

DARA NEWS



Kris Bock

Fast Starts - How to Hook your Reader

Most editors, agents, and readers will judge a story on the first page or two. If you can't get their attention right away, you've lost that opportunity. Understand the promises your first chapter makes so you promise what you deliver and deliver what you promise. Then start with a "grab you by the throat" opening to hook readers on those opening pages. Learn how here!

Bio: Kris Bock writes romance and mystery with characters you'd like to know, often with smart, snarky heroines finding adventure in the Southwest. (Plus cats. Lots of cats.)

Kris has published 30 mystery and romance novels and over 100 books for young people under the name Chris Eboch. She is a popular writing teacher and developmental editor and the author of *Advanced Plotting*. Learn more at <https://chriseboch.com/> and <https://www.krisbock.com/>.



April 25, 2026 Meeting Information

Social Time: 9am. Business Meeting: 9:30 am. Speaker: 10am.

Non-members are invited to attend two (2) free meetings. If you want to attend a third meeting, you're required to join DARA and RWA. Go to [DARA's website](#) and click the button to register for the meetings. You'll receive an email with the Zoom link. The link and the recording will be sent to you with the email you register with.

President's Letter - *The Courage to Begin Again*

April is a month of movement.

Spring is no longer tentative the way it feels in March. The trees are budding. The days are brighter. The world seems to be stretching awake after a long winter.

And with that energy often comes a familiar feeling for writers: the urge to start something new.

A new story. A new idea. A new direction.

Beginnings are one of the most exciting parts of writing. There's a kind of electricity in those early moments when a story first takes shape—when characters start talking in your head, when scenes appear unexpectedly, when the possibilities feel endless.

But beginnings also require courage.

Because starting something new means stepping into uncertainty. It means writing pages that might not work. It means facing the blinking cursor again and asking yourself, *Can I really do this?*

Every writer in this community knows that question.

It appears when we start a new book. When we try a new genre. When we submit a manuscript. When we share our work with others.

The truth is, writing romance requires bravery in ways people outside our community sometimes don't see.

We're not just telling stories—we're exploring vulnerability, connection, and emotional truth. We're asking readers to believe in transformation, redemption, and love strong enough to overcome the obstacles we place in our characters' paths.

And to do that well, we have to risk something of ourselves on the page.

That can feel daunting.

But here's the beautiful paradox of writing: every time we begin again, we bring more experience with us.

Every story we write strengthens our craft. Every critique sharpens our instincts. Every rejection teaches resilience. Every finished manuscript proves we're capable of more than we thought.

In other words, there is no such thing as starting from scratch.

You are always beginning from experience.

One of the things I admire most about this chapter is the incredible range of journeys happening within it. Some members are writing their very first manuscript. Others have published multiple books. Some are experimenting with new genres, new formats, or new publishing paths.

What unites all of us is that we keep beginning again.

That willingness—to start a new project, learn a new skill, ask a new question—is what keeps writers growing.

And it's also what keeps our stories fresh.



Romance thrives on reinvention. New voices, new perspectives, new twists on beloved tropes. Readers return to this genre again and again because it continues to evolve while still holding fast to its promise of hope.

Our work as writers is to keep showing up for that promise.

Not perfectly.

But persistently.

April is a wonderful time to ask yourself a simple question:

What am I ready to begin?

Maybe it's a new manuscript. Maybe it's a revision you've been avoiding. Maybe it's submitting your work for the first time. Maybe it's volunteering within the chapter or attending a workshop that stretches your skills.

Or maybe the beginning you need most is simply this: giving yourself permission to start imperfectly.

Because imperfect beginnings lead to finished stories.

And finished stories lead to readers who find exactly the book they needed.

That's the quiet magic of what we do.

So as spring unfolds around us, I hope you'll embrace the spirit of the season and take that next brave step—whatever it looks like for you.

Write the first page.

Try the new idea.

Say yes to the possibility that your next story might be the one that surprises you most.

After all, every great love story begins with a single moment of courage.

Why should our writing journeys be any different?

—*Michelle Miles*

Speakers Booked for 2026

June - Alex Langley - *The Alex Langley Amazing, Spectacular, Uncanny Guide to Being a Professional Writer & Nerd.*

July - Lisa Rabey - *Introduction to Websites, Newsletters, and Blogs.* Building your online presence.

