



Southern California Writers Association

The Perennial Writers Conference

March 2019 Newsletter

Volume 18, Number 3 -- March 2019

President's Message Larry Porricelli, SCWA President

Thank you for making the SCWA the phenomenal organization it is today, and for even better things to come. If your annual fees are due, please sign up to extend for your next twelve months. There are some surprises ahead so stay tuned. Happy writing!

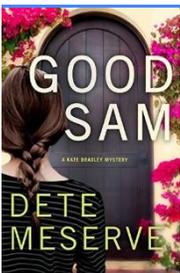
A note from our Social Media and Communications Maven, Diana Pardee:
Check out our SCWA Facebook link and join us for excerpts, discussions and encouragements.

Follow us, we'd love to see you there!

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/160332824032519>



March 16, 2019 DETE MESERVE The Joys & Challenges of Adapting a Book to Screen



Dete Meserve is one of SCWA's favorite guests, and the award-winning, bestselling author of *Good Sam*, *Perfectly Good Crime*, and *The Space Between*. Her first novel, **Good Sam**, is about the search for an anonymous Good Samaritan leaving \$100,000 on Los Angeles doorsteps. Dete adapted the book into a screenplay; the film is in pre-production as a feature film to be released in Spring 2019.

Dete will be talking to us about the challenges of adapting a book to screen.

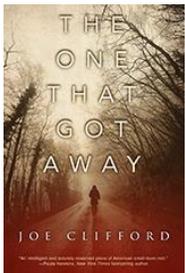
Like her heroine Kate Bradley, award-winning author Dete Meserve keeps looking for people who are doing extraordinary good for others, sometimes at great personal sacrifice. Instead of tracking a killer or kidnapper, Dete's mysteries seek to uncover the helpers, the rescuers, and the people who inspire us with selfless acts of kindness.

Good Sam is the first in her Kate Bradley Mysteries series, followed by *A Perfectly Good Crime*, about another search for an anonymous group behind several large-scale charity events for the poor and the possible connection to a series of sophisticated heists of some of the most opulent estates in America.

Dete is an accomplished creator and producer of independent movies and award-winning television shows as well as a bestselling novelist. As a key member of the executive team at Wind Dancer Films, Meserve has been a major player, overseeing its successful properties including films *What Women Want* (Mel Gibson), *Where the Heart Is* (Natalie Portman), *Bernie* (Jack Black), *What Men Want* (Taraji P. Henson) and *Good Sam*.

When she's not writing, she is a film and television producer in Los Angeles and a partner and CEO of Wind Dancer Films. Meserve lives in Los Angeles with her husband and three children--and a very good cat that rules them all.

Coming to SCWA: April 20, 2019
Joe Clifford



Joe Clifford is acquisitions editor for Gutter Books and producer of Lip Service West, a "gritty, real, raw" reading series in Oakland, CA. His latest book, *The One That Got Away* is a dark, psychological thriller, featuring a compelling, conflicted heroine and a page-turning narrative that races toward its final, shocking conclusion.

His bestselling Jay Porter Thriller Series (Oceanview Publishing) has received rave reviews from Publishers Weekly, Library Journal, and the San Francisco Chronicle, among many others. Joe is also editor of *Trouble in the Heartland: Crime Stories Based on the Songs of Bruce Springsteen* and the forthcoming *Just to Watch Him Die: Crime Fiction Inspired by the Songs of Johnny Cash*.

Currently Joe teaches online writing courses for LitReactor and around the country at various conferences and retreats.

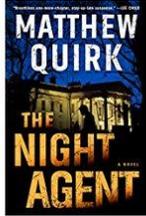
Joe's writing can be found at www.joeclifford.com.



Highlights: February 16, 2019

Matthew Quirk

Writing Thrillers: Is Truth Really Stranger than Fiction?



“The Night Agent is bigger and riskier than anything I’ve ever done, and I can’t wait to get it into readers’ hands.”

