

DARA NEWS



Wren Valentino

Creating an Effective Marketing Plan

Getting the word out about your new novel can be challenging. In this workshop, discover some strategic planning techniques and resources that can help you save time, energy, and money when promoting a new title.

Wren's Bio: As a bestselling author, Wren Valentino writes in multiple genres, primarily romance, thriller, young adult, and horror. Wren is the author of twenty novels including *Accidents Never Happen*, *The Everlasting Gift*, *Fast Beat*, *Gollan Grove*, *Love in the Shadows*, *Marijuana*

Mermaid, *Mesmerized*, *Motel Queen*, and *Sophomore* (Blue Dasher Press), the novelettes *Miss Nothing*, *Riding with James Dean*, and *Snap Shot*, and several short stories including the paranormal romance *I Think We're Alone Now*, the best selling Christmas romance *One Kiss From Mr. Christmas*, the award-winning Halloween romance *Pumpkin Love Charm*, and the holiday love story *Warming Up*. His collections of poetry include *Love and Detours*, *Souvenir Boys*, and *Walking in the Underground*. His literary work has appeared in *Atomic Flyswatter* (Long Shot Books), *Disquiet Arts*, *Halfway Down the Stairs*, *Powders Press*, *Regency Reflections* (Wingless Dreamer), and *Wicked Gay Ways*. Wren received a Pushcart Prize nomination for his poem *Cherry Drop*. For his short story *Home*, Wren was named an international finalist in the Jane Austen Writing Contest.

Wren graduated with honors from Oglethorpe University in Atlanta with a Bachelor of Arts in Communications and English. He earned a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing at Queens University of Charlotte in North Carolina. He is a graduate of the Professional Program in Screenwriting at UCLA. Wren has been an educator for twenty years. He is the founder and instructor of Workshops with Wren, a series of virtual writing workshops created for writers of all levels of experience, genres, and form. As a proud member of Contemporary Romance Writers, Wren serves as the elected VP of Programs. He is also an active member of Disney's D23, the International Screenwriters' Association (ISA), and the Romance Writers of America, who presented him with a Volunteer Service Award. He lives in Sacramento, California.



ACCIDENTS NEVER HAPPEN

Albert is a Puerto Rican amateur cruiserweight married to a woman who can't stand the sight of him. Joey, a college sophomore, claims he just watched his parents drive off a cliff after he bled the brakes of the family car. From the moment their broken lives collide beneath a train track on a street in Chicago, the two men can't deny their mutual attraction. The second they give in to their desires, a domino effect is triggered setting off a chain reaction of murder and tragedy.

President’s Letter

“Nature always wears the colors of the spirit.” — Ralph Waldo Emerson

April is the beginning of Spring and the beginning of new things. As winter moves out, and storms move on, my Red Oak is once again full with green leaves. The Irises and Roses are coming alive. I love roses and have seven different colored bushes around my house.



Spring is more than a season for nature’s colors to shine. I see spring as a symbol of renewal and revival. For most writers, spring is a time for creativity to bloom and inspiration to bring life into story ideas. There’s something about the sunshine that puts me in a happier mood making it easier to sit down and write.

The warmer weather seems to flip a switch in our brains, and we want to do spring cleaning. I’m not talking about house work, so stay away from closets. Clearing the mental clutter is spring cleaning to a writer where we make room for creativity to grow with new plots, new characters, and new worlds. A change of scenery can bring a fresh perspective to an old story you have put aside.



You can also take this time to try something new with your writing, such as:

- write something in a different genre,
- write a short story for a magazine, or anthology,
- take an online writing class,
- show up on Monday nights for writing sprints,
- rewrite an old story from another character’s POV.

Let the spring weather inspire your love of writing and renew your creativity. Take advantage of the warm evenings and go sit outside, watch the stars come out, and let your imagination run. If it doesn’t run, add wine.

—Donna McGoldrick



Zoom Meeting For April 26th. Social Time: 9am. Business Meeting: 9:30 am. Speaker: 10am.

