
The Advanced Fiction Writing E-zine

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Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius.

"Fiction Writing = Organizing + Creating + Marketing"

What's in This Issue

- 1) Welcome to the Advanced Fiction Writing E-zine!
 - 2) Organizing: The World's Scariest Question
 - 3) Creating: The Novelist's Dilemma
 - 4) Marketing: Web Sites and Blogging, Part 3
 - 5) Interview: Scratching that Niche
 - 6) What's New At [AdvancedFictionWriting.com](http://www.AdvancedFictionWriting.com)
 - 7) Steal This E-zine!
 - 8) Reprint Rights
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- 1) Welcome to the Advanced Fiction Writing E-zine!

Those of you who have joined in the past month (more than 200 of you have joined since the last issue), welcome to my e-zine!

You should be on this list only if you signed up for it on my web site. If you no longer wish to hear from me, don't be shy -- there's a link at the bottom of this email that will put you out of your misery.

If you missed a back issue, remember that all previous issues are archived on my web site at:
<http://www.AdvancedFictionWriting.com/ezine>

What's in this issue:

I believe that success in fiction writing comes from balancing three aspects of the writing life: organization, creativity, and marketing. I'll discuss each of these in one of my regular columns.

In the organization column, I'll talk about the one question everybody will ask you about your book. This is the scariest question that can possibly be asked, and you MUST have an answer. Do you know what it is?

In the creativity column, I'll talk about the classic dilemma all novelists face when creating characters substantially different from ourselves.

In the marketing column, I'll talk about the three basic purposes of web sites. Do you know which is the most common one for writers?

In a bonus column, I'll talk about successful niche marketing. Every novelist has a niche, no matter what kind of fiction you write. Successful marketing means scratching your niche. I'll interview a guy who is scratching his niche as hard he can.

I will be speaking for 8 hours at a weekend seminar sponsored by the Idaho Writing League in Couer D'Alene on April 25 and 26 (Friday night and all day Saturday). If you're dying to hear me in person, this is your chance. For more info, click here:
<http://www.AdvancedFictionWriting.com/links/cda.php>

Are you reading my blog? If not, join the fun here:
<http://www.AdvancedFictionWriting.com/blog>

2) Organizing: The World's Scariest Question

Someday you'll be signing autographs for your novel at a Wal-Mart. A woman will wander past hauling three desperate-looking kids. She'll ask you where the bathroom is.

You won't have any idea, but you'll helpfully point in a random direction.

She'll hurry off with the brats in tow. Ten minutes later, she'll be back, having solved the immediate problem. She'll thank you for being helpful. Then she'll ask The World's Scariest Question:

"So," she'll say as she picks up your novel. "What's your book about?"

If you're a novelist, you can expect to answer this question about 500 times for each book you write.

You must have an answer to this question, because it's the difference between a sale and a pair of glazed eyes.

First, let me give you the wrong answer: "Well, see, there's this guy. And he works for the government and he's got a girlfriend. The girlfriend is mad at him for leaving Cheezits in his socks. Oh yeah, and his boss is, like, really mean. And one of his co-workers is doing pretty bad stuff, and he's just about to figure out what it is, when his girlfriend kicks him out--because of the Cheezits--and then, um, where was I?"

The correct answer is one like this: "My novel is about a Pentagon worker who blows the whistle on his boss for taking kickbacks from the President's cousin."

Or whatever your novel is about.

You must, you must, you MUST have an answer to this question. Your answer must be one sentence with as few words as possible. It must capture the flavor of your book. And you must memorize it.

Why all those "musts?" Because this "One-Sentence Summary" is the selling tool you will use for the entire life-cycle of your book, from the first gleam in the editor's eye until the last pitiful signing in Wal-Mart.

Remember that your book has to be sold about 7 times in order to be a commercial success:

- * You sell the idea to your editor.
- * Your editor sells the idea to the in-house committee
- * Your editor sells the idea to the sales force
- * The sales force sells the idea to bookstore buyers
- * The buyers sell the idea to bookstore sales staff
- * The sales staff sell the book to readers
- * Your readers sell the idea to their friends

If any of those links in the chain fail, then your book will either never make it to market or it won't sell well.

