Who Am I? A Philosophical Question Or Amnesia?

By Cynthia Lea Clark, Psy.D.


Amnesia is the inability to remember your past or to process already learned information as well as some impairment with learning new information. The memory disruption must be strong enough to cause impairments in social and/or occupational functioning. This impairment represents a significant decline in one's previous level of functioning (i.e., an attorney's level of functioning may be different from that of a drifter, or a waiter, etc.) It can be temporary or permanent.

This is not the same as when memory loss occurs in dementia or during delirium.

What causes Amnesia?

Amnesia can be caused by strokes, closed head trauma (i.e., a blow to the head that does not result in any type of open wound), penetrating missile wounds (i.e., bullets), surgery, hypoxia (lack of oxygen), brain aneurysm, some metabolic conditions, seizures, high fever, trauma (physical or emotional), some medications, exposure to certain toxins, and substance abuse (alcohol, hypnotics, anxiolytics, sedatives, and some unknown substances.)

Characteristics of an Amnesiac:

Amnesiacs tend to deny memory loss despite evidence to the contrary. They do not have the capacity initially to understand their mental deficiency. They may lash out against others due to their inability to understand what is happening to them. They may become agitated. They may know they have a problem yet seem unconcerned about it. They hold the fear inside, not wishing to share it with anyone. They may also express apathy, a lack of initiative, emotional blandness, as well as other altered personality functions. They may appear friendly and agreeable, but this may be superficial. Their affective expressions may be shallow or have a diminished range (their facial expressions, such as smiling, frowning are not as expressive as usual.) If the Amnesia is transient global (for details, see below), they may appear bewildered and/or befuddled. There may be subtle deficits in cognitive functions but generally they are not severe enough to cause clinical impairment.

They may not recognize family members, friends or places.

Physically, they may experience fatigue, loss of sleep, nausea, nightmares, restlessness, headaches, as well as excessive alertness while being easily startled.

Cognitively, they may suffer poor concentration, poor attention and memory, disorientation, confusion, visual images of the event, and have intrusive thoughts.

Emotionally they may experience fear, numbness or detachment, avoidance, depression, guilt, anxiety, panic, over sensitivity, withdrawal and fearfulness.

Depending on the area affected, the amnesiac may be able to remember things from the far remote past more so than recent events. For example, one might remember a school play in 1962 but not what he did last week.

Confabulation may occur when an amnesiac victim fills in his/her memory gaps with imaginary events. This generally happens in the early stages of Amnesia and tends to dwindle down and disappear over time.
About The Kiss Of Death Chapter

Kiss of Death, the Mystery/Suspense Chapter of RWA® serves writers who are interested in the romantic suspense/mystery genre.

The chapter offers a variety of services including two on-line mailing lists, Clues-N-News, (CNN), for the purpose of networking and LethaLadies, (LL), for critiquing manuscripts. A Critique-By-Mail service is available for members who wish to contact each other through postal mail.

We have a yearly meeting at the annual RWA® conference, a bi-monthly newsletter, an annual contest for published books in the preceding copyright year, and another contest for unpublished writers designed to demonstrate their skills.

We also operate COFFIN, the College of Felony and Intrigue, a series of online classes on the technical aspects of murder and other criminal matters and courses on the craft of writing.

Contact Becky Martinez, our Membership Chairperson, for an application to join. Visit our web site at: http://rwamysterysuspense.org.

Permission to Reprint

The material in this newsletter may be reprinted by other RWA® chapters provided the author and The Kiss of Death receive appropriate credit. Articles should not be edited without the author’s consent.

Getting Published

Anyone interested in submitting material to The Kiss of Death should contact our Editor, Patty Burns. Articles may be sent by e-mail to pburns@voicenet.com or by regular mail to 303 South 5th Street, North Wales, PA 19454.

“Quotation”

A reader’s confidence in what he is reading will be subtly betrayed or even squandered should a novelist choose to enter the mind of a character but fail to bequeath the indispensable gift that the reader can now know more about the character than before. The internal monologues are usually routine and insist on telling us what we know already. There is almost no signature quality of mind.

Norman Mailer
The Spooky Art
Thoughts on Writing
For example, an amnesiac woman, in an early interview, talked about her childbirth experience in minute detail. Later, when her husband was asked where their daughter was, he responded that they had no children. She had created a memory to fill in some of the gaps in hers. If the amnesiac is reciting stories, it is important to get collaborating evidence from family, friends, business associates to sort out reality from fiction.

Severe amnesiacs may have severe disorientations to times and places but rarely to self (one's core personality). Those with a disorientation to self tend to be suffering from dementia and not Amnesia. Of course, there are exceptions to everything.

There are movies where the evil person gets Amnesia and the new memory less person is a better person; not mean, bad, or evil. In reality, although this could happen, it generally does not. However, in a fugue state (which is defined later), one could be fighting with the person they have become, be overwhelmed with the life they have made, (which is not true to their inner core) and then flee it. Then when they set up their new life in the fugue state it would be truer to their core self, their true personality.