With four thrillers and several awards to his credit and a background in investigative journalism for *The Atlantic*, Matthew Quirk was “so happy to see everyone. I spend all my time in front of a computer.” He discussed how to shape an idea that will take you to the next level, an action plan he used for his newest thriller, *The Night Agent*.

With his fourth book and a “great publisher,” Quirk had optional film rights. But even so, “It’s tough all the way—even after you get your agents, etc. You can wind up drifting sideways.” He decided to be more assertive, maybe aggressive. You may break up with your old agents. “You want your agent in New York. Otherwise, you have to work harder.” In addition, “You need a team. Reach out to people and ask for help.” He says he’s not great at networking, but he did reach out to other authors. “You’ll be shocked at how nice they are.”

At conferences, Quirk discovered that as soon as he articulated his problem to one of the seasoned attendees, he realized changes he needed to make. He wanted a new agent and probably a new publisher. He did remind us that for fiction, an agent wants a whole, finished manuscript, but for nonfiction primarily just outlines, etc.

“Who has a book idea?” Quirk asked. “Who has a *bunch* of book ideas written down? Kick the tires on them.” Using Evernote, he keeps his ideas listed on his phone and computer. “It’s a volume game.” Of course, you “winnow them down, but some you can’t let go of.” He’s always surprised at what rises to the top. He recommends winding up with ten ideas and bouncing these off other writers. Which of those would they want to watch on TV at night?

“Is the hook actually a story?” Which of your ideas blooms into a book? Decision time. Perhaps an idea is unworkable or you “don’t really want to write it out. Think how to avoid issues and objections that may come up.” “A story sets up a good guy and a bad guy, and the beginning sort of sets up the end.” He repeatedly stressed reading and knowing your genre. Clarify the storyline for yourself before spending a year or two writing it—and another year on revision. “You’ll “also want to torture-test it.” But if it just doesn’t work . . .

For viewpoint you can use first person, but for thrillers, use close third person (because “there’s an assassin hiding in the podium”). Avoid head hopping; use a chapter break or something else.

This fifth book, *The Night Agent*, became a “conspiracy thriller” set in Dupont Circle in Washington, D. C. Quirk ensured it was non-partisan. The title refers to an F.B.I. staffer who waits by the phone all night, ready to receive emergency calls about threats to the central government. He will then wake up the F.B.I. head. Quirk’s plot became a hunt for the Russian mole in the White House.

Quirk explained that national security agents are “by the book, don’t drink, very boring.” The main character is a strong Catholic, “straight-laced guy because his father may have been a spy.” The pain of his father’s career has infused him with anger. “Many people want to get justice from family stuff.”

The fun of using a character who is always rigidly focused comes when you shove him “over the line.” Quirk recommends having that type work with a “loosey-goosey person,” who can be female. Then you can also use the formula for romantic comedies [Rom Com]. But this thriller needed to be super timely. Quirk said that in 2015, the headlines started to match his ideas.

Next came the agonizing process of selling the book. His agent had other agents read this conspiracy thriller; then it went to committee. He was told, “We’re setting the auction for Tuesday.” Quirk was scared that

enough potential buyers wouldn't show up. But, he said, "A great guy bought it. Everything worked out. It's an enthusiasm game." His conclusion for writers: "You need to start with something you're insanely in love with!"

After lunch the speaker answered questions. Earlier he had spoken about cutting out fifty pages. How did he know which fifty to cut? In this thriller, he had written all the details of how intelligence agents test the government security to keep out penetrators. However, the input he received from his editor and agent made him "the saddest puppy in the world. My stomach hurt." All those pages they objected to couldn't be fixed. He wound up excising all those details of how the penetration occurred and began with the main character finding a body.

"It felt so amazing. Sometimes later, you throw out your great hook. Then I had a new lease on life." However, he did add that even though some changes feel right, they're still wrong. It's helpful when his brain switches from writer mode to reader mode.