Let's be clear here: The selling tool that greases the skids on EACH link in the selling chain is your One-Sentence Summary.

You'll use your One-Sentence Summary when you (or your agent) pitches the idea to your editor.

Your editor will use it when she presents your book to the publishing committee (if the editor doesn't have the authority to buy a book).

Your editor will use your One-Sentence Summary again when the sales conference rolls around and she needs to get the sales team excited about your novel.

The sales team has maybe 30 seconds per book when they present books to buyers for the bookstores. That's enough time for your One-Sentence Summary plus a bit more.

And on and on it goes, with your One-Sentence Summary the tasty first bite all the way down the selling food-chain.

The last step in the selling chain is the most critical -- when your readers love your book and want to get their friends to buy it too. Everyone knows that word-of-mouth is the most powerful force in the universe for selling books. A One-Sentence Summary is a tool that your readers can use to tell their friends about you. But they can only do that if they HAVE a good One-Sentence Summary.

Who's going to give it to them? Trust me, your readers don't have a degree in marketing. They won't spend hours figuring out your One-Sentence Summary. They need for you to give it to them. You do that by giving it to your editor, who will make sure that it gets into the marketing copy.

What if you don't bother? Isn't it your marketing team's job to figure out how to sell your book?

Yes, of course it's their job. But nobody loves your baby like you do. Your marketing team may have 10 or 100 other babies to deal with. You only have the one. And you know your baby.

The simple fact is that if you don't come up with a compelling One-Sentence Summary, then somebody somewhere will come up with one anyway. But it most likely won't be the one you want. And once the marketing team comes up with a concept they like, they don't appreciate you horning in to do their job.

So if you want to do their job, you need to do it BEFORE they get their hands on it. You need to give them something so powerful that they wouldn't dream of changing it.

We've been discussing the One-Sentence Summary on my blog recently and I challenged my loyal blog readers to post their best shot. Around 60 of them did, and I've been critiquing them one by one.

I've asked one of my blog readers for permission to show his One-Sentence Summary here, along with my critique and my attempt to improve it, along with his final version.

Thanks to Livinus Nosike for giving permission. He has

requested, of course, that nobody should steal his idea. I'll discuss in a minute why this is unlikely.

Here's what Livinus posted:

"African most endearing young researcher steals a secret manuscript, dating the time of the Algerian revolution against French occupation, to track down the leader of a weird anti-western civilisation movement and win the \$120m reward the US is offering, little knowing who was behind the offer of his research grant and why."

Livinus noted in his post that he knew this was too long, but he wanted me to tighten it up so we can all learn from it.

Here's my critique of his One-Sentence Summary:

Randy sez: Yes, this is way long. There are some nice points to it, but I count 53 words and 5 distinct plot ideas. That is about 40 words and 4 plot ideas too many.

What's good here? Lots. For starters, we have a fairly unique character (at least to US readers), a "young African researcher." I'd be interested to know what kind of researcher. Livinus knows, but I don't, so I'm going to supply a possible specific example out of many. I'm going to make him a political scientist, for no good reason, just because.

So now we've got a lead character: "A young African political scientist".

Good, what's next? Well, we've got way too many plot threads here, so let's trim. What's the most important thing going on here? This researcher is pursuing Somebody Bad. Let's trim up the description of that Somebody. There are a lot of choices, but I'm going to use "shadowy anti-Western militant". That has some good hypey words in it, familiar to everybody who reads this genre, which is "spooky conspiracy suspense novel".

OK, so we've got a Good Guy and a Bad Guy. Now let's add a verb and a motive.

The verb is easy: "tracks". The other possible alternative is "pursues". Both of them are good, strong verbs. Both are overused, but in this genre, we aren't LOOKING for new verbs. We're looking for explosions, car chases, and secrets. Livinus will deliver those, we hope.

The motive is also easy: "\$120 million." Yeah, that gets most people's attention. There was a study once that showed that the average person would be willing to kill a stranger for less than \$10 million. So \$120 Big Boys will motivate our researcher Good Guy.

Let's put all this together and see what we've got so far:

"A young African political scientist tracks a shadowy anti-Western militant for a \$120 million reward."