August - Aaron Ryan - *Properly writing and structuring Your Novel.* How to finalize your book and prepare for publishing

October - Karen Docter - *The "W" Plot...or The Other White Meat for Plotters.*

Member's Corner

A place to celebrate success, recognize our members, and welcome new members



Title: Raven's Wake
Author: L.E. Sterling
Genre: Romantasy / Fantasy Romance
Release Date: April 17, 2026
Available In: Kindle
First/Subsequent Sale: Subsequent

In a world of legends, some stories turn deadly.

It's been mere months since Nieve Septîle—once thought to be the only Talin born without water mage abilities—reopened Llyan's Gate and flooded magic back into the world. Nieve doesn't yet have a firm grasp on her new, godlike powers, and when Keir Manseray, the pirate mage who captured her heart, is attacked by mercenaries, she lets slip the fragile threads of her control. But how can she and Manseray make a life together if she is no better than a monster?

Pirate lord and water mage Keir Manseray doesn't want to part from his true love, even for a short time. Yet, Nieve needs time to learn control, while Manseray—a target of King Hyperion's war against magic—must act quickly, or see all that he loves suffer. But there are more dark forces at play than just Hyperion's soldiers. Lurking in the deep, destroying ships across the seven seas, is a terrifying creature that had long been relegated to stories. The Kraken has awakened, and she is claiming victims

When Vauna's priestesses are captured by Hyperion's forces, Nieve and Manseray are reunited—but their happiness is fleeting. To free the priestesses, they'll need to put aside the hunt for Kraken and return to the one place they hoped never to set foot again: Hyperion's Metal Court. But what is supposed to be a straightforward rescue mission quickly devolves into a desperate gambit for their lives. And soon, a slippery connection is revealed between the water beast and the king's realm.

Starling's Weave will be on sale for 99 cents April 3 - April 14, and apparently will be both the Kindle Daily Deal and a featured title on Book Bub's Teen and Young Adult list on April 7th. (My publisher set this up; I'm shocked).

Truth is more dangerous than fiction...in this exhilarating upper YA fantasy that will capture fans of *Shadow and Bone* and *Dark Water Daughter*.

Published by Entangled - Teen on October 21, 2024.

Inspired by a childhood roaming across Canada in a van, **L. E. Sterling** is the author of multiple novels spanning romance, fantasy, science fiction, dystopian fiction and YA. Holding a B.A. and M.A. in creative writing, Sterling also draws heavily on her Doctorate degree in literary magic to weave stories of fathomless depths, lyrical complexity, and arcane wonder. She lives in the French-speaking suburbs of Montreal, Quebec, where she enjoys the romantic, lost-in-translation life of an anglo ex-pat.



Member's Corner

A place to celebrate success, recognize our members, and welcome new members

Hello authors,

HBP moved our scheduled book signing due to a conflict.

Our new date is Sunday, July 26th.

Here are the details. Please email me at Janetleighbbooks@gmail.com if you are interested.

1:00–2:00 PM: Meet-and-greet, book sales, and signing

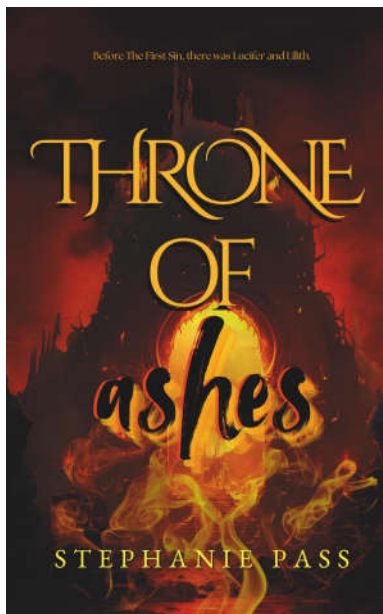
2:00–3:00 PM: Panel discussion, audience Q&A, and optional readings

3:00–4:00 PM: Additional time for sales and signing

If you are not yet published, please add this to your calendar so you can stop by and support your fellow DARA authors.

Hugs,

Janet Leigh



Title: Throne of Ashes

Author: Stephanie Pass

Genre: Dark Romance / Romantic Fantasy

Release Date: March 27, 2026

Available In: Paperback

First/Subsequent Sale: Subsequent

This isn't a love story. It's a betrayal.

Throne of Ashes is a dark romantasy prequel filled with fallen angels, morally gray rulers, and a love story destined to become a war.

Before he was ever the Devil, Lucifer Morningstar was Heaven's favorite son—its brightest archangel and most trusted servant. Until the day he fell.

Cast into Hell for a rebellion he cannot remember leading, Lucifer rules a kingdom of ash and fallen angels while haunted by a single, unsettling truth: he cannot remember the sin that damned him.