Quirk advises spending much more time beforehand on your synopsis. Then you can easily write a thousand words a day because you know where you're going. "Write even crappy stuff because your subconscious can figure things out." And, yes, it's painful, but later you have to kill your darlings. Be super generous with yourself and fight perfectionism as he had to. "Just finishing something is huge." His earlier books are *The 500*, *The Directive*, *Cold Barrel Zero*, and *Dead Man Switch*.

Although Quirk reads widely and his favorite authors and books change all the time, *Catch 22* is still very special to him.

Matthew Quirk clearly loves his writing profession, but his final advice is "Don't quite your day job until you have to—or you've replaced your salary."

See also matthewquirk.com.

Glenda Brown Rynn, Reporter
grynn@cox.net

SCWA Mission

The mission of the SCWA is to provide a forum for promoting the welfare, fellowship, spirit, education, information, and encouragement among published and unpublished writers in the Southern California area,

SCWA Active Member Benefits

Active members receive a 30% discount at every SCWA meeting.

SCWA provides scholarships to members who attend writer's conferences.

SCWA members receive a free review and 30-minute consultation from Sharon Goldinger for any publishing contract.

SCWA members receive discounts on Jeff Lyon's online courses.

SCWA Critique Program – see below.

Discounts are available for active SCWA members for registration for the La Jolla Writer's Conference, and for early registration for the Southern California Writers' Conference, which is held twice annually in San Diego and Orange County.

SCWA Critique Program

We have some exciting news on the critique front. One of our members received a critique, and he credits that critique with getting him a two-day response from an agent, who wants to see the entire manuscript. We love it when that happens.

Critique requests should be sent to Steve Jackson at steven@stevengjackson.com. If you have not received a response to a previous critique request, please resubmit (without any fee if you've already paid) to Steve. Steve will direct your sample (up to 15 double-spaced pages) to one of the Board members once we receive your payment. Payments (\$20.00 for members and \$30.00 for nonmembers) should be directed to Don Westenhaver.

- Check payable to SCWA: mail to Don at 5391 Fox Hills Ave., Buena Park, CA 90621
- Credit Card: advise Steve that you will pay by credit card. He will have Don send you an invoice with instructions on how to pay through the SCWA Square account.

Have a Question about a Publishing Contract?

Contracts involving publishing matters can be confusing if you're not familiar with all the language. What does something mean? What questions should I be asking? Do I have any other choices? If you're not sure what you're reading, what a term or section means, or if you should be signing the contract at all, SCWA is offering a new benefit. SCWA member, publishing consultant, and book shepherd Sharon Goldinger is offering a free review and thirty-minute consultation for any publishing contract to any SCWA member. You can reach her directly at pplspeak@att.net.

Conferences, Events, and Announcements

Lit Up! Orange County is 7pm Tuesday, March 19th at our NEW LOCATION Bardot & Bars in Tustin at 662 El Camino Real in the Camino Real Shopping Center in Old Town Tustin. Easy location off Newport Avenue just north of the 5 freeway.

Lit Up! springs into 2019 with a special night of readings and smart conversation with award winning mystery authors [Naomi Hirahara](#), [Brett Battles](#), and [Dot Caffrey](#). Enjoy the casual vibe along with delicious coffee, ice cream and a light food menu! Lit Up! is free and open to the public!

Janis Thomas has partnered with Sonia Marsh to offer an exclusive writer's retreat in South Africa May 25-June 2, 2019. This includes an exclusive safari for 10. Contact Janis or Sonia via email for details.

“Will Write for Food” Contest

The “Will Write For Food” contest is a monthly blind competition. Winners are selected by a literary agent. First prize includes publication in the SCWA Newsletter, a certificate, and a \$25 cash prize.

You may write on any subject. Stories have a maximum of 1000 words. The winner will be announced at the SCWA meeting. To enter, email your story by February 8th, 2019, to meeting@ocwriter.com.