We've now got 16 words, 2 characters, 1 plot, and we're almost there. I'd say to make "African" more specific. This is up to Livinus, who actually knows the story. What kind of African do we have here? Nigerian? Ghanaian? Zimbabwean? South African? Being specific says that you have done your research. It tells people that you know something about one particular culture within Africa. It says that you know something about political science (or whatever the specialty of your researcher).

When you use vague words, it sounds like you're just pulling stuff out of your ear. For that matter, it might be nice to get a little more specific about that Bad Guy. Islamic Bad Guys have been overdone lately, so what do we have left? I'm not sure, but I'll bet Livinus knows. Let's see a 2 or 3 word description of a Bad Guy who hasn't been done. That would get any editor's attention.

After reading this, Livinus sharpened it up to:

"A young Nigerian environmental scientist tracks a shadowy anti-Western militant for a \$120 million reward."

This is more compelling because (as I discovered by tracking back Livinus on my blog) he is a Nigerian geoscientist. So he is writing what he knows.

Writing what you know, by the way, is your best defense against people who want to "steal your idea." Suppose I decided to steal this idea from Livinus and run with it. Could I do that?

Maybe, but not very well. I know almost nothing about Nigeria, so I'd need to do a boatload of research. But no matter how much research I did, I'd know in my gut that I'm still way behind Livinus. And I already have a ton of book ideas of my own. I'd be crazy to steal his idea. So would you. So would anyone except someone very much like Livinus.

Final comments: I would still like to see that "anti-Western militant" sharpened up a bit also. At that point, Livinus would have himself a very decent pitch. A One-Sentence Summary will get him to first base with editors who like this kind of novel. Whether Livinus can advance to second base will depend on how well he writes.

That's the point of a One-Sentence Summary: It gets you to first base. After that, you still need to score, and you do that with excellent writing. But you'll never

score at all if you don't make it to first base.

3) Creating: The Novelist's Dilemma

Let's imagine you're writing a novel and you've got a great idea for a character. This character happens to be quite similar to you, but not identical. (That is, you haven't fallen into the trap of writing an autobiographical novel.)

Your character is a strong, deep character, well-motivated, with solid values. Most importantly, he's unique. There's nobody quite like him in literature.

Congratulations! That's great. Now you need two or three more of those and you've got yourself the ingredients for a really terrific novel.

The problem is that those two or three others need to be different from that first character. Which means they need to be quite a bit different from you.

In all likelihood, one or more of those characters are going to have made different "choices" than you have for such things as gender, ethnicity, hometown, worldview, religion, occupation, political philosophy, education, and many other aspects of your character.

Now you have a problem child. This character of yours is likely to be very different from you in some Xtremely important ways.

Let's keep this simple and make the character different from you in only one of these critical ways. If you're a woman, then we'll assume your character is a man who has the same ethnicity as you do, same hometown, worldview, religion, occupation, politics, education, etc.

Should be simple, right? This character is almost you, except he's a man and you're a woman. So you decide to follow that good old advice about "writing what you know" and you make him quite similar to you, except of course that he's a man. Very simple.

Well, no. It's not simple. Just because your character uses the men's room doesn't make him authentically a guy. If he acts, talks, and thinks like a woman, then your readers are going to complain that "real men don't act like that." And they'll be right. MOST men don't act like that. There are real differences between men and women.

Ouch! You've just been gored by the first horn of the Novelist's Dilemma. Because it's not always possible to "write what you know."

You may think it's easy to fix this problem. All you have to do is research a list of all the ways that men and women are different. Then just make your male character "act like a real man."

As an example, you discover that the average height of an adult man in America is 5'9". (For you metric folks, that's 175 cm.) So you make your character that height or close to it.

Your research tells you that men don't ask for directions, so your character never asks for directions either.

You learn that men have something called a "male ego," so you give your character a good strong ego.

You find that men are "visual," so you give your man a roving eye for the ladies.

Tick, tick, tick, right down the list, you make your character "typical" in every way. How he thinks, how he acts, the words he uses, the beer he drinks, the chips he likes to eat, the sports he likes.

When you get done, you've got a perfectly "typical" guy in every respect. But now you get gored by the other horn of the Novelist's Dilemma: Your readers are going to scream that you've created a stereotype. And they'll be right.