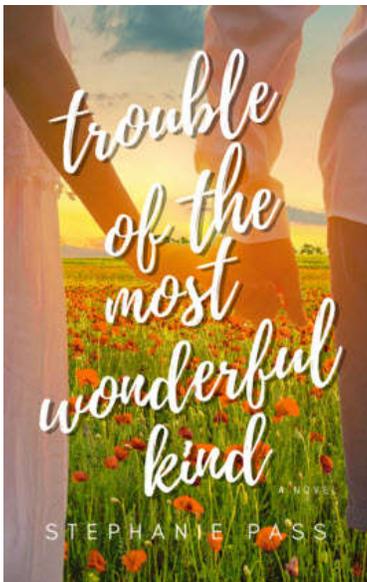
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Meeting ID: 895 4635 4660

Passcode: 897562

New Releases



Title: Trouble of the Most Wonderful Kind
Author: Stephanie Pass
Release Date: April 14, 2025
Available In: Kindle
Length: Novel
First/Subsequent Sale: Subsequent

When a love is written in the stars, and you let it slip away, sometimes fate offers you a second chance.

Years after ghosting a blind date that sparked an unforgettable connection, Claire Montague finds herself at a crossroads—newly divorced and searching for direction. When an unusual box filled with romance novels lands on her doorstep, she discovers a hidden riddle promising to lead her to true love. Initially skeptical, the pragmatic Claire can't help but be intrigued by the handwritten notes in the margins—notes that seem to shift and change before her eyes. And then, inexplicably, one of the novels disappears.

Eight years ago, Edison Wright let Claire mistakenly believe he was her blind date, igniting a brief yet powerful spark he's never forgotten. Still haunted by memories of her, Edison's world turns upside down when Claire's missing book appears in his hands—complete with mysterious notes referencing her and even her photograph. It feels like fate itself is nudging them back together.

As Claire and Edison reconnect, passion reignites. But the magic guiding them back to one another can't shield them from the secrets they've kept hidden. Will confronting the ghosts of their past allow them to rewrite their story, or are they doomed to repeat history, forever trapped by the question of what might have been?

TROUBLE OF THE MOST WONDERFUL KIND is a spicy and heartwarming romance that proves second chances are worth every risk, especially when fate won't take no for an answer.



Carolyn Rae has received the cover for *Double Jeopardy*.

A romantic suspense novel about ambitious reporter, Jessica Ballard, who's terrorized by an obsessed stalker who can't tell her apart from her twin, and the stunning police investigator, Michael Steel, who rescues her.



If you have a new release, send your information to Michelle Miles at mlmiles21@gmail.com.
Please include your name, title, date of publication, publisher, format, and whether or not it's your first publication.

Author Interview with Michelle Miles



Submitted by Donna McGoldrick

Michelle Miles believes in fairy tales, true love, and magic. She brings fantasy worlds to life with high adventures. Author of multiple series. Creator of fantasy worlds. Lover of words and wine.

Welcome Michelle, and thank you for taking the time for this interview.

Tell us a little about yourself.

I live in North Fort Worth with my husband of 14 years. We recently bought some property in Daingerfield, Texas (near Mt. Pleasant) and are planning to build a house and, eventually, move there. I'm looking forward to getting out of the city. In the meantime, we're working to make some upgrades to our current house. When I'm not writing, I like to read, cross-stitch, and watch movies. When the weather is good, I sit outside in the evenings with a glass of my favorite red blend.



What is your favorite aspect of writing Fantasy and Young Adult?

I love creating worlds and writing about magical places. I've been a fantasy fan for a long time. The first book I read that made me want to write was by Patricia A. McKillip called *The Forgotten Beasts of Eld*. The heroine lived an isolated life with a menagerie of talking animals and I was sold from that moment on. I decided to try Young Adult for the simple fact that I felt like the stories I wanted to tell would be a good fit for younger readers. I read the genre myself and have found so many wonderful books that sit on my keeper shelf.

What do you think are the key elements that keep your readers engaged?

I think the most important thing is you have to tell a good story and you have to have compelling characters. You want to hook the reader and then keep them turning pages to find out what is going to happen next. All my books have some sort of action/adventure element in them and I love creating twists and turns that are unexpected.

What is your typical writing process? How do you stay focused? And do you use writing software tools?

Great question! I write around two hours per day. I've been in Corporate America a long time and when I decided I wanted to write, I knew I had to carve out the time to do it. So, I started writing during my lunch break. I started with a mini laptop, a copy of Word, and a thumb drive so I could carry my WIP back and

Michelle Miles Continued

forth. Now I use OneDrive and an iPad (I love technology!). I also write from 7-8 pm religiously every evening and have been doing this for years. My brain is trained to write during these times.

One of things I've started doing to keep my focus up is to play some ambiance sounds in the background. Sometimes I like to listen to the Star Trek warp core (I'm a nerd), sometimes I like to listen to waterfalls. This white noise keeps me from wanting to procrastinate and block out everything around me. It keeps me focused and it works.

