

The Writers Network News, August 2015

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The Writers Network is an organization for writers everywhere.
No Fees. No Demands. No Rules; Just Write!

The Writers Network News
Editor: Bobbie Christmas

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Follow my Write In Style creative-writing blog at <http://bobbiechristmas.blogspot.com/>

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Meet Fellow Writers

Do you live in or visit metro Atlanta? Sign up for local meeting notices today! Send your name and e-mail address to [Bobbie@zebraeditor.com](mailto:Bobbie@zebraeditor.com).

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Note: I have shortened some links in this newsletter with the help of www.tinyurl.com, a free service that takes long web addresses and converts them to short ones.

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Writer's Quote of the Month

Virginia Woolf, novelist and one of the greatest essayists of her generation, wrote the following: "So long as you write what you wish to write, that is all that matters; and whether it matters for ages or only for hours, nobody can say. But to sacrifice a hair of the head of your vision, a shade of its color, in deference to some headmaster with a silver pot in his hand or to some professor with a measuring rod up his sleeve, is the most abject treachery."

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One: From the editor's desk: Climb Every Mountain

Dear Fellow Writers:

Whew! In late June and early July I spent two weeks in Greece, a country many of my friends had toured, but I had not. I'd eaten and enjoyed Greek cuisine at many restaurants in America. I'd seen photos of Santorini, with its whitewashed walls and blue-domed churches abutting calm, azure waters. In history books I'd read about Delphi, Olympia, and the Parthenon, and I'd been to the British National Museum and seen the artwork taken from the Parthenon, but never had my foot stepped on Grecian soil. I decided it was time for me to stop enjoying Greece from a distance, so I signed up for a trip that sounded exactly what I wanted. The literature listed quite a few cities we would visit and even more sites we would see, so more than six months ago, I committed to the trip.

The price wasn't cheap, but I had six months to pay, so I did not let the price deter me. I find it difficult to stay away from home for two weeks, but I did not let the schedule dissuade me. The flight would be long and hard, but I decided not to let the travel difficulties stop me. As the time drew nigh, my brother-in-law grew ill, but my sister said that no matter what, I should not put off the vacation I'd been planning for half a year. After my sweet brother-in-law passed away, though, his Celebration of Life was scheduled on the very day my flight was leaving. What to do? My siblings still insisted that I leave, even though I missed seeing family members who came from far and wide to honor a man we all loved dearly.

I was going to Greece. Nothing could stop me.

Our group arrived jet lagged, exhausted, and sleep deprived, but before we could sleep, we had an orientation meeting to attend, which

turned out to be vital to our understanding of the country. Next we climbed aboard a bus that took us near our dinner destination. Dinner? It was noon by my body clock, but eight at night in Athens, but off we went. Dropped off at a curb on a busy road, we were then led by foot up through steep, narrow, balance-challenging cobblestone streets. Up, up, up we went, sometimes with motorcycles whizzing by only inches away, until huffing and puffing, we arrived at our dinner destination. Dinner was a long, slow, entertaining, and delicious affair, accompanied by Greek music and dancers that amazed me. Closer to ten o'clock than I would have liked, we left the restaurant and made our winding, rocky, harrowing way back down to the bus. Only then did the tour director explain that Greece is not a flat country. We would, in the next two weeks, spend much of our time walking up and down hills. Prior to signing up for the trip I had not been told how strenuous the trip would be. Nothing explained that every historic site, every town, every restaurant we visited, and even every restroom would require not only a great deal of walking, but also usually involved stairs, ramps, and steep hills. By the second day of climbing to the tops of large hills, I wondered if I could go any farther, and that's when I learned that the two monasteries we were going to visit the next day both sat atop immense tall rocks that once gave the priests and nuns sanctuary and security. One monastery had almost 200 stairs leading up to it; the other was almost as high, and we had to come back down those stairs, as well.

Let me pause a moment here to say that in 2001 I broke my leg walking down stairs, and to this day not only am I paranoid about stairs, but I also never fully regained my prior balance. In addition, my aging hips hurt, I have arthritis in my feet, and my knee gives out from time to time. To say I was worried that I would either hurt myself or be unable to endure every trek was an understatement. I often stared up at some hill or other that we had to climb and thought, "I'll never make it," yet every day, every time, again and again, I saw, I climbed, I conquered.

Those of us with low risk tolerance and high age rarely push ourselves, but I pushed through, and I made it to every site, every time. I came home and found I'd lost five pounds, garnered more than 600 beautiful photographs, and gained memories to last a lifetime.