Where did you go wrong? You did your homework. You really nailed your character. He's exactly a "manly guy" in every way. Why are you getting hammered for writing a stereotype?

The answer is because you wrote a stereotype. You deserve to get hammered for that.

What, exactly, is a stereotype? The term gets thrown around a lot, but it rarely gets defined. For our purposes, we'll define a stereotyped character as one who is "in every single way typical of the class he belongs to."

And what's wrong with that?

There are plenty of wrongs, but we'll focus on two.

The first wrong is that a stereotype is boring.

The second wrong is that, mathematically, it's extremely rare to find any individual who is typical in every single way. (It's even more rare to find one who is atypical in every single way, which is why your readers complain if your character doesn't act like a

"real man" -- or whatever class he comes from.)

I won't do the math here, but it involves probability distributions of independent variables in a parameter space of high dimension. If you know the meaning of that sentence, then you are one sick geek, but you will also instantly see that I'm right.

The fact is that NOBODY is "typical in every way." If you are a man, then you are likely to behave like a typical man in many ways, but there are bound to be a few ways in which you behave more like the typical woman. If you're a woman, you'll likely behave like a woman in most ways, but there will be a few points on which you're more like the average guy.

The same goes for all those other ways we classify people. Race, religion, political party, geography, education, occupation -- each of these defines a group of people who are similar in certain ways.

But the key point is that none of these groups has any members who always fit the stereotype for that group. If you look hard enough, every member of any group is different in some significant way from the average.

You can use this to help you create your characters. For each character, do the following:

- * Define the major classifications for the character -- gender, race, religion, etc., right on down the list.
- * Do your research and know the stereotypical behavior of each classification for that character.
- * Make your character "typical" in most ways.
- * Make your character violate the stereotype in several significant ways.
- * When writing your character, make sure he shows some awareness of any stereotypes he is violating. The more severe the violation, the more awareness (and conflict) the character should show.

The nice thing is that there are almost an infinite number of ways to choose how each character will violate his stereotypes.

Again, there is a whole mathematical theory behind this which I am too darned lazy to explain here. If you know anything about combinatorics, (you geeks know who you are), then you won't need any explanation anyway.

If you execute this strategy well, you'll dodge both horns of the Novelist's Dilemma. Your men will be men and your women will be women. But they'll be real people, not stereotypes.

When you accept your Nobel Prize, you will of course

acknowledge me for teaching you about those pesky probability distributions of independent variables in parameter spaces of high dimension.

I'll be there to watch you accept your award. Look for the angry guy sitting in the back muttering, "That Nobel is rightfully MINE!" to anyone who'll listen.

4) Marketing: Web Sites and Blogging, Part 3

In the last couple of months, I've talked extensively about the fundamental things you should be thinking about before you create a web site or a blog. In this issue, I want to focus on purpose.

As a writer, you want a "purpose-driven site." (After all, what would be the purpose of a non-purpose-driven site?)

I believe there are three main purposes that a writer's web site or blog can have:

- * Product sales
- * Lead development
- * Brand recognition

A "product sales" web site would be one that actually sells your products -- either your books or related products or both.

A "lead development" web site would be one that focuses on collecting "leads" -- in this case, a database of e-mail addresses of readers who are interested in the kind of books you write.

A "brand recognition" web site would be one that raises the consciousness of that pesky world about who you are and what you write.

You may be asking, "Can't I have a site that does all three of those?"

The answer is yes, you can do that. Multi-billion dollar businesses have web sites that do all three of those things. Take a look at Apple's web site, for example. All of its products are for sale there. If you're a software developer, you can get free software tools and join Apple's developer mailing list. And the entire site has a clean, elegant look that screams, "Apple products are clean, elegant, and cool!"

For an example of an author who does all of the above, see Scott Adams' web site. Scott is "the Dilbert Guy" and his web site is here: <http://www.dilbert.com>

On that site, you can buy Dilbert products. You can sign up for the newsletter of the DNRC -- the "Dogbert New Ruling Class" -- which is one of the few e-zines that I read the instant it hits my in-box because the humor is so hot, it might burn a hole in my hard-drive otherwise. And the entire site is done in the outrageously funny Dilbert style, helping build "top of mind brand awareness" for the Dilbert brand.

