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President's Letter

by Janice Konstantinidis

Dear Fellow NightWriters,

By now, most of you have heard of the loss of our friend and writing mentor, Susan Tuttle. She succumbed to her health issues on June eighth. SLO NightWriters feels her departure deeply, as she was a cheerful friend to all and mentor to many, many NightWriters. We on the board will miss her advice and vast experience in NightWriter history and policy.

Several members, including myself, have been moved to write about Susan. We include these memorial works in this issue with the obituary we have written for her. If anyone wishes to leave a memory in the newsletter, please write to slonnewsletter@gmail.com and we will publish it in a future issue.

Susan's passing leaves a large hole in the organization. If anyone is interested in continuing her work with the Critique Table, please contact Terry Sanville (tsanville@sbcglobal.net). Or, if you are interested in becoming a member of the board, please let me (jkon50@gmail.com). We can always use the help!



On the bright side, we are emerging from our caves into a strange, different world. After a year of isolation, I find myself extremely intimidated by the bustle of traffic in my town. I hope you all are coping well with life as it returns to "normal".

Janice Konstantinidis

Australian Tern

T'was a wet stormy day for the Tern,
who loved to show us his stern.
His wings held aloft were really quite soft,
he'd no real need for concern.

Janice Konstantinidis



Photo by Lorraine Flakemore

General Meeting Previews

Tuesday, July 13

Ava Homa

5:15 pm: Join the Critique Table

6:30 pm: Ava Homa

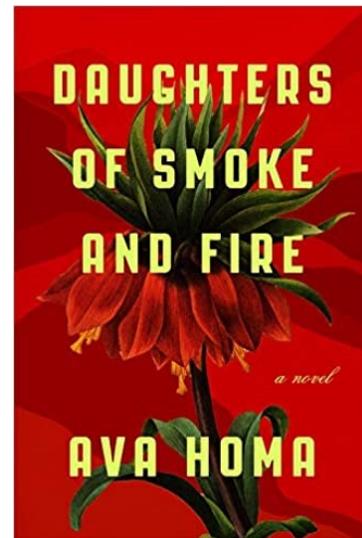
A Best Book of 2020: Daughters of Smoke and Fire

Mark your calendars for July 13 when we will have a special guest presenter, [Ava Homa](#). Ava's [Daughters of Smoke and Fire](#) was named "A Best book of 2020." She was nominated for the Frank O'Connor International Prize. Her book has been described as an unforgettable, haunting story of a young woman's perilous fight for freedom and justice for her brother.



Set primarily in Iran, this extraordinary debut novel takes readers into the everyday lives of the Kurds. Leila dreams of making films to bring the suppressed stories of her people onto the global stage, but obstacles keep piling up.

Leila's younger brother Chia, influenced by their father's past torture, imprisonment, and his deep-seated desire for justice, begins to engage with social and political affairs. But his activism grows increasingly risky and one day he disappears in Tehran. Seeking answers about her brother's whereabouts, Leila fears the worst and begins a campaign to save him. But when she publishes Chia's writings online, she finds herself in grave danger as well.



Daughters of Smoke and Fire is an evocative portrait of the lives and stakes faced by 40 million stateless Kurds and a powerful story that brilliantly illuminates the meaning of identity and the complex bonds of family, perfect for fans of Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*.

Daughters of Smoke and Fire "unfurls the history of an oppressed people fighting for their right to live, love, thrive, and create. Homa peels back layers of sorrow and injustice to reveal the resilience and hope of so many Kurds living in the stateless nation."—Chicago Review of Books

General Meeting Previews

Tuesday, August 10, 2021

Wendelin Van Draanen and Mark Parsons

5:15 pm: Join the Critique Table

6:30 pm: Wendelin Van Draanen and Mark Parsons

The Realities of the Writing Life

Wendelin Van Draanen and **Mark Parsons** will discuss various aspects of being an author (with regards to both writing and publishing) as well as what it means to “live the writing life.”

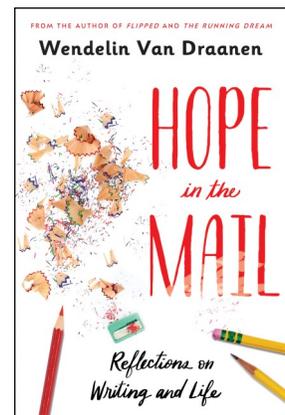
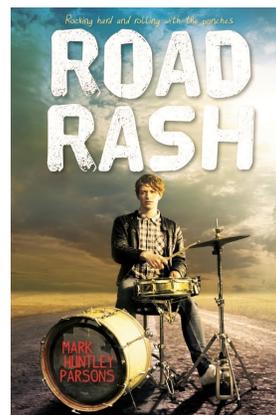
This presentation is for writers who may think the journey ends at finishing a manuscript... or publishing it... or landing a literary agent... or getting a book deal with a Big-5 imprint... or a follow-up deal, with options for more... or winning awards... or having films made from your books...