When I'm in the creating process, I tend to get the words down and worry about editing later. One of my favorite tools is AutoCrit. I use this to help me polish the book once I've gone through a round of editing. What I love about this tool is when you run the summary, it helps identify the weak spots.

How do you keep details straight while writing a series?

I tend to write long series—5 books or more. I know there are online tools to help with this, but I guess I'm old school. I keep a Series Bible in a Word document that has everything I need to know about my series. Characters, descriptions, blurbs, titles, timelines, items, places, etc. My series bible for my urban fantasy series is over 20 pages long. It's the only way I can keep track of everything and everyone, especially when writing a fantasy world.

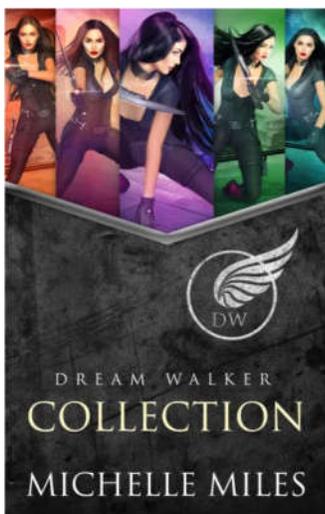
What is it like as an Indie published author? What challenges have you faced?

I love being 100% in control of the process from creation to publication. I think the biggest challenge is finding readers, marketing, and making those sales. But, really, I wouldn't trade it! :))

Can you talk about your current work in progress?

Sure! I'm currently working on the third book in my Highland Destiny series for Dragonblade. These are historical fantasy romances that are about three modern sisters who go back in time and fall in love with three Highlander brothers. It's set in the mid-14th century on the Isle of Skye. The first book will be out this fall.

See Michelle's website for a complete list of books: <https://michellemiles.net/>



Add That WOW Factor to Your KDP Books with Eye-Catching A+ Content

By Michelle Miles



Have you heard about A+ Content for KDP books? My friend and fellow author, Kathleen Baldwin, wrote a fabulous post breaking it all down—how to do it, what works, what doesn't, and why you totally need it. I highly recommend giving her post a read here: <https://writersinthestormblog.com/2023/08/guide-to-a-amazon-content-that-sells/>

Naturally, the second I learned this was a thing, I had to jump in and try it myself!

Rather than repeating Kathleen's brilliance, I'm going to walk you through how I created A+ Content for my book *Once Upon an Ancient Curse*. And yes—it's 100% DIY-friendly.

What I Used:

- **Canva Pro** (though the free version works too)
- **BookBrush**

You *can* create everything in Canva, but BookBrush makes slicing and dicing images super simple.

Step 1: Start in BookBrush

If you use BookBrush, go to **Custom Creator**, click **Amazon** on the left menu, and pick the layout for **stacked three images** (super helpful for that banner look).

Pro tip: BookBrush will split the image for you. Just pick your background, drop it in, and let the magic happen.

Once I had my image slices, I downloaded them and moved over to my old faithful—Canva.

Step 2: Head to Canva

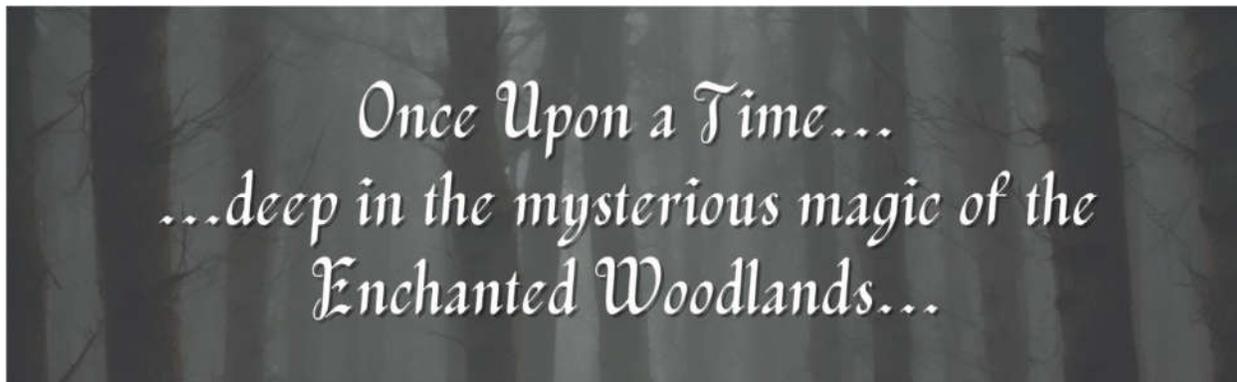
Upload your image slices and start designing! I added stylized text (Canva makes this SO easy), played with effects to make the words pop, and then dropped in the cover on the last banner (shout-out to my awesome cover artist).