The experience made me think of how long I put off revising, updating, and expanding Write In Style, despite the huge success of the first edition. I viewed the project as too overwhelming. My only version of the first edition was on a badly corrupted file with much garbage that had to be deleted character by character. I knew much more than when I wrote the first book in 2003, and I would want to add my fresh knowledge to a second edition. The computer-related information needed to be updated, too. Everything would then have to be edited again and proofed and then designed and printed, because this time I would not sell it to a publisher; I would self-publish. All those requirements daunted me, stopped me from working on a second edition, even though writers and teachers of creative writing begged me to re-release the book.

A friend challenged me to launch the second edition Write In Style at a convention planned in June, though, and voila! I had a goal and a deadline, and by golly, I met it. Now the book is selling swiftly, wherever I speak as well as on the BookLogix and Amazon sites.

We writers should push ourselves more often. Good things happen when we do. I accomplished a great deal when I released the second edition of Write In Style, and the book is helping writers across America, Canada, and Australia find their fresh voice and write more creatively. I faced my fears and tackled every trek in Greece and benefitted in more ways than I expected. Mountaineer and explorer Sir Edmund Hillary summed up my feelings when he said, "It is not the mountain we conquer but ourselves."

What will you conquer this month?

Yours in writing,

Bobbie Christmas (Bobbie@zebraeditor.com or bzebra@aol.com)

Author of Write In Style, owner of Zebra Communications, director of The Writers Network, and coordinator of the Florida Writers Association Editors Helping Writers service.

If someone forwarded this newsletter to you, please sign up to get your own copy. Simply go to www.zebraeditor.com, click on Free Newsletter, and follow the prompts. I never share your address or send out spam.

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Two: Ask the Book Doctor about Following Your Passion

By Bobbie Christmas

Q: Is there anything wrong with incorporating real live events that have happened to me in a nonfiction love story? Is this a stupid question?

A: A question is a question, without any qualifying terms. If you don't know the answer, it's not a stupid question. We all started somewhere, and we will go nowhere if we don't ask questions, get answers, and keep learning.

First, though, I think there may be some confusion between fiction and nonfiction. Nonfiction reports actual events, so incorporating real events in nonfiction would be expected.

Perhaps the intended question was whether it is okay to incorporate real events into a story that is otherwise fiction. If that's the question, trust me, almost all fiction writers begin by fictionalizing real stories. We take events we have experienced or heard about and turn them into plots or scenes in our fiction. You won't be the first to do it or the last. Many dramatic television shows are based on stories from the news.

I encourage people to start their novels and short stories from real-life experiences, because those are the events we know, the ones we feel passionate about, the ones we want to understand. We lived those scenes, so we can describe them in action and dialogue without difficulty.

If you have concerns about offending someone, change the names and circumstances enough to disguise them, but keep writing.

Q: This isn't so much a question as a statement. I've decided to unsubscribe to your newsletter. It's not that your newsletter is not helpful. It's that the only writing I'm doing now is a weekly column in a local newspaper. I wrote a play that was produced once locally, but I don't know the contacts to get it produced again. I've written three self-published books and sold enough to get my money back—barely. I'm just tired of the downside of publishing.

A: I feel your pain. I've been in the writing business since the 1960s, and it's always up and down, mostly down. As I am sure you are aware, though, writing is a passion not driven by money. When your passion dissipates, it could be a sign of illness or depression. If such is not the case with you, I hope you'll turn again to newsletters and conferences for inspiration and information.

Oh, and don't forget that depending upon the rights you sell, you can collect your weekly columns and turn them into a book, too. Here's to finding your passion for writing again!

Q: I'm thinking about writing a controversial book regarding something I'm passionate about. There have probably been a number of books already written on this subject, and there is a ton of information about the subject on the Internet. I have two concerns. One, could plagiarism be involved if I take information from the Internet? My next concern has to do with the market. I wrote to some of the Internet websites for permission to use their material, and a person wrote back and claimed that books of this nature do not sell well, even if you are an experienced writer. Any thoughts?

A: By definition, plagiarism is the act of using someone else's words or ideas without giving credit to the originator. Although I am not an attorney, I interpret the definition to mean that we writers can use statistics, data, and research from any source, as long as we credit the source. We cannot, however, copy narrative information word for word; we must present the information in our own words.

As to the issue of marketability, obviously the subject goes against popular thinking, which means one of several things can happen. It could hit a controversial note, catch a publisher's eye, get published, get a great deal of publicity, and sell many copies. A few controversial books have done so. At the opposite end of the spectrum, it could be too controversial and not unique, and no traditional publisher will want to touch it. How can you guess which it will be?