All these things are nice, but they’re the sauce on the ribs. The real meat is simply being a writer... living the writing life. Which includes that big chunk of your work life which is spent in support of your career as an author—but not on actually writing—as well as making sure you *do* allot the butt-in-chair time to actually do your real work: putting words on the page.

Presentation followed by Q&A. Come with questions!

Wendelin Van Draanen is the bestselling author of more than thirty books, including the long-running Edgar-winning Sammy Keyes mystery series. Her novel *Flipped*, named a *Top 100 Children’s Novel for the 21st Century* by SLJ, became a Warner Brothers feature film, and *Shredderman* became a Nickelodeon made-for-TV movie. Her first non-fiction book, *Hope in the Mail: Reflections on Writing and Life*, was published by Random House in 2020. Her latest novel, *Millions of Peaches*, is coming from Knopf/Random House in 2022.

Mark Parsons has written primarily non-fiction for several years, penning over two hundred articles for national publications as well as a pair of non-fiction books before turning to book length fiction. His YA novel *Road Rash* (Random House) was named to the ALA’s Best Fiction for Young Adults list, as well as Bank Street College’s Best Children’s Books of the Year list. His latest YA novel, *The 9:09 Project*, is coming from Delacorte/Random House in 2022.



General Meeting Previews

Tuesday, September 14

Judythe Guarnera

5:15 pm: Join the Critique Table

6:30 pm: Judythe Guarnera

Using the Five Senses - Add Descriptive Dimension to Your Writing

Most writers know that description—of setting, characters, action, can make or break a story.

In this presentation, Judythe will cover general information on description, including show vs. tell and then go into detail about a tool which can convert ordinary, prosaic, non-memorable writing to exciting writing that readers won't want to put down.

Writers and readers take in information through the five senses: sight, taste, sound, smell, and touch, but approximately 83% of our knowledge comes to us visually. What about the other 17%? What about audial learners, those who need tactile stimuli to learn? Prepare to be surprised about which of the five senses leaves the deepest memories.

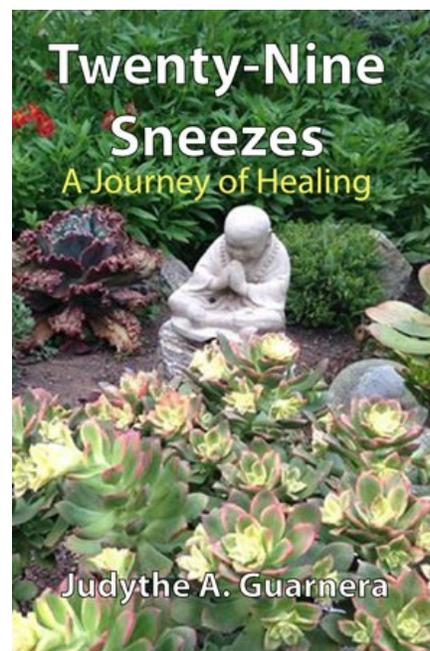
Yet, despite our different ways of learning, we often expect our readers to respond to just visual descriptions. Check your own writing to see if most of your description isn't visual.

Judythe confesses that her desire to learn more about how to use the other senses to enliven her writing is what inspired her to research this topic and share it with you. Her goal is to inspire you and herself to enliven our writing by using all five senses in whatever genre we are writing.

Bio:

Now 82, Judythe Guarnera declares herself too old to die young, which she considers a benefit to her writing. She's happy with her one published novel and now focuses on short stories, memoir, and essays because they provide instant gratification when her time might be limited.

Judythe, the former editor of the *NightWriter* column in Tolosa Press, and editor of four anthologies, has been published in nine anthologies, including four in *Chicken Soup for the Soul*. Her novel, *Twenty-Nine Sneezes*, is available on Amazon in paperback and on Kindle. Within the next few months, she hopes to begin releasing three books—collections of her shorter writings which cross a variety of genres.