Then Lilith arrives. Defiant. Seductive. The only woman in creation who refuses to kneel to any man. Their alliance ignites something dangerous—power braided together with a blood bond strong enough to reshape the underworld itself.

But the deeper Lucifer builds his throne beside her, the more cracks appear in the story of his Fall.

And the greatest mistake Lucifer ever made may not have been his supposed rebellion—but the woman he chose to trust.

RWA 2026 Annual Conference

Why Attend?

- Inspiring workshops, deep dive sessions, and insider access sessions
- Pitch appointments with agents and editors actively acquiring romance manuscripts
- Networking events that bring writers and industry professionals together
- Author Book Signing open to the public
- Prestigious Golden Heart Awards, Diamond Heart Awards, and more at our Saturday Awards Dinner & Ceremony
- Marketplace featuring vendors July 16-18
- Exclusive discounts for local businesses and restaurants
- Plus... the always-popular **Scavenger Hunt** and unforgettable after-hours fun!



Tentative Conference Schedule Outline

- **Wednesday, July 15:** Retreats, Deep Dive Sessions, Chapter Expo, Welcome Reception
- **Thursday, July 16:** Workshops, Pitch Appointments, Vendor Marketplace, Evening Get Together with Featured Speaker, After Hours Networking & Fun
- **Friday, July 17:** Workshops, Pitch Appointments, Vendor Marketplace, Librarians & Booksellers Event, Evening Get Together with Featured Speaker, After Hours Networking & Fun
- **Saturday, July 18:** Workshops, Pitch Appointments, Vendor Marketplace, Author Book Signing, Awards Dinner & Ceremony, After Party Celebration

Conference Hotel

Embassy Suites by Hilton Albuquerque, 1000 Woodward PI NE, Albuquerque, NM 87102

Writing Sprints 2026 ZOOM Link

Janet Leigh host the Writing Sprints every Monday night at 7:30 CST. Look for the link in Circles and on DARA’s Facebook. Join the sprinting action on Zoom.

If you can’t click it, highlight the link and paste it in a browser.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86099936742?pwd=ApZiLtnB0J0PX30lcia4fHbHuXWeab.1>

Let us hear from you!



If you have ideas for DARA or would like to help us improve our organization, please share them with our board. Send your suggestions to info@dallasarearomanceauthors.com. We want to hear from you.

DARA Newsletter

Our Mission: DARA is focused on providing education and marketing opportunities to the members. With monthly programs on writing craft, publishing business, and writing tools, we strive to improve our writing skills. We support and encourage our members no matter their writing level.

DARA welcomes letters, comments, and articles on writing and publishing. The DARA News is seeking articles that cover self and traditional publishing, author interviews, genre and subgenre writing techniques, grammar, reports from conferences, marketing / promotions, social media, and many other writing advise and tips. You don't need to be a published author to submit an article. Send your submissions in MS Word format to Donna McGoldrick at dsmcgold@donnamcgold.com

The DARA News is published monthly from January through November. DARA does not publish a newsletter in December. **DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION is the 10th of each month.**

SUBMISSION POLICY

In the interest of good journalism the editor reserves the right to refuse or edit any material that could offend our readers and the right to edit to meet space requirements. Accuracy of the articles, announcements, and informative statements are the sole responsibility of the submitting author and not this publications or its supporting Executive Board. DARA does not endorse any person, firm, partnership, or corporation mentioned in this newsletter. Readers are urged to determine for themselves the reliability, integrity, and financial responsibility of those with whom they deal. DARA makes no warranties or representation, either expressed or implied.

To our sister Chapters: We invite you to use any part of our publication with proper credit to the author and chapter.

If you have a new release, send your information to Michelle Miles at mlmiles21@gmail.com.

Please include your name, the title, the genre, release date, format, and whether or not it's your first publication.



DARA's Website:

dallasarearomanceauthors.com

Mailing Address:

Dallas Area Romance Authors
PO Box 833092
Richardson, TX. 75083-3092

DARA Board of Directors for 2026

- President—Michelle Miles
- President Elect—Janet Leigh
- Treasurer—Donna McGoldrick
- Secretary—Lisa Fenley

DARA Leaders

- Program Coordinator—Jennifer August
- Membership—Donna McGoldrick
- Member Awards (Roses) - Michelle Miles
- Communications (Newsletter / Website) - Donna McGoldrick
- Pan Liaison—Open
- Pro Liaison—Open