Here's the thing to remember: Only one percent of all manuscripts written ever get traditionally published, but people keep writing books, and publishers keep buying them, so people who are passionate about their subject and diligent about polishing their writing and using good editors are still being successful. Self-publishing means you take all the risks, but you could reap all the benefits if the book becomes a hit.

Because of your passion for the subject, my suggestion is this: Instead of writing the whole book, write a proposal. Traditional publishers want a book proposal for nonfiction books, and proposals make the author research the market and estimate the size of the market as well as the size and toughness of the competition. Get a book on how to write a book proposal and perform all the research a proposal requires. Study the size of the market for yourself; don't count on hearsay from naysayers. Find other books on that subject and find out how they fared. Don't listen to one person's comment, which may have even been said out of jealousy. Go to the publishers of similar books and ask for sales statistics.

See what, if anything, you can do to make your book unique, better than others on the market, and more appealing to a broader audience. If you can't come up with a unique selling point, you may decide not to write the book, or you may decide to self-publish a small quantity and test the market, if you have an outlet for your book--that is, if you can find a way to reach into the niche market to which the book is geared.

Send your questions to Bobbie@ZebraEditor.com. Book Doctor Bobbie Christmas, owner of Zebra Communications, will answer your questions. Read more "Ask the Book Doctor" questions and answers at www.ZebraEditor.com.

The Small Publishers and Writers Network (SPAWN) website graciously hosts dozens of past "Ask the Book Doctor" columns. To catch up on many writing and editing tips, go to <http://www.spawn.org/editing/i/index.htm#bookdoctor>.

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Three: This Month's Easy Editing Tip(s) from Bobbie Christmas: Only

I have three tips regarding one word: "only." First, use "only" immediately in front of the word it should modify. Notice how moving it changes the meaning of a sentence: Only I had a slight injury. I only had a slight injury. I had only a slight injury. I had an only slight injury.

Second tip: In narrative don't use "only" to mean "except." Incorrect: He would have gone, only he was busy. Correct: He would have gone, except he was busy, or He would have gone, but he was busy.

Third tip: The use of the term "not only" begs for its pair, "but also." Avoid using the first without the last. Rarely acceptable: Not only did he drink, he drank excessively. Acceptable: Not only did he drink, but he also drank excessively.

Use my Find and Refine Method (use the Find function on your computer) to search for the word "only" in your manuscripts to be certain it is not only used correctly but is also placed correctly in the sentence, so the sentence reflects your true intent.

For more editing and creative writing tips, order *Purge Your Prose of Problems* here: <http://tinyurl.com/4ptjnr>.

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Four: Subjects of interest to writers

Find Your Fresh Voice, and You'll Write In Style

You asked for it, and it's finally here: The second edition of *Write In Style: How to use your computer to improve your writing*.

This updated, upgraded, and expanded edition of *Write In Style* teaches writers how to produce captivating and compelling prose and uncover their fresh voice, the type of voice contemporary publishers and readers demand. The second edition goes even further than the first edition in pointing out weak and overused phrases that writers can find, delete, or revise in their fiction and nonfiction manuscripts.

The first edition of *Write In Style* won awards and set thousands of writers on the path to publication. This expanded edition goes many steps beyond the first edition. This book is for anyone who writes novels, memoirs, short stories, how-to books, essays, business reports, advertising, and more.

To order your copy for \$14.95 + \$4.95 S/H for US order of 1 book shipped with standard shipping. \$7.95 S/H for US order of 1 book with Priority shipping. International Shipping varies.

To order, click here: <http://tinyurl.com/o4trud2>. You do not have to have a PayPal account to use this payment method; you need only a credit or debit card.

For questions about book orders, e-mail Customerservice@booklogix.com or call 470-239-8547 M-F 9 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. EST

Rather order through Amazon? Click here: <http://tinyurl.com/p7phk3x>.

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Atlanta Writers Club Fall Conference, November 6-7, 2015

Will I see you there? On Saturday, November 7, while the late-morning and early-afternoon critiques are held, author, writing coach, and book doctor Bobbie Christmas will provide two 75-minute talks: "Write in Style and You Write to Win" and "Write Your Memoirs for Fun and Profit." The conference consists of pitches, critiques, workshops, and panel discussions. You may participate in one, some, or all the events. For further details see <http://tinyurl.com/q6gd6p5>.

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I Need Your Book Review!

Are you one of the lucky folks who already bought the second edition of Write In Style? If so, I need your reviews! If you like the book, please go to <http://www.shop.booklogix.com/Write-In-Style-New-Edition-6295.htm> and write a review. If you didn't like the book, tell me why, and maybe I can help in some other way.

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Will I see you at the annual Florida Writers Association Conference in October?