Many writers do in fact try to make their sites serve all three of these purposes.

It's very common to see a site with Amazon links, and sometimes even an order form for actual books that the author sends out.

It's much more common to see a site trying to do lead development. Most writers have a "Join my newsletter" box on their web site.

The most common type of site for a writer is a brand recognition site. "Here's who I am, here's what I write, and here's a list of my books." I often refer to this kind of site as a "brochure site" because it has the feel of a glossy brochure.

In fact, I recommend that a writer should shoot for product sales AND lead development AND brand recognition. Eventually.

But there is such a thing as trying for too much too fast.

I suspect that if you polled authors, asking which works better on a web site, product sales, lead development, or brand recognition, the very angry answer you'd get is: "None of the above. I shelled out a lot of money for my web site and it earns me diddly!"

So the key question is what should you shoot for first?

That's a tough question, and there's probably no best answer that fits every author, but I'm going to take a stand anyway. I'll give you the answer that I believe an author should pursue FIRST:

The first goal of an author's web site or blog should be lead development.

What that amounts to is building an e-mail database of people who are interested in the sort of thing you write.

Here's my logic. You have two other choices: product sales or brand recognition. Let's look at each of these.

Should product sales be your first goal? No. You do NOT want to be in the business of buying books at

wholesale, selling them at retail, putting them in envelopes, addressing them, stamping them, and putting them in the mail. That is a tedious, low-margin, low-wage job. If you like that sort of thing, then there are many tedious, low-risk, low-wage jobs where an employer will pay you EVERY MONTH to do that work. So why create for yourself a tedious, HIGH-RISK, low-wage job?

Should brand recognition be your first goal? No. You may not even know what your "brand" is yet. Or you may want to change it next year. Or after three books. Branding is good. I believe in branding. I've put very considerable effort into branding myself. But let's be brutally clear: Focusing on branding FIRST is just way too Nineties.

When your next book launches, your marketing director is not going to care that you can sell your book on your web site. She will be somewhat interested that your web site has a nice brand (or even a logo).

She will be ECSTATIC if you have an e-mail list of 5,000 interested readers whom you can tell about your book in the last few weeks before your book launches. If you have 50,000 names on that list, you will be a hero to your publisher. If, like Scott Adams, you have half a million names on your list ... you won't need anyone to tell you you're a superstar.

Am I right? Ask your marketing director. Then tune in again next month when I talk about building your e-mail list. There are a thousand ways to do this. I'll focus on the basics, which will be plenty.

See ya then!

5) Interview: Scratching that Niche

No matter what kind of book you write, you are still writing for a niche market.

Want proof of that? The Harry Potter books have sold tens of millions of copies, in total. With seven books in the series, that works out to roughly ten million copies for each book. Figure that three to five readers read each copy. So J.K. Rowling writes for an audience of about 30 to 50 million people.

That is still less than 1% of the world population. A niche market. Pity poor J.K., writing for such a small corner of the world, but don't pity her too much. You write for a niche too, and I'll bet yours is no bigger than hers.

What is important for any writer is to know what niche you serve and to reach it as well as possible.

That is one reason I'm so interested in the efforts of my friend Jeff Gerke, who is working hard to corner the market on a niche nobody else wants. I interviewed Jeff in this e-zine in December.

I've decided to interview him again, because his marketing efforts might well benefit you -- even if you are totally uninterested in his niche.

Let's get it out there in the open right away. Would you like an all-expenses-paid trip to the 2009 ComicCon in San Diego? If so, read on, because that is the grand prize Jeff is offering.

The San Diego ComicCon is huge in the science fiction and fantasy world. I've never been to it, because, quite honestly, SF&F isn't really up my alley. But lotsa people love it.

If you remember my December interview with Jeff, you'll know that Jeff is shooting for a difficult corner of the SF&F market -- he's launching a new SF&F publishing company targeted at Christian readers. So he's building an e-mail list of readers now.

The interesting thing here is that Jeff's prize isn't solely for Christian readers of SF&F. (That's a small niche.)

Jeff's prize is for anyone who helps him build his list, whether they are interested in his books or not. So anyone who'd like to go to ComicCon 2009 in San Diego should be interested in helping Jeff. (That's a much bigger niche.)