**Diagnosis:**

Diagnosis is made through taking a history of the patient, a physical exam, laboratory findings, and MRIs. *The DSM IV, Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (4th Edition, American Psychiatric Association, 1994) is used for the mental classifications of Amnesia and its varying types and degrees. Once the diagnosis of Amnesia is made, general medical conditions are looked at to establish if it was caused by an underlying reason, such as stroke, injury, etc.

**Etiology:**

Injury to or around the temporal lobes, which are situated immediately behind and below the frontal lobes and just behind the ears, and control memory, speech and comprehension can lead to many problems including Amnesia. Also, injuries to the hypothalamus (located at the base of the brain) which controls appetite, thirst, temperature, and some aspects of memory as well sexual arousal may also lead to Amnesia.

**Testing:**

Quantitative neuropsychological testing generally exhibits specific memory deficits in the absence of other cognitive disturbances.

Standardized tests may access recall of historical events, public figures, etc, and may vary with amnesiacs depending on the extent and nature of the deficit.

When using standardized tests, cultural and educational backgrounds need to be considered, as everyone may not have had the same access to the information solicited.

**Specifiers of Amnesia:**

Transient— Amnesia due to head trauma. It may last varying amounts of time including a characteristic pattern of greatest deficit immediately after the injury. It will generally improve during the next 24 months. (In rare cases, memory gain has continued past 24 months.)

Amnesia may be due to CV (cerebral vascular) etiology. Episodes may be recurrent and may last hours to days.

When the transient diagnosis is used within the first month, one may add provisional, to watch its course further.

Transient global Amnesia is characterized by a dense, inability to learn new information, with variable ability to recall events that recently occurred, or occurred in the middle of the CV problem.

Chronic— This specifier is for Amnesia disturbances that last longer than a month.

**Courses of Amnesia:**

Acute onset— occurs quickly and due to traumatic brain injury, stroke, or specific types of neurotoxic exposure (such as carbon monoxide poisoning.)

Insidious Onset— due to prolonged substance abuse, chronic neurotoxic exposure, sustained nutritional deficiency.

Persisting impairments— due to destruction of the middle-temporal lobe structures (which can occur from infarction, surgical ablation, malnutrition, or alcohol dependence.)

Substance Intoxication/Substance withdrawal— due to intoxication or withdrawal from drug use/abuse.

**Retrograde Amnesia:**

Retrograde Amnesia is where the individual loses memories for the time period just prior to the injury. It may result from a brain injury or severe emotional trauma (such as rape or...
Lacunar Amnesia:

Lucunar Amnesia is the inability to recall a specific event.

Dissociative Disorders:

The inability to recall important personal information, generally of a traumatic or stressful nature, that can not be explained by ordinary forgetfulness. This usually presents itself as a gap or gaps in the ability to recall aspects, of one’s life history. This inability is usually related to a traumatic or stressful event. In this category such things "forgotten" may be suicide attempts, self mutilation, and violent outbursts.

It may be localized where one can not recall events during a specific period of time, generally the first few hours following a profound disturbing or traumatic event.

It might be selective Amnesia where the person may recall some but not all of the events during a specific period of time.

In generalized Amnesia, there is a failure to encompass one's entire life. This is rare, and these individuals present themselves to police officers, emergency rooms, etc.

In continuous Amnesia there is an inability to recall events subsequent to a specific time up to and including the present. This means that from the point of injury onward, memory recall suffers. Short term memory is lost. The movie Momento would be an example of this.

In systematized Amnesia there is a loss of memory for certain information in categories, such as all of one's memories relating to their family or to a specific person.

In the latter three types, these individuals may also have more complex Dissociative Identity Disorders.

Fugue:

Some people consider Hysterical and Fugue Amnesia states as the same. I do not, as there are differences between the two.

In a fugue state there is a sudden, unexpected flight away from one's home, daily activities, with an inability to recall their past. They tend to be confused. They don't know who they are and may adopt a new identity.

Their travels may be of short duration— hours to days, or as long as years. Some may even travel thousands of miles away.
President’s Letter
By Beverley Bateman, President

Since my last letter to the membership we have had major disasters affecting many of our membership. I’m not going to list names because I’m liable to miss one and some were impacted more than others.

Hurricane Katrina devastated Louisiana and Mississippi which included homes, families and for many the loss of jobs.

Hurricane Rita then came along, causing more challenges for families in Texas, specifically the Galveston area, and more damage to Louisiana.

Kiss of Death has formed a committee to contact our members and to ask how we might assist them. We’re not looking at major financial implications but some small way we can assist people to put their writing life back together; perhaps by providing reference books or writing paper or something that might help get their career back on track. Once we get all the information compiled we'll post to our membership to let everyone know what we will be doing.

We also suggest that if you want to help those impacted by this disaster you donate to one of the organizations such as the Salvation Army or the Red Cross who are helping during this crisis.

I’d like to thank Mary O’Gara, one of our members and a past president who has offered to do psychic readings and donate all the money to the Disaster Fund.

I know that many other members have already donated generously and to those I say “thank you.”