There are no limits to the number of times you can win. Join the fun and earn some rewards.

February 2019 Winning entry: *California Prospects* by Sulan Dun

CALIFORNIA PROSPECTS by Sulan Dun

Evan tucked the blanket under Grandpap’s arms and then pushed his wheelchair up to the table. Grandpap liked to claim that he didn’t feel the cold, but Evan knew better. He wished he could raise the thermostat up from 65 °F. But Evan’s extra shifts at the diner, his cousin Lily’s seniority at the Household Hazardous Waste collection center, and Grandpap’s social security and veteran benefits were no match for the perpetual rent increases for their tiny apartment north of San Francisco.

“I ever tell you about my Great Gramps, Captain James Ballymore?” Grandpap said.

Evan had heard the story dozens of times since he and Lilly had moved in five years ago to help with Grandpap’s care and the rent. But as he left the kitchen table to go get their breakfasts he said, “No, that sounds really interesting.”

“Oh it’s a great story,” Grandpap gushed. “My Great Gramps, Captain James Ballymore, brought a ship full of gold miners here in 1849. His crew deserted to try their luck at gold mining and left Great Gramps stranded in San Francisco harbor. So many other crews had done the same the harbor looked like a forest due to the masts of all the abandoned ships. So my Great Gramps decided to make lemonade out of lemons and turned his ship into Ballymore’s Bar! It was a fine life and he always enjoyed celebrating with the miners who struck it rich. He said he could make more in a month in port than he’d ever made sailing for a year.”

“That’s great!” said Evan. He slid the scrambled eggs he’d cooked earlier onto two plates and expertly garnished the plates with red apple slices.

“Those were the days,” Grandpap said as Evan slid their breakfasts onto the table. “A man could make a fortune with just his hands and his wits! Even if you didn’t have a ship, you could just go up in the hills with a gold pan and strike it rich! Not like these days where there are no more opportunities for young people anymore.”

Evan sat down opposite Grandpap and took a bite of eggs. Grandpap took a bite of eggs too.

“Say these are very good!” Grandpap said.

“Thanks Grandpap,” Evan said.

“You made these?” Grandpap said, surprised.

“Yes,” Evan said.

“Well who knew you could cook so well! I wish I had a big gold nugget to sell so you could open your own restaurant!” Grandpap said.

Evan broke out laughing. “That’s very kind of you Grandpap,” he said.

Grandpap beamed from ear to ear.

They heard the front door open.

“Is that Colleen?” Grandpap said eagerly.

Colleen, Grandpap’s wife, had died of a stroke six years earlier. “No, that’s Lily, your grandniece,” Evan said. “Colleen’s out volunteering at church.”

“Ah she’s a good woman, that Colleen,” Grandpap said. “But it’ll be great to see little Lily too.”

Lily, age 29, whistled a happy tune as she took an envelope out of her pocket and hung up her coat. She entered the kitchen triumphantly.

Evan gave her a quizzical look. “Aren’t you supposed to be at work?”

"I took a vacation day. I've got a surprise for us," she said, waving the envelope with a flourish. "In a way, it's thanks to you Grandpap and all your gold rush stories."

"Oh?" said Grandpap.

She pulled up another chair to the kitchen table and just sat there, beaming at them in that annoyingly smug way of hers.

"Well what is it?" Evan finally said.

"You know how we recycle all kind of things at the Hazardous Waste Center including fluorescent bulbs and computers? Well back in 2010, Dameon, this pale looking guy who recycles his workplace's fluorescent bulbs every month, came by. He started talking about some new kind of money his company's server computer guys were mining in the basement of the IT department. I didn't believe him and bet him five dollars he was pulling my leg. A month later, he comes back and shoves a book in my face and says I was wrong and he was right so pay up. It got mad and I told him I wasn't going to pay anything until I'd read the book. It was a super dry and technical read. When Dameon came back a month later, I had to admit I was wrong. I returned the book and he gloated like crazy as he took my five dollars.