Here's a peek at what I made:

Continued - Next Page

WOW Factor Continued

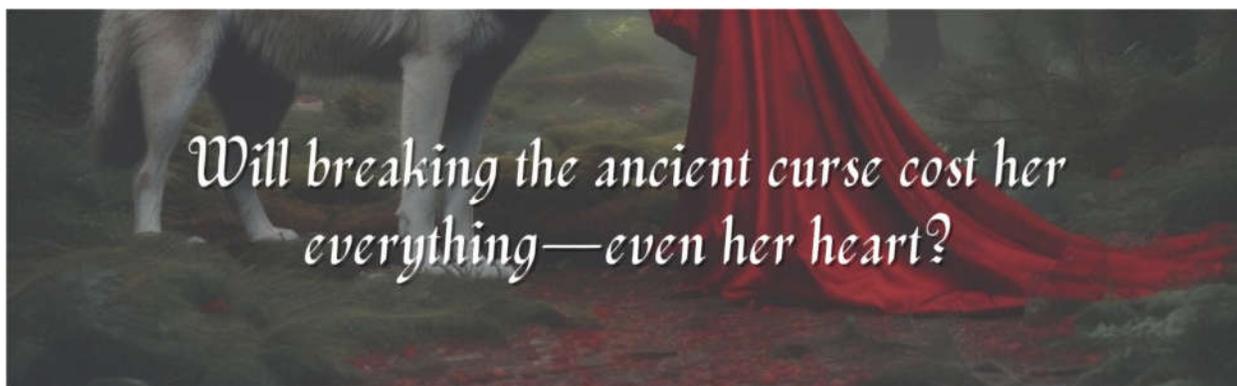
Banner 1: Background imagery + bold text overlay



Banner 2: More text + dreamy background



Banner 3: Mood + vibes + series consistency



Notice how perfect the image is sliced? That's the magic of BookBrush! This is actually one image.

Continued - Next Page

Banner 4: Book cover + translucent text box



Each banner was saved as a high-res PNG so it looked crisp on screen.

Step 3: Add A+ Content to KDP

1. Log into KDP and click **Marketing**
2. Scroll down to **A+ Content**
3. Select your marketplace (I stick with .com, .co.uk, .ca, .au—my hot spots!)
4. Hit **Start creating A+ content**
5. Pick a layout module (I used **Standard Image & Dark Text Overlay** for a banner vibe)

Make sure you check the image size requirements—mine was 970px x 300px. In Canva, create a custom-size design and drop in your image. You can also crop your book cover or background art to fit exactly how you want.

After designing each banner, go back to KDP and:

- Upload your image
- Add some image keywords (this is for metadata, not display)
- Leave the overlay text box blank if your text is baked into the image
- Add more modules and repeat the process for each banner

Final Steps

When you're done designing and uploading, click **Next: Apply ASINs**. I found it way faster to copy/paste my ASIN directly instead of searching by book title.

Click **Apply Content**, then **Next: Review & Submit**. Preview again, and if you're happy, hit that **Submit for Approval** button.

That's it! Mine went live on the product page almost instantly.

A Few Extra Tips:

- You can use A+ Content on *any* Amazon marketplace where your book is published.
- This is a great way to boost your book's visual appeal—think of it as a mini marketing billboard on your product page.
- Check out what other authors are doing to get ideas and inspiration!

So, what do you think? Ready to jazz up your book pages with A+ Content? Let me know if you try it—I'd love to see what you create!



2025 Speaker Lineup

May 24 – Candie Moonshower - Craft
June 28 - Michelle Miles - World Building
Aug 23 - Susan Gable - Character Mottos
Sept 27 - Lexi Blake - Building suspense
Dec 6 - Jane Porter - TBA



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: To inform the membership about chapter events, RWA news and classes, our member’s good news, and other things important to our members.

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 news- letter in December. **DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION is the 10th of each month.**

SUBMISSION POLICY

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

Please include your name, title, date of publication, publisher, format, and whether or not it’s your first publication.



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