Another spin off of Hurricane Rita was the cancellation of the 2nd KOD Retreat in San Antonio. Because of the risk to health and safety of the speakers and participants, the retreat was canceled at the last minute. We are rebooking it for February 10th – 12th, 2006 in San Antonio, and it appears that all of our speakers will still be able to attend. So if you couldn’t attend in September and you’re free in February you might want to join us. Check out our speakers and agents.

If you can’t join us then you may want to consider joining the next KOD Retreat in Victoria, British Columbia, September 29 - October 1st, 2006. More information will be available after the Board meeting.

And speaking of the Board meeting, I’d like to see more of the membership sitting in on our Board meetings. It will give you some idea of how many volunteers it takes to make this organization the awesome group that it is.

Just contact your Board Member at Large, Debbi Ward or Darlene Roberts to get subbed in to the meeting.

Please consider helping those who have lost everything due to the Hurricanes.

And for our Canadian members – Happy Thanksgiving.

Beverley Bateman writes romantic suspense and medical thrillers. She is published in epublishing and POD. She has been a member of KOD for six years and has been on the Board for five years as a Board Member At Large. She has worked on the Nominating Committee and the Retreat Committee. She has also been a monitor for COFFIN and assisted with the Death By Chocolate Party.

KOD’S BIAW
By Nanci Race, BIAW Coordinator

BIAW (Book In A Week) is over for September and although we had a very small group everyone worked hard.

The people who participated accomplished what they wanted to for the week although it might not have been the goal they started with.

Page counts varied but everyone wrote several pages, some editing and some necessary reading were also accomplished.

The most important aspect of the BIAW is the camaraderie and the support that comes from knowing there are other people working hard to finish their WIPs.

The next BIAW will be in December.
Amnesia, continued from page 4

During the fugue state, one appears to have no psychopathology, and does not attract attention.

Not every fugue state takes on a new identity. But if one does, they may take one that is more gregarious and uninhibited than the one they left behind. They may take a new name, a new home, new social activities, and integrate into a new life.

After returning from a fugue state, the person may develop depression, dysphoria, grief, shame, guilt, psychological stress, conflict, suicidal tendencies, and may become aggressive. They may answer questions inaccurately.

What makes someone return from a fugue state? There is no clear answer. Sometimes, they wake up and remember their old life. Sometimes in their new life, they begin to get flashes of memory, like a slide show; and either slowly or with speed, they regain their old memory. Some may go out to get cigarettes (or some such thing) as they did the first time (classically used as an example in literature or movies) and return to the old life with no memory of where they had been for those three years (or whatever time span.) They then leave their new life and friends behind with the same questions.

Onset is generally related to overwhelming stress and life events or trauma. "Fugues" are mostly adults. The prevalence of fugues is estimated to be at a rate of .2%. Single episodes are most common. They may last just hours to months. Recovery is generally rapid but sometimes Dissociative Amnesia may linger.

In the fugue state, the individual does not know he/she has/had another life. In the fugue state, the new identity just sort of happens. They seem to gravitate toward something natural, easy. A man might be a handy man. A woman might apply to be a teacher or a secretary. It may have nothing similar to do with their old life. Signs they see may trigger the names they pick, or they go with something that pops in their head. But they are totally unaware of this process at the time they are doing it. When, if they begin to come out of the fugue state, the two worlds may collide, and it is possible they could become aware of both lives. In other cases when the person is brought back to the pre fugue state there is no memory of the fugue identity.

Recovery/Treatment:

As the amnesiac recovers, they tend to retrieve the oldest memories first, followed by the most recent ones, until the puzzle is filled in. However, with Retrograde and Anterograde Amnesia, the event that caused the Amnesia may not be retrieved. A person may recover everything around the event but not the event (injury or emotional shock). With Retrograde and Anterograde Amnesia, hypnosis may be helpful. However, pending the cause of the trauma, a full recovery may not be possible.

The more severe the injury, the longer the recovery will be.

I had a client, who was violently raped. She lost 28 hours. Reconstruction of time, figures that her memory stopped about 30 minutes prior to the attack and resumed 26 hours later. She tried hypnosis, and was able to get back all but 30 minutes; the 30 minutes of the actual attack. That was 20 years ago. She has never gotten back that lost 30 minutes. So, sometimes, the trauma is so severe that it can not be retrieved but the memories around the "event" can be.

If brain damage has caused Amnesia, and that brain damage is permanent, then those memories may be lost forever.

In situations where the damage to the brain lobes is not permanent, then there are tricks that can be used to try and help one recover their memory. Exposing them to their previous life, their family, home, and things they enjoyed. Sometimes this will appear foreign to them. They may resist. Other times, snippets of the past life will slowly sneak into their mind. In other times, explosions of their past life may occur.

Published studies show that Amnesia patients can recover memory in several hours to a few days when Vasopressin or Piracetam or both are used (Ostrovskaia et al. 1985; Rakhmankulova et al. 1985; van Wimersma Greidanus et al. 1986; Lenegre et al. 1988.) Piracetam has also been shown to enhance memory, particularly when used in combination with Choline. These studies have spanned over two decades. (Bartus et al. 1981; Pragina et al. 1990; Senin et al. 1991.)