"But I learned something interesting from that book. A lot of computer geeks were making this new kind of money called Bitcoin on their computers for fun. A Bitcoin wasn't worth much, just a few pennies, but I decided to use my newfound knowledge to make my five dollars back so I could rub it in Dameon's smug little face.

"I started looking at the hard drives from the computers coming in for recycling on my lunch break, going prospecting for thrown away Bitcoins made by the geeks. After several months, I had a whole college-ruled notebook full of Bitcoin private keys I'd found and written down. But just my Bitcoins were worth enough for me to get my five dollars back, Dameon got transferred to the LA office and I never saw him again.

"I shoved the notebook in my work locker and forgot about it. But then last week I saw a news story that said a Bitcoin was now worth thousands of dollars instead of pennies. I cashed out."

She opened the envelope and slid a check out in front of them. "We can turn the heat up as high as we want now. I can go back to school. Evan could even open his own restaurant."

They stared at the check.

"Who knew there was so much gold inside those computer things!" Grandpap said.

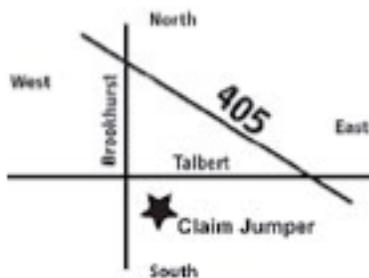


Monthly Meeting Information and Map

Meeting Location:

Claim Jumper Restaurant
 Banquet Room entrance, rear of building
 18050 Brookhurst St., Fountain Valley, CA
 Restaurant telephone: (714) 963-6711

Registration & Networking: 9:30 a.m.
 Meeting: 10:00 a.m.
 Lunch: 11:30 a.m.
 Afternoon Program: 12:30 p.m.



[Meeting Fees \(cash, check or credit/debit\)](#)

Reservation Type	SCWA Member	Student	Others
RSVP	\$25	\$15	\$35

SCWA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

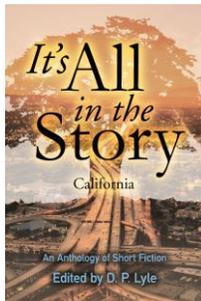
PresidentLarry Porricelli
Vice President of Membership Steven G. Jackson
Vice President of Finances and Communication Don Westenhaver
Vice President of Programming Madeline Margarita
Director of Social Media Diana Pardee
Webmaster Brennan Harvey
Newsletter Editor Pam Sheppard
Newsletter Speaker ReporterGlenda Rynn

Mailing Address: PO Box 47, Huntington Beach, CA 92648

Membership: Yann Jackson, ykj3678@gmail.com

Meeting Reservations

Larry Porricelli, meeting@ocwriter.com
714-580-5072



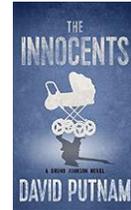
The SCWA Anthology, *It's All in the Story*, went to a second printing to meet the demand of wholesalers and bookstores. We have books for direct sales (\$15 for one, \$12.50 each for two, \$10 each for three or more). You may contact Don Westenhaver to arrange for payment, and we will have the copies available for you at the next SCWA meeting. Don can be reached at donwestenhaver@roadrunner.com.