Plan now to be at the 14th Annual Florida Writers Association Conference, October 15 - 18, 2015. The theme is "Changing Times," and the event takes place at the Hilton Orlando in Altamonte Springs, Florida. FWA always gives smooth-running and highly informative conferences, and I'm honored to be one of the speakers again this year. I hope to see you there. For details and registration, see the FWA website at [www.floridawriters.net](http://www.floridawriters.net).

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I'd Rather Be Writing

I have to cook, but my apron says "I'd Rather Be Writing." Find it and other gifts for yourself and friends at <http://tinyurl.com/nvh7dyu>.

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Terminology Writers Should Know: New Journalism

New Journalism is a term that describes journalism that reveals private facts or presents facts in a false light, more for sensationalism than for pure reportage. A portion of the tabloid reporting on celebrity activities falls under the label of new journalism and often, therefore, results in lawsuits and court battles.

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Carbonite saved me again! My desktop computer stopped connecting to the Internet right before I could send out the previous newsletter, but with my laptop I was able to retrieve the newsletter from Carbonite and send it to my subscribers anyway. My desktop is still in the shop, almost a full month later, but all the information I needed for this newsletter was still stored on Carbonite. Carbonite has saved me stress and strain more times than I can count. I'm glad I signed up for Carbonite, because it works seamlessly. I don't have to do or remember a thing, yet all my files are safely backed up, whenever I need to retrieve them, either on the same or a different computer. Follow this link to sign up, and you and I both get a \$20 gift card of our choice: <http://tinyurl.com/k9mb8r9>, but even if you don't use Carbonite, please be sure your computer is always backed up to a safe location separate from your computer, and preferably not even in your house.

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Purge Your Prose of Problems

A Book Doctor's Desk Reference, Fifth Edition

Save thousands of dollars and edit your own book! Order my proprietary book-doctor desk reference book online at <http://tinyurl.com/4ptjnr>.

In alphabetical order and in easy-to-understand language, Purge Your Prose of Problems covers all you need to know to revise and edit fiction and nonfiction books, including grammar, punctuation, word choices, creative writing, plot, pace, characterization, point of view, dialogue, Chicago style, format, and much more. The spiral binder lets the book lie flat in front of your computer, for easy use. Available printed or as a PDF e-book that allows you to keep all this vital information on your computer for ready reference.

The PDF e-book is the best deal. You get it immediately and pay no shipping. After you download the searchable PDF, it resides on your computer for the speediest reference, whenever you need it.

To save thousands of dollars by editing your own book, order Purge Your Prose of Problems today at <http://tinyurl.com/4ptjnr>.

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Did Author Solutions engage in a fraudulent scheme to sell worthless marketing services? The question and lawsuit continue. Read the latest Publishers Weekly report on the subject here: <http://tinyurl.com/p6rlpwp>.

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Do your writing friends a favor, at no charge! Tell them to subscribe to The Writers Network News by going to [www.zebraeditor.com](http://www.zebraeditor.com) and clicking on the yellow box at the top. To view back issues of this newsletter, go to <http://tinyurl.com/psnmp6p>.

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Free Reports for Writers

Go to http://zebraeditor.com/free_reports.shtml.

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Literary magazines do not make money, yet publishers keep producing them. Why? A NewYorker.com article explores the persistence of literary magazines. See <http://tinyurl.com/nrecuup>.

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Ask the Book Doctor: How to Beat the Competition and Sell Your Writing answers many of the questions you wish you could ask an editing expert. Whether you write books, short stories, articles, reports, or anything else, learn more about how to write, edit, and sell your work. Paperback: \$14.95 plus \$4.99 S & H (total: \$19.94 US) E-book: \$8.95, no S & H, with almost instant delivery. You will save almost \$10 by buying the e-book. To order either, go to <http://tinyurl.com/lexp7n>.

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Become my friend on Facebook and follow my adventures, opinions, and observations: <http://www.facebook.com/bobbie.christmas>. I have a separate Facebook page specifically for writers. Like and follow my Zebra Communications for writers here: <http://tinyurl.com/7vcxaxu>.

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Five: Contests, Agents, and Markets

The Baltimore Review
6514 Maplewood Rd.
Baltimore MD 21212
www.baltimorereview.org
Barbara Westwood Diehl, senior editor.

Each summer and winter issue includes a contest theme (see submissions guidelines for theme). Prizes are awarded for first, second, and third place among all categories—poetry, short stories, and creative nonfiction. All entries are considered for publication. Judged by the editors of The Baltimore Review and a guest, final judge.

Prizes: 1st Place: \$500, 2nd Place: \$200, 3rd Place: \$100. All entries are considered for publication.