At least 16 IU a day of Vasopressin via nasal spray has been recommended. Some physicians have prescribed higher amounts to treat acute Amnesia. A recommended dose of 4800 mg daily of Piracetam is generally prescribed until memory is restored.

Nimodipine has been recommended for head trauma victims experiencing Amnesia.

continued on page 7
A Taste Of Success  
By Michele Scott

I've been writing for over a decade and during that time wrote a handful of thrillers that didn't sell. When I started working in the wine industry I visited Napa and Sonoma and fell in love with the area. I also thought it would be fun to do a mystery set there. I started studying the mystery genre and found that I actually enjoyed writing in that arena because I could use some humor and the violence wasn't so gratuitous and dark as with thrillers.

As I was working on the book, I started querying agents and found my agent in Jeff Herman's Guide to Book Editors, Publishers, and Literary Agents 2005, Who They Are! What They Want! How to Win Them Over. When I read her bio, it just felt right. She asked me for 50 pages and later a full manuscript. After that I signed with her, I did some minor revisions on the manuscript that she suggested, and then she sent it to Berkley who bought the book two weeks later and wanted to sign me for two more books.

The Wine Lover's Mysteries are a lot of fun to write. In Murder Uncorked my amateur sleuth Nikki Sands interviews for a position at Malveaux Estate Winery with the owner Derek Malveaux and soon thereafter finds herself cast into a wacky group of characters and knee deep in murder when she discovers the murdered body of the winery's winemaker.

Nikki takes it upon herself to find out who dunnit and in the meantime she can't help but lust after the charming and handsome Derek Malveaux.

The series is a bit of Murder She Wrote meets Friends on a vineyard with a bit of Emeril Live! as I include recipes and wine pairings throughout the book. Look for it out in bookstores now.

Amnesia, continued from page 6

Amytal (sodium amobarbital) may be given to people suffering from Amnesia. The medicine may help some people recall lost memories. There is some controversy with Amytal, as it has been used to help a patient recall false repressed memories, especially repressed memories associated with sexual abuse.

Now that is not to say, that all memories on this drug are false. They are not. Unfortunately, some have been, and this led to some court battles.

Natural supplements such as Ginkgo, Vitamin B, Choline, Lecithin, and other memory herbs and supplements, as well hormones such as Pregnenolone and DHEA have been shown helpful in restoring memory.

Psychotherapy may be helpful if the Amnesia was caused by trauma.

Amnesia and Writing:

As you can see, there are many types of Amnesia, from severe damage where memories may never be recovered, to the faker, to the hysterical amnesiac, where memories can be relatively easily recovered and many degrees of severity in between.

So, what does that mean to you? If your character is suffering from Amnesia and will regain their memory, then you must have their trigger (cause) be one where they can recover. A massive stroke or bullet in the temporal lobe will probably not allow your character to regain their memory. However, if your witness sees a horrible crime, she can regain the clues to that crime, with help— drugs, hypnosis, and/or counseling.

Does your WIP have a fugue? Now you know a little more about why one goes on a fugue, and how you can play with it.

Now where did I put that pen?

Cynthia Lea Clark, Psy.D., is a Forensic Psychopathologist, writer, and actress mixing all three worlds. Recently she, with Rae Monet and Karin Tabke, formed CrimeInMind to provide technical advise to writers and the entertainment industry.
The Kiss of Death

Rae Monet: FBI Agent Turns Author

By Patty Burns

Former FBI Agent Rae Monet once spent her days investigating violent crimes, hunting down fugitives and cracking crime in cyber space. All the while she heard voices telling her tales—would be characters telling their stories—perhaps even confessing. She listened and one day gave those characters a chance to speak. She started writing romantic fantasy then switched to romantic suspense. The results include a three book FBI series featuring Special Agents who track bank robbers and bombers.

Here Rae provides a glimpse into the real world of the FBI and how it inspired her imagination.

What is your background and training?

I joined the United States Air Force out of high school. I wanted to go to college but couldn’t afford it. I thought this would be the best way to attain my education. I served over five years in the Air Force, the last few years I served with the Air Force Office of Special Investigations as an Administrative Support Specialist. After my service ended, I worked in the business world and finished two business degrees until I joined the FBI in 2002. While with the FBI, I served as an Agent in both the Violent Crimes Major Offender program and Cyber Squad. I left the FBI to go back into the private sector and obtained my Private Investigator license in the state of California.

How did you end up working for the FBI? What was the Academy really like?

Working for the FBI was a lifelong dream but because my uncorrected vision did not meet the physical requirements, I couldn’t actually pursue my application until after the invention of laser eye surgery. Having worked in law enforcement with the Air Force, my interest in being an Agent was peaked. Unfortunately, I had to wait to follow that dream, until that little machine was invented to fix me. The application process for a Special Agent can take up to two years.