For more information visit the SCWA Anthology website at:
www.SCWAanthology.com

Recent SCWA Members' Publications

David Putnam: <https://dwputnam.wordpress.com>

The Innocents: A Bruno Johnson Novel
The Early Years, Book 1 12/18



Janis Thomas: janisthomas.com

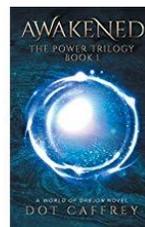
All That's Left of Me

What Remains True



Dot Caffrey: www.dotcaffrey.com

AWAKENED 8/18



PJ Colando: www.pjcolando.com

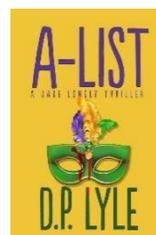
The Winner's Circle: Launched February, 2019



Steven Jackson: <https://stevengjackson.com>
"The Optimism of Youth"

D.P. Lyle: www.dplylemd.com

A-List: Coming in Paperback 2/19



Jeff Lyons: www.jefflyonsbooks.com

*Rapid Story Development: #4: Teams and Ensembles—
How to Develop Stories with Large Casts - 10/18*

*Rapid Story Development: #5: The Moral Premise –
How to Build a Bulletproof Narrative Engine for Any Story - 11/18*

Rapid Story Development: #6: Seven Steps to Busting Writer's Block - 12/18



JEFF LYONS



#4



JEFF LYONS



#5



JEFF LYONS



#6

Darlene Quinn: <https://darlenequinn.net>



**WEBS OF PERCEPTION – the final novel in Darlene Quinn's
Webs Series. 11/18**

AUDIBLE version NOW AVAILABLE!

CLICK TO LISTEN TO THE FIRST FIVE (bite-sized) CHAPTERS:

<https://darlenequinn.net/webs-of-perception/>

Available March 19: Richard Miller Morgan's CROWN HUNT 3/19



Ananya and Brett Ridenour:

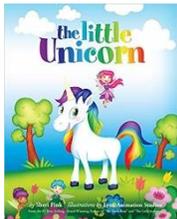
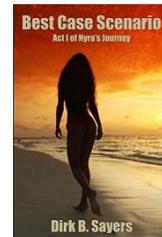
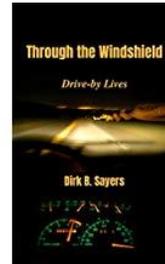
COLORING OUTSIDE THE LINES: Integrating Project Management and Creativity 10/18



Dirk Sayers: dirksayers.com/dirks-writings

Through the Windshield: 12/18

Best Case Scenario: 8/18



Sheri Fink: www.sherifink.net

The Little Unicorn 9/18

SCWA Member Publications and Productions

<u>Author</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Year</u>
Belmont, Julie	<i>Creativity Business Plan for Artists at Heart</i>	2014
Belmont, Julie	<i>The Path to Personal Success and Freedom; Turning Hurdles into Stepping Stones</i>	2005
Caffrey, Dot	<i>Cursed Power</i>	2015
	<i>Awakening Powers</i>	2014
Colando, PJ	<i>The Winner's Circle</i>	2019
	<i>Hashes & Bashes</i>	2016
	<i>Stashes</i>	2014
Crayne, Victory	<i>Rebuilt</i>	2016
	<i>Humans Only</i>	2016
	<i>Freedom</i>	2015
De Ladurantey, Joseph	<i>Making Your Memories with Rock & Roll and Doo Wop</i>	2016
	<i>Cowards, Crooks, and Warriors</i>	2015
Dingus, Peter	<i>Worlds in Transition</i>	2017
Donenfeld-Vernoux, AR	<i>Pudel & Cie: Case #1 Moroney Boloney</i>	2015
	<i>Cave Dreams</i>	2014
	<i>Out of the Chute</i>	2014
	<i>How To Get And Keep The Best Jobs:Secrets HR Won't Tell You</i>	
Dunlap, Larry J	<i>Night People</i>	2015
Fink, Sheri	<i>The Little Unicorn</i>	2018
	<i>Counting Sea Life with the Little Seahorse</i>	2017
	<i>Cake in Bed</i>	2016
	<i>My Bliss Book</i>	2015