Here's the key point: The more people you refer to Jeff's list, the more chances you have at winning his prize.

In this interview, I'll ask Jeff to tell us all about his new publishing venture and his grand prize:

Q: Jeff, why should there be a Christian publisher for SF&F? Why not let the general market publish this kind of fiction, since it does it so well already?

A: The impulse behind Christian speculative fiction is the same as the impulse behind Christian fiction of any kind. Christian readers want fiction that springs from their worldview and doesn't offend them. Christians who love science fiction and fantasy would like to enjoy those kinds of stories without being told that God is a moron or having to endure a book full of objectionable content.

We're all the same in that sense, Christian or otherwise. Let's say we're Americans who love our country but the world produces nothing but anti-American fiction. We might appreciate the great writing or the timeless themes in those books, but how great it would be to read something that didn't assault our sensibilities on every page.

It isn't just the absence of offensive material that makes Christian speculative fiction attractive to Christian readers, though. It's also the presence of Christian content that they like. The Christian imagination, set loose in speculative fiction, is a wondrous thing. And it is the reader with an awakened spiritual dimension who can best enjoy the flights of fancy speculative fiction takes us on.

It's an interesting historical shift we've seen in the last few centuries. For a millennium at least the only acceptable art was Christian art. Then we had the Enlightenment and the rest, and now Christian art is seen as a sub-genre of "real" art.

Christians who love speculative fiction will go on enjoying the novels put out by the general market. But many of them yearn for an expression of the Christian imagination and authors that can take us to places that secular authors simply don't know how to get to.

Q: You've chosen a unique financial arrangement with your authors. Can you describe that and explain why you chose it, rather than the conventional royalty rates?

A: In a conventional publishing model, the publishing company pays the author very little. A typical royalty rate is something in the range of 14-22% of retail or about half that of wholesale. This is because the publisher has such a big overhead and low profit margin. They'll pay an advance to the author, but the book's sales must recoup that advance before the author begins receiving royalty checks. Most books don't break even, much less make money.

Many publishers operate right on the edge of the red. If they don't have a blockbuster to come make up for the 99% of their books that bomb, they'll be in trouble quick.

In my model, the author and publisher split the royalties 50/50 -- after the publisher recoups the expenses of producing the book. My overhead is very low, as are my expenses. The profit margin is much higher for all parties -- partly because there are no distributors or bookstores or other middlemen taking their cut. The author receives no advance but begins receiving profits as soon as the book breaks even on production costs. Everybody wins.

Q: Your first set of books will release in October, 2008. How do you intend to market your books on behalf of your authors?

A: My main marketing effort revolves around a prize drawing on Launch Day, October 1, 2008. We're giving away dozens of prizes, including speculative artwork, signed sets of novels by authors like Jerry B. Jenkins, and other goodies. But the main prize is the real pull. We'll be sending one winner and a guest to the 2009 ComicCON convention in San Diego. I've been to ComicCON and I can guarantee that someone who loves science fiction and fantasy will love this prize.

I'm spreading the word about the drawing through all the means at my disposal, including interviews like this. People are motivated to spread the word because for every person who registers for the prize and lists someone as referrer, that referrer's name is entered into the drawing an additional time. The more people you tell, the better your own chances of winning that trip.

I'm also working with many Web sites and blogs dedicated to Christian speculative fiction to create a real ruckus about Marcher Lord Press in the month before launch. We'll be having reviews, interviews, profiles, and other cool stuff to get the momentum peaking at just the right time.

I'm also working to get the launch novels reviewed by Library Journal, which would greatly increase the books' exposure.

Q: You're offering a number of prizes to people who sign up for your email list. Does somebody have to be a Christian to win? How do you check?

A: LOL. No, you don't have to be a Christian to enter or win. It's open to all.

Q: What will be exciting about the day of the launch?

A: Well, the main thing will be the prize drawing, of course. It's my goal to have 100 prizes to give away, so there will be lots of happy winners -- and not just the lucky one going to ComicCON.