The academy was very difficult for me. It’s both physically and mentally draining. I was trained for 16 weeks. The FBI Academy curriculum includes intensive training in physical fitness, defensive tactics, practical application exercises, and the use of firearms. Information concerning the details of this training can be found at https://www.fbijobs.gov/jobdesc.asp?requisitionid=368

After successfully graduating from the academy I was assigned to the Violent Crimes Major Offenders squad (VCMO) and later the Cyber Squad out of the San Francisco Division of the FBI.

What sort of assignments or cases did you have?

An agent working on these two squads can have a variety of cases at any one time. Let me explain the programs below, which can both be found on the FBI.gov websites. I’ll give you the links and the verbiage from those sites.

The Violent Crimes and Major Offenders (VCMO) program involves both the FBI and local law enforcement agencies. The criminal activity investigated includes bank robbery, violent street/drug enterprises, extortion, kidnapping, assault on federal officers, sexual exploitation of children facilitated through use of the Internet, and fugitive matters. Additionally, the FBI investigates interstate property crimes such as commercialized auto thefts and "chop shops," thefts of cargo from interstate shipments, and transportation of stolen property from one state to another. Information on the program can be found here http://sanfrancisco.fbi.gov/sfcriminal.htm

The Cyber Squad

The FBI plays two very important roles in cyberspace. First, it is the lead law enforcement agency for investigating cyber attacks by foreign adversaries and terrorists. The potential damage to the United States’ national security from a cyber-based attack includes devastating interruptions of critical communications, transportation, and other services. Additionally, such attacks could be used to access and steal protected information and plans. The FBI also works to prevent criminals, sexual predators, and others intent on malicious destruction from using the Internet and on-line services to steal from, defraud, and otherwise victimize citizens, businesses, and communities. http://www.fbi.gov/cyberinvest/cyberhome.htm

So at any one time I could be investigating several crimes on whatever squad I was working. On the VCMO squad my primary responsibility was Bank Robbery and Fugitives.

Can you tell us what a typical day at the FBI was like?

Busy, busy and busy. As a VCMO agent your day is unpredictable. It might start with you attending the first appearance of a suspect taken in custody the previous day, have a mid-day bank robbery you need to respond to, and end with a surveillance on a serial bank robbery team that goes into the next morning. All the while your spouse is calling asking if you’ll be home for dinner and your thinking about the affidavit you have to finish on a search warrant scheduled in two days. Days are long and packed with constant decision-making and stress, but also very rewarding when a crime is prevented or solved.

continued on page 9
What is the best way for a writer using the FBI as a setting or a FBI agent as a character to make sure they get it right? What are the best sources?

http://FBI.gov is full of useful information. It even has a booklet you can read that tells you the requirements for the FBI agent process: http://www.fbi.gov/employment/booklet/SAapplinfobooklet.pdf.

The following link gives you a pre-Quantico kit and tells you everything you might expect from the academy https://www.fbijobs.gov/PreQuanticoKit/chapter00.htm

One thing I teach people in connection with writing their true law enforcement hero/heroine is not to get fixated on the LEO (law enforcement officer) details. Here’s the great thing about fiction, it’s just that—fiction. I advise to use your literary license to create the characters that work best for your book and you. Again, don’t get so fixated on the LEO details you lose sight of your story and slow your writing process.

Do you have a favorite book or movie about the FBI? One that was especially good? Or bad?

I like Without a Trace and SVU. I absolutely love Stargate and all Sci-Fi (wait that’s not FBI related but so much more entertaining). Without a Trace, seems to be a fairy acute depiction of the FBI. Like most people, I like movies that entertain me and take me away from the realities of life for a while. Usually, when you have worked in law enforcement, it’s difficult to watch a movie that depicts that life style because you’re always screaming, “it doesn’t work that way.” Drives my husband nuts. DNA, on a normal case, might take 13-18 months to process. So, you can see how I’d be screaming when I watch CSI and see it done in an hour.

You are also a PI can you tell us what led you to this career choice and what kind of cases you have worked on?

I chose to acquire my PI license so I wouldn’t lose touch with my investigative roots. Most of the PI cases worked these days consist of; observe and report. Meaning a lot of surveillance and paperwork, along with a lot of computer work. I might for instance, be following a subject as requested by the client, observe and report where they are going, and after this is complete go back to working on the computer trying to find a lost relative for another client.

What made you start writing fiction?

I think mainly because I wanted to share the stories talking to me.

How long have you been writing?

I’ve been writing seriously since 1998, mainly Romantic Fantasy.

How did you get started?

I just turned on the computer and started typing. Seriously, you just need to sit down and start writing. That’s how it all begins. Learning how to hone your craft comes with time.

What are your writing habits like?

I try to write everyday. I think it’s important for all aspiring writers to make a daily writing goal and stick with it.

What inspired your first book?

My first book, The Lost Wolf Warrior, weaved in a lot of elements I love. I wanted to include a strong action/adventure heroine, historical Scotland, and the Wolves in my world. I craved this need to combine all these elements together in one Fantasy/Paranormal Romance, which would successfully tell my story to everyone. And so The Lost Wolf Warrior was born.

