



As the Author Learns

Bits & bites about publishing & writing from

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books that defy categorizing

What's Happening?

Sometimes I think I turn around, blink, and two months have passed. How does that happen?

I went back through my calendar to see what I did in September and October and yes, I was busy! I had a lot of Master Gardener work to do in those two months. We're wrapping up seasonal projects now as well as planning for next year. Add in training every week with the next batch of MGs and it means I was thoroughly busy for the past two months.

I did manage to finish all the edits for *Whole*, which I hope will come out early next year. I also finished writing my Little Mermaid book, *Beached*. I struggled a bit with that one because I wasn't quite sure if I got my villain right. In the end, I had two villains and had to do some rewriting to make sure the bad things that happened were caused by the right villain (if you know what I mean).

I finished writing in September then started researching what to start on next. I reviewed a few fairy tales. They're *very* grim when you read the original versions, not the Disney sanitized versions. I could easily envision a few murders occurring during the course of some of those tales.

I started work on a Little Red Riding Hood book but stalled and decided to switch over to Cinderella. That one is coming along nicely. I'm in what I call my "percolation phase" where I gather thoughts for the history of my characters. What motivates them? What happened to them in the past? Most of that information never appears in the story but it tells me how they'll act or react during the story I'm writing.

Another thing I do (and I suspect most writers do this, too): I wait until I hear the voices in my head (yes, we are all a bit crazy). When I can envision a scene or a bit of dialog between the heroine and someone, I know I'm on the right track and that's the book I should be working on.

Once I knew Ash's background (Ash=Ashley, the heroine of my Cinder story), I could hear her voice in my head. She's a small organic farmer who shares her farm with an elderly man

who does wildlife rehabilitation, helping animals that are sick or injured. Where's the conflict? A wealthy developer is moving into the neighborhood and her property will be affected by run-off and herbicide encroachment. That will put her farm and the critters in jeopardy. Plus, she's a widow and her husband died (years earlier) from pesticide poisoning so she's passionate about landscape chemical use.

That's all it takes for me, sometimes--just the glimmer of an idea and I can visualize scenes in my head. I have six or seven thoughts about the classic ballroom scene, the "pumpkin" coach, the glass slipper, and all the fairy tale elements. Now I just have to figure out my victim and I'll be off and writing!

In Other News

In September I went to the Twin Cities for a fun weekend, checking in with my writing group there and having lunches and dinners with a variety of people from my work past. It's the first time I saw folks I used to work with last year and we had a lot of catching up to do.

Next, I want to take some time this fall to decide what to do with my returned books. My publisher gave me back rights to some of my earlier books (*If Not For You*, *Lie To Me*, *Shadow of Doubt*, *Brilliant Disguise*, and *Nowhere to Run*). I want to rework those so they all tie more closely together then release them as a boxed set next year.

Before I can do that, though, I need to figure out cohesive covers for them, edit them, re-edit them (because there's always more edits needed) then decide whether I'll do the formatting and releasing or if I'll hire someone to do it.

It's hard to take time away from creativity to work on the more mundane aspects of publishing, like the business stuff. But it has to be done and I need to just clear out a few days and make some decisions about how to proceed.



What's Next?

My annual gambling trip is coming up in a few days. I hope to get my Cinder story plotted and maybe figure out that Red Riding Hood dilemma I had. I always get excellent ideas from my plotting partners, with the added bonus that gambling will be done along the way (not to mention all the hilarity that ensues when you get a group of writers together, mix in some wine, and turn us loose).

If possible, I want to get Cinder done this year, so next year I can dig into the Endless American Dream series and prep that for publication--I know, you've heard about it for years and I am inching closer to releasing it--finally! It won't be next year, but possibly the year after that.

She said hopefully ... 😊