Costs: \$10 entry fee

Deadlines: May 31 and November 30.

Needs: fiction, creative nonfiction, poetry, short stories

Open to all writers. Only unpublished work will be considered. Asks only for the right to publish the work for the first time.

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AcuteByDesign  
<http://acutebydesign.com/>

AcuteByDesign (AbyD) is a tiny publishing ensemble hidden in a garage in the valleys of Fairfield County, Connecticut. AbyD is dedicated to providing new, emerging and under-represented writers, illustrators, editors, social media marketers, and publisher wanna-be's the opportunity to actually be!

AbyD recruits from the ranks of those who wish to learn and grow in the publishing industry. We provide a platform for minorities, women, and others who are under-represented in the world of publishing to be heard through quality publishing.

AbyD creates books so that children of all races, cultures and religions can be touched by the gift of literature. We want our writers and illustrators to empower girls and boys as equals in their abilities to dream and to achieve as they have dreamed. Our books and illustrations should inspire children from struggling world countries to dream bigger than their circumstances while inspiring empathy in affluent children that we are in a connected world and somehow we must all be a part of its solution.

For more information and submission guidelines, see website.

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Gival Press Short Story Award
P.O. Box 3812
Arlington, VA 22203
<http://www.givalpress.com>
givalpress@yahoo.com
(703) 351-0079
Robert Giron, Editor

Deadline: August 8, 2015
Entry Fee: \$25

A prize of \$1,000 and publication on the Gival Press website is given annually for a short story. Submit a story of 5,000 to 15,000 words with a \$25 entry fee by August 8. Send an SASE, call, e-mail, or visit the website for complete guidelines.

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Claymore Awards  
<http://www.claymoreaward.com/>

More than \$3,000 in prizes, plus possible book advance and book publication, plus possible agent representation

Judges will consider any subgenre of mystery or thriller. Enter the first 50 pages of any unpublished literature in the genres listed on the website. For further information and submission guidelines, see the website.

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Eaton Literary Agency
P. O. Box 49795
Sarasota, Florida 34230-6795
USA

We charge no reading fees, ever, but we ask that the following submission guidelines be followed. After reading your material, we will either accept it for presentation to publishers on your behalf, return it to you if we feel we could not place it, or, if we feel the material has a good potential but needs work to bring it up to our marketing standards, offer editorial assistance.

We accept novels, nonfiction books, short stories, and articles for presentation to publishers. We do not handle poetry, fillers, children's material, stage plays, screenplays, newspaper material, partials, or queries. We must see your completed manuscript to make a decision. For full submission guidelines, see <http://www.eatonliterary.com/submissions.htm>. All qualified manuscript submissions to Eaton Literary Agency are automatically entered into the \$3,000 Eaton Literary Awards Program.

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Dogwood Literary Prize  
Fairfield University English Department  
1073 North Benson Road  
Fairfield, CT 06824  
(203) 254-4000, ext. 2565  
Carol Ann Davis, Editor  
<http://www.dogwoodliterary.com>  
[cdavis13@fairfield.edu](mailto:cdavis13@fairfield.edu)

Deadline: September 5, 2015  
Entry Fee: \$10

A prize of \$1,000 and publication in Dogwood is given annually for a poem, a short story, or an essay. Submit up to three poems totaling no more than 10 pages or up to 22 pages of prose with a \$10 entry fee by September 5. Visit the website for complete guidelines.

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Six: Got Muse? One Person's Trash is Another Person's Treasure

Think of something you threw away or donated recently. Maybe you donated a gift someone gave you, but you never used. We all throw away and give away things we no longer value, but those things may have value to someone else, and sometimes in surprising ways. After you consider the things you have recently discarded, think what could happen when someone gets one of those items. Could it be an aging computer that sets a student on the path to an education that results in a cure for a disease? Could it be a suit that someone uses to interview for a new job that becomes life changing? Perhaps you donated an old DVD player, and someone can use it to entertain a housebound patient who recovers and goes on to become a film director. Write a story about a discarded or donated item that changes someone's life in a positive, and perhaps even unexpected, way.

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Do YOU have news for The Writers Network News? Please send it in the body copy, not an attachment, to Bobbie@zebraeditor.com.

Deadline: The 15th of each month.

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Send a copy of this newsletter to all your writing friends. Tell them to join The Writers Network F-R-E-E by visiting [www.zebraeditor.com](http://www.zebraeditor.com) and clicking on Free Newsletter.

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With the exception of Zebra Communications, information in this newsletter is not to be construed as an endorsement. Be sure to research all information and study every stipulation before you accept assignments, spend money, or sell your work.

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