I always do quite a bit of research on my topics, and was finally able to travel to Scotland last year to be pleasantly surprised how accurate my book was.

How did you develop your FBI series? What inspired Gabe’s Prize?

Of course, my FBI Series is totally fictional. I drew it from again, from the voices talking to me. I guess working in the field helped to inspire my imagination, and after I left the FBI, Stolen Courage started talking to me first, Then Gabe’s Prize and finally Z’s Story. Besides, all my RWA buddies kept saying, “With your background, you should write a romantic suspense.” So I did, three of them. But I think that series cleared my mind of the contemporary romantic suspense genre, and now I’m writing action/adventure, combined with LEO elements.

When drawing a FBI agent does a writer have to be mindful that there is a certain personality type to include or traits to avoid?

I can only give my opinion here, having worked with a variety of law enforcement officers, both federal and local. Although, most come across a bit arrogant, they are human and they have a deep abiding need in them to do the right thing, to solve the crime, to help someone. They put their lives on the line everyone day for

continued on page 10
this cause and they are usually 100% committed to what they do. Still, that being said, I think you should use your imagination when you create your own law enforcement hero/heroine and write the character that works for you and your storyline.

And yes, I have worked with and met former agents I didn’t like, but I think this is normal in life. We can’t mesh with everyone, all the time. So if you write a nasty agent in your book are you going outside the realm of possibility? No, probably not. There are always bad apples in the lot, and anyone who tells you the FBI was a perfect world and all the agents perfect, is just being silly. Remember, this is only my humble opinion.

What are your future plans and goals?

Keep writing romances. My obsession and my sanity are married with my continued need to write and share my stories.

Readers can surf my site at http://www.RaeMonet.com
For a sample of my writing world or join my chat group at http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Rae_Monet/join, where I will answer any type of LEO questions on their WIP.

Patty Burns is the Editor of The Kiss Of Death.

Published Author News

Roxanne St. Claire is celebrating the release of two new books, *Kill Me Twice*, a new romantic suspense from Pocket Books and *The Highest Bidder*, her latest from Silhouette Desire. For more information stop by Roxanne’s web site at (http://www.roxannestclaire.com/).

Cheryl Clark’s romantic mystery *Restore My Heart* has earned her a contract offer from Medallion Press for their Jewel Imprint (mass market paperback) for a 2007 release.

Michele Scott’s debt novel *Murder Uncorked* is out now from Berkley Prime Crime. Visit Michele’s website at www.michelescott.com for additional information.

*No More Secrets, No More Lies* by Marie Roy received a four star review from Romantic Times Book Club.

Cynthia Scott received three contracts from Starlight Writer Publications.

Look for These Books by KOD Members

*To The Limit* by Cindy Gerard from St Martins Press

*Reflected Pleasures* and *A Scandalous Melody* by Linda Conrad both from Silhouette Desire

*Wayward Angels* by Karen Wiesner from Hard Shell Word Factory

*A Shadow On The Snow* by Dorthy Bodoin from Hilliard and Harris

*The Prostitution of Women and Girls* by R. Barri Flowers from McFarland

*The Flight Doctor's Lifeline* 
*The Flight Doctor’s Emergency* by Laura Iding both from Harlequin

Barbara Dove has resigned as Treasurer. Thanks for all your efforts keeping our books in order, Barbara. Darlene Roberts will now take over as Interim Treasurer. Thank you for stepping in, Darlene.
Critical Ingredients To Writing Page Turners

By Adrianne Lee

Everyone who has ever read one of my books, or been in a critique group with me, will tell you that I am the Queen of Introspection. And we’ve all been told over and over—too much introspection translates into boring, slow moving books. Why, then, do reviewers invariably call my books fast paced, page turners? Do I know a secret no one else knows? Not likely. But I do have list of 22 writing musts I believe are critical to writing a book that readers won’t put down.

1. Open with a hook. That first sentence does count. As well as that first paragraph. That first page. This is what an editor will read FIRST. This is what will make her decide whether or not to read on. But ask yourself if you want the editor to just read on, or if you want to compel her to read on. And on. If you’re not sure how to write a compelling opening sentence, then go to your keeper shelves. Read the opening pages of your favorite five books. Then look at your current work in progress and ask yourself whether or not an editor will find it so darned intriguing she just has to read the whole book. If you think not, then rewrite until it is that compelling.

A few of my favorite opening hooks are in Susan Wiggs’ *Vows Made In Wine*, Dick Francis’ *The Banker*, Tami Hoag’s *Still Waters*.

2. Conceive an interesting heroine who is thrust into your plot in such a way that she must respond emotionally as well as physically. In other words, she needs to be given no choice about getting involved in the danger and staying involved because she is emotionally driven to act and react. Emotion is why readers read romances in all of its sub-genres. Again, look at your keeper shelf for books whose heroines you remember with admiration or fondness.

3. Write STRONG Point of View. Be your character as you write. Feel what she’s feeling. See what she sees. Dig into her heart and then express, in actions, thoughts, and/or dialogue, how she feels about what’s happening to and around her in the scene. Showing physical as well as emotional reactions is what breathes life into characters, keeps readers caring about what will happen next and turning pages long past lights out.