But I'm also developing some nonfiction books (in electronic form) that will be given away for free when people purchase Marcher Lord Press novels on Launch Day. The first is an introduction to the historical marcher lords and their castles, which were the inspiration for the name of the press. **IN THE BREACH: MARCHER LORDS IN HISTORY AND LEGEND** is being written by castles expert Lise Hull, author of *The Great Castles of Britain and Ireland*.

The second is something I'm calling a virtual coffee table art book. I've invited all the Christian artists I know who produce speculative art to contribute original and existing pieces to this book. I've already got commitments from professional and amateur artists, including space artist Frank Hettick, and I have dozens more considering it.

Both of these books will be available for paid download on days after the launch of Marcher Lord Press. But on Launch Day, they'll be available for free download. Purchase one Marcher Lord Press novel on Launch Day and receive IN THE BREACH for free. Purchase two or more MLP novels on Launch Day and receive IN THE BREACH and the art book. Sweet deal, huh?

Q: Can you tell us what your opening lineup of books will be?

A: Absolutely! SUMMA ELVETICA is a philosophical fantasy about what would happen if something like the medieval Catholic Church existed in a fantasy world and had to decide whether Elves have souls.

THE PERSONIFID INVASION is a science fiction novel in which humans can transfer their consciousness into artificial (personifid) bodies, and thus live forever. The problem comes when certain "negative energy entities" discover that personifid bodies would make good homes for them, too.

And HERO, SECOND CLASS is a comic fantasy in which our lovable young hero wants nothing more than to become a true Hero (in the Heroes' Guild, of course) but must first overcome wise-cracking dragons, droll zombies, and a Villains' Guild that has a personal interest in keeping this hero down. Plus his girlfriend is kind of a cat.

Q: Where can readers sign up for those prizes and learn more about these books?

A: At <http://www.MarcherLordPress.com>. All are welcome. And tell your friends and neighbors to sign up, too!

Thanks, Jeff, for bringing us up to speed on your efforts!

For my readers, let me point out something cool about Jeff's marketing plan here.

You might be wondering, what's the catch here? If you don't have to be a Christian to sign up for Jeff's prize, then why does he let you enter?

The answer is that even if you're not likely to buy Jeff's books, you probably have a friend who IS a

likely customer. By referring that person to Jeff, you help both Jeff and your friend. Jeff's way of rewarding you is to give you an increased shot at winning his grand prize.

That's fair to everybody.

6) What's New At AdvancedFictionWriting.com

It's been a quiet month for me. I spent 9 days on the road, in two separate trips. The first one was to Minneapolis to help plan a writing conference coming up in September. The second was to teach at a conference in California.

I'll be teaching a weekend workshop for the Idaho Writer's League in fabulous Couer D'Alene on April 25 and 26.

I'm looking forward to this! I'll be teaching eight solid hours on the craft and marketing of fiction. I will ALSO be doing paid critiques of sample chapters OR web sites. I will ALSO be giving steep discounts on some of my products. Those discounts will add up to more than the cost of the workshop.

For complete info on this, click this link:
<http://www.AdvancedFictionWriting.com/links/cda.php>

7) Steal This E-zine!

This E-zine is free, and I personally guarantee it's worth at least 66517 times what you paid for it. I invite you to "steal" it, but only if you do it nicely . . .

Distasteful legal babble: This E-zine is copyright Randall Ingermanson, 2008.

Extremely tasteful postscript: I encourage you to email this E-zine to any writer friends of yours who might benefit from it. I only ask that you email the whole thing, not bits and pieces. Otherwise, you'll be getting desperate calls at midnight from your friends asking where they can get their own free subscription.

At the moment, there is one place to subscribe:
My fiction site: <http://www.AdvancedFictionWriting.com>

8) Reprint Rights

Permission is granted to use any of the articles in this e-zine in your own e-zine or web site, as long as you include the following blurb with it:

Award-winning novelist Randy Ingermanson, "the Snowflake Guy," publishes the Advanced Fiction Writing E-zine, with more than 11,000 readers, every month. If you want to learn the craft and marketing of fiction, AND make your writing more valuable to editors, AND have FUN doing it, visit <http://www.AdvancedFictionWriting.com>.

Download your free Special Report on Tiger Marketing and get a free 5-Day Course in How To Publish a Novel.

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Publisher, Advanced Fiction Writing E-zine