	<i>The Little Seahorse</i>	2014
	<i>The Little Firefly</i>	2013
	<i>The Little Gnome</i>	2012
	<i>Exploring the Garden with the Little Rose</i>	2012
	<i>The Little Rose</i>	2011
Gilmore, Susan Kay	<i>Possessed by Baseball</i>	2013
Giussani, Sara	<i>Malibu</i>	2015
	<i>Come fare... La valutazione di un processo aziendale</i>	2014
	<i>Management dei processi aziendali</i>	2012
Jackson, Steven G	"The Optimism of Youth"	2018
	"Full Service"	2017
	"Life Dies, and Then You Suck"	2017
	"The Master Playwright"	2016
	"The Asylum for Rejected Characters"	2016
	<i>The Zeus Payload</i>	2015
	"Fade to Crazy"	2015
	"The Loan Officer"	2014
King, Roy	<i>Symfonie Fantastique</i>	2011
Klann, Nancy	<i>The Clock of Life</i>	2012
	<i>Like The Flies On The Patio</i>	2012

Lambert, Harlen, Sharron

Affairs of the Heart, Vol. 2 2017

Affairs of the Heart, Vol. 1 2016

Levine, Jennifer *Summer Secrets* 2016

Lloyd, Rita Lee	<i>How to Survive in the 21st Century as a SSOFF</i>	2011
Lyle, DP (Doug)	<i>A-List</i>	2018
	<i>Deep Six</i>	2016
	<i>Forensics for Dummies, 2nd edition</i>	2016
	<i>Original Sin</i>	2015
	<i>Devil's Playground</i>	2015
	<i>Double Blind</i>	2015
	<i>Murder and Mayhem</i>	2013
	<i>Royal Pains: Sick Rich</i>	2012
	<i>Run To Ground</i>	2012
	<i>Thriller3: Love Is Murder (Short Story)</i>	2012
	<i>ABA Fundamentals: Understanding Forensic Science</i>	2012
	<i>Royal Pains: First, Do No Harm</i>	2011
	<i>Hot Lights, Cold Steel</i>	2011
	<i>Thrillers: 100 Must Reads (Essay)</i>	2010
	<i>Stress Fracture</i>	2010
	<i>Howdunnit: Forensics: A Guide For Writers</i>	2008
	<i>Forensics and Fiction</i>	2007
Lyons, Jeff	<i>Rapid Story Development: Bust the Top Ten Creative Writing</i>	
	<i>Myths to Become a Better Writer</i>	2018
Lyons, Jeff	<i>Rapid Story Development: Commerical Pace in</i>	
	<i>Fiction & Creative Nonfiction</i>	2018
Lyons, Jeff	<i>Rapid Story Development: Ten Questions Every Writer Needs</i>	
	<i>to Ask Before They Hire a Consultant</i>	2018
	<i>13 Minutes</i>	2018
	<i>Anatomy of a Premise Line</i>	2016
	<i>Jack Be Dead</i>	2016
Marsh, Sonia	<i>My Gutsy Story Anthology</i>	2013
	<i>Freeways to Flip-Flops</i>	2012
Marshall, Evelyn	<i>Concerning Georgia Stekker</i>	2014
	<i>The Way They See</i>	2013
	<i>The Provider</i>	2012
Martinez, Maria	<i>The Apple Tree Wish</i>	2012
Michaels, Jeffrey J.	<i>The Age of Change: A Challenging Path to the Future</i>	2017

<i>Becomes Us All</i>	2016
<i>A Day at the Beach</i>	2015
<i>Tasa's Path</i>	2015
<i>How to Become The True You</i>	2015
<i>Light: The Reason for Existence</i>	2012
<i>Beings: A Journey to Joy</i>	2010
<i>Touch the Earth: A Path to Ascension</i>	2009
<i>Crystal Experience: Manifest an Extraordinary Life</i>	2007
<i>Harmonic Coalescence, the Future of Humanity</i>	2007

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	<i>Run To Ground</i>	2012
	<i>Thriller3: Love Is Murder (Short Story)</i>	2012
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