4. Don’t give away too much too soon. Save that back story. It does NOT belong in the beginning of any book. If you aren’t sure whether there is too much back story in the beginning of your book, my advice is to ask your critique partners for an honest opinion of the scene in question.

5. End chapters in the middle of a scene:

Example: *Miranda tiptoed across the room. Her breath clogged her throat as she nudged open the closet door. This was it. She would finally know the truth. The lights went out.*

End chapters with on a dramatic note or with a question.

Example: *Miranda had just lied to the police. Why? What was she hiding? Or: Miranda opened the back door and stepped into her kitchen and sucked in a sharp breath. The cool sage walls, the white tiled counter tops, and the hardwood floors were all splattered with a vivid red liquid. Her stomach churned at the tinny stench. Animal blood? Or human? Or: Miranda couldn’t wait to drop into bed for the night. Just one problem. The dead man sprawled on her comforter.*

6. Never, ever, have your character fall asleep at the end of a chapter. If in the last example, Miranda had dropped into bed and then off to sleep, so would your reader. If your character MUST fall asleep at the end of a chapter, then before you finish writing that scene, have something startle her awake.

7. Write your sentences so that the most important punch of what you’re saying comes as the last word. Example: *If she told Miranda about Josh, her secret would be out.* Stronger: *If she told about Josh, Miranda would guess her secret.* Secret is the strongest word, the one with the punch.

8. Write dialogue that advances your story. (Not, “Hi.” “Hi.” “How are you?” “Fine, and you?” “Same.”) Dialogue can define character, advance plot, uncover clues. On the same note, dialect can make for rough reading and might have some readers putting your book down. Better to remind the reader of a character’s accent than to use dialect.

9. Make your descriptions vivid. Just be careful not to write with such imagination and flourish that the reader stops reading to admire your writing. Descriptions should reflect the tone you are trying to convey for the overall story. Mysteries, Suspense, and Romantic/Suspense require descriptions that are darker than other types of romance. Word choice is essential. The best smelling, most beautiful rose garden can be made darker by reminding the reader of the thorns below the beauty.

continued on page 12
Critical Ingredients To Writing Page Turners, continued from page 11

10. Specific is scarier than elusive. *The gun aimed at Miranda’s heart* is scarier than *the threat came from everywhere*. Don’t expect the reader to figure out what you’re saying. Be specific.

11. Make sure you have enough plot and conflict from the outset to carry the story through the middle to the end.

12. If plotting is hard to impossible for you, try giving all of your characters a secret. Then list the secrets in order of importance or drama and reveal the secrets in the story one by one starting with the least important and ending with the biggest secret.

13. Figure out plot points that you can write towards.

14. Develop a strong story conflict. Your characters need goals in opposition. If your story’s conflict isn’t strong enough, the sexual tension will be weak and the story won’t be a page turner. There is a conflict sheet posted on my website that can be printed out and used. [www.adriannelee.com](http://www.adriannelee.com)

15. Use Sexual Tension. Remember in a romantic suspense that the story is more compelling if the suspense is driving the romance and the romance is driving the suspense throughout. The deeper trouble the couple faces, the closer they get. Their closeness in turn causes them more danger.

16. In long passages of introspection insert one feeling and one action in every other paragraph. This is a little trick of mine and you’d be amazed at how it “speeds up” those pages where the heroine is alone, mulling over problems.

17. Build tension from the beginning of the story. Start small and increase and keep increasing. This can be plotted out ahead of time. Figure out what can happen in the first few chapters and then ask yourself how can I make this worse by chapter 6, then worse yet by chapter 9 and really bad by chapter 12. If you build slowly but surely, it will keep the reader turning pages.

18. Keep your main characters questioning the motivations of other characters, as well as their own throughout the story. This is what makes characters grow and change.

19. During the course of your story, your characters should make steps towards reaching their goals as well as steps away from reaching their goals.

20. The only darkest moment that belongs in your book is the one that arises from that story’s conflict. The darkest moment is a head-on collision of the hero and heroine’s internal and external conflicts. Everything the story has been— or should have been— building towards. The more poignant you make this moment— the more impossible it seems that the hero and heroine can go on together from this point— the more hooked the reader will be.

21. Come to realize. Here is the greatest growth of your characters. The scenes in your story should have brought about moments that have proven the hero/heroine erroneous in holding onto his/her original core belief. If set up properly, then both will realize they must change that core belief one way or another.

22. Resolution. Remember no matter what sub-genre the bottom line is that you’re writing a romance. The story needs a happy ending, but not just any happy ending. It needs one that is apropos to the story. The reader wants a satisfying ending with all the threads tied up. And you want this story to hook the reader into buying your next book.

*Adrianne Lee is the author of 14 Harlequin Intrigues including “Denim Detective” and “Sentenced to Wed”. She is currently working on her next romantic suspense.*
COFFIN Workshops

RWA®’s Mystery/Suspense chapter is pleased to announce our COFFIN (College of Felony and Intrigue) online writing workshops for November, 2005. Killer Instincts workshops encompass the craft aspects of writing. Murder One workshops encompass the technical aspects of murder and mayhem. The four week workshops are conducted via email only, no real-time or live chats, on a private list. Participants will be subbed to the list for the month of the workshop then unsubbed when it’s over. Each month-long workshop includes both lectures and Q & A sessions. You do not need to be an RWA® member to participate. Workshops are open to everyone with email capability who wishes to participate. The CUT OFF date for receipt of payment is October 25, 2005.

Murder One Workshop

How Crimes Are Solved: From Criminal Behavior To Methods Used

Instructor: Joseph R. Paglino

November 1, 2005 – November 30, 2005

Workshop Description

This course will take the student behind the scenes to discover just exactly how crimes are solved. From the simple hunches detectives have, to the most sophisticated equipment available today, HOW CRIMES ARE SOLVED will demonstrate what methods law enforcement uses to close criminal cases. From arson to burglary to homicide to child abuse to sex crimes, the nitty gritty is all here. And it's all 100% uncensored. Common myths about how crime is solved, such as through television, will be explored. This course will cover forensics, psychology of criminal behavior, surveillances, search warrants, neighborhood canvases, sketch artists, interview and interrogation (and the fine line between them), agency cooperation (and fighting among agencies), Miranda issues, police stress and its effect on solving crime, and many more topics. It will give a comprehensive overview of the system, providing the attendee with enough rocket fuel to stir even the most lax of writers.

Instructor’s Biography

Joseph R. Paglino was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York. After obtaining his Bachelor of Science degree in Criminal Justice from Saint John's University, New York, Joseph obtained the position of Confidential Investigator for the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner in New York City. As part of this assignment, Joseph was tasked with the investigation of homicide crime scenes in all five boroughs of New York.

Joseph subsequently advanced in the field of law enforcement in securing the position of Detective for the Brooklyn District Attorneys Office in Brooklyn, New York. While there, he was assigned to the Major Offense/Career Criminal Unit, the Transit Crime Bureau, the Auto Crime Unit, the Supreme Court Bureau and the Night Fugitive Strike Force.

Upon relocating to New Jersey, Joseph obtained the position of Detective with the Monmouth County Prosecutors Office in Freehold, New Jersey, where he is currently employed. Joseph has served in the White Collar Crime Unit, the Child Abuse/Sex Crimes Unit and the Bureau of Technical & Forensic Services.

Additionally, Joseph is a published author, collaborating with his partner, Mauro Corvasce in the works MODUS OPERANDI: a writer's guide to how criminals work, and MURDER ONE: a writer's guide to homicide, both published by Writer's Digest Books. He has also lectured at numerous conferences throughout the country, such as the Santa Barbara Writer's Conference, Bouchercon, The California Writer's Club, Romance Writers of America and Novelist's Inc. Joseph is the recipient of a Masters Degree in Forensic Psychology and is currently pursuing a Ph. D. in Psychology.
**Killer Instincts Course**

**Elvis, James Dean & You: 13 Ways To Make Your Dialogue Cook**

**Instructor: Jeff Shelby**

**November 1, 2005 – November 30, 2005**

**Workshop Description**

Ever wish your characters sounded more hip and happening? Find out how to make the right things come out of your characters’ mouths at the right time. In this class, participants will learn 13 basic ways to create, find and write cool dialogue in their novels. Using examples from contemporary novels, television and film, we’ll look at a variety of ways that dialogue can help define character personalities and make each individual character unique. We'll also look at rhythm and cadence in dialogue and how the words that characters speak are the single most important driving force of every aspect of your novel.

**Instructor’s Biography**

Jeff Shelby spent more than twenty years growing up around the beaches of Southern California. He graduated from the University of California, Irvine with a Bachelor’s degree in English. After two years directing youth sports programs for the YMCA and four years as an athletics administrator and girls basketball coach at a private high school, he quit to be a stay at home dad and full time writer. His first novel, *Killer Swell*, was published by Dutton in June of 2005. He currently lives in Castle Rock, Colorado with his wife, Stephanie, and their daughter, Hannah.

**COFFIN Coordinators**

Killer Instincts  
Darlene Roberts  
darroberts@greeleyschools.org

Murder One  
Midge Johnson  
midgeblue1@aol.com

**Sign Up**

Cost of each workshop is $15.00 US for KOD Chapter Members; $30.00 US for Non KOD Chapter Members. Canadian registrants, please send US Money Orders only; no Canadian checks.

PLEASE MAKE PAYMENT OUT TO 'MRSRWA'.

We also accept PayPal. PayPal payments should be sent to: paypal@rwamysterysuspense.org.

Details and sign up information is available on our web site at: [http://rwamysterysuspense.org](http://rwamysterysuspense.org).

**COFFIN REFUND POLICY**

No refunds will be given for withdrawing from a workshop.

In the event the instructor cancels a workshop, COFFIN will apply payment to another COFFIN workshop of the student's choice.

All COFFIN payments must be RECEIVED by the payment deadline.