Notices

An Offer to Complete Susan Tuttle's Unfinished Editing

In appreciation of Susan Tuttle's contribution to the writing life of San Luis Obispo County, professional marketing editor **Rhonda Collins** has volunteered to complete any reviews or edits that Susan may have had in progress, free of charge.

If you have a story or work that Susan was assisting you with, Rhonda will be happy to help finish the editing. Please contact her at:

Email: rckmktg@gmail.com

Mail: Rhonda Collins, RKC Marketing, PO Box 12916, San Luis Obispo, CA 93406

Monthly Online Zoom Meetings

During the pandemic isolation, we are offering online meetings and presentations via Zoom (see [page 3](#) for details of our July 13 General Meeting). We encourage interested visitors to join us. The meetings will be held on the second Tuesday of the month. The Critique Table will begin at 5:15 pm and the General Meeting will begin at 6:30 pm.

If you have any ideas or comments about our online presentations, please contact our Program Director, Steven Mintz, at smintz@calpoly.edu

Visitors are always welcome. For details, visit our website: www.slouwriters.org

How to Join the Monthly Zoom Critique Table

1. If you desire to have your work critiqued, send your chosen two pages to Terry Sanville (tsanville@sbcglobal.net) by the Saturday before the meeting.
2. Login to the monthly Zoom meeting a few minutes before 5:15 pm on the day of the meeting using the link below, the link on our website, or the link provided in the email that is sent to members. You are welcome to join us even if you just want to listen and hear the critiques.
3. If you have any specific issues or questions you'd like covered at the Critique Table, just let Terry (tsanville@sbcglobal.net) know before the meeting.

The Zoom Meeting Link

[Click HERE to join the Zoom meeting](#)

WORD PLAY

by Morgann Tayllor

VROOM VROOM! Beyond Cars

Her groceries are carried in the cart on her way to the cashier. She carries her purse slung across her shoulders as she fumbles inside for the billfold that carries her credit card, which carries payment information. Once past the cashier, she pushes her shoulders back to align the body that carries her. In her left hand, she carries the grocery bag that carries tonight's dinner; with her right hand, she carries the key fob that unlocks her car, which carries her home.

Carry as a verb is so ancient it was in action before it found a written language, even before *homo erectus* stood upright. But it really got rolling with the invention of wheeled vehicles, estimated to be at least 6,000 years ago. Since then, people have been on the move with **carts**, **carriages**, **caravans** and finally the **car**, in the process of evolving even as we write. And **carry** is one of our hardest working and most enduring words.

* * * * *

In the beginning, **carts** were drawn and pushed by people or domestic animals such as oxen, never mind the weather fair or foul. During the Roman era, the two-wheel **chariot** was a vehicle of choice. Much later the **caroche** became a luxury horse-drawn four-wheel coach or **carriage** for passengers.

Around the turn of the twentieth century, horsepower took on a different meaning with Henry Ford's mass-produced horseless carriage—a motor **car(riage)** with a gasoline-powered internal combustion engine attached to an enclosed box on four wheels.

In America's Deep South back in the day, someone needing a ride could ask a friend or acquaintance: "Could you **carry** me home?"

meaning by whatever transportation they had—wagon, carriage, horseback, early automobile.

* * * * *

The word *automobile*, in its formal context, is still with us but *motor car* soon devolved into the shorter usage **car**. It wasn't long before the horse-drawn wagon that formerly took travelers from train stations to hotels became the motorized *station wagon* hauling family and kids on road trips, sometimes in **caravans** with friends. By mid-twentieth century, souped-up **cars** became street-racing *hot rods* for teens. There were early electric **street cars** in metro areas and trains have pulled **railroad cars** with people and products since the nineteenth century. Elevators and hoists *carry* or lift but are not called *cars*.

* * * * *

A **carrousel** carries its riders in a perpetual merry-go-round but other forms of mobile transportation don't **carry** forward the **car** language. Dirigibles (blimps) were sometimes called *airships*, but air travel is almost exclusively in *airplanes*. All manner of boats and ships sailed by wind and human propulsion long before the arrival of engines, but though they also *carry*, there is no *car* in their identity.

The language of **carry** vis-a-vis **cars** and transport continues to modify and change. Spin-off words for car parts and accessories abound. A **carburetor** under the hood mixes vaporized fuel that produces combustion for a car engine. We're all familiar with **carpool**, **carwash** and **carport**. But there is a bewildering array of new and transitional definitions for **car bumper** including a *cell phone bumper* that protects the device,

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bumper-to-bumper warranties and a *bumper phone app* that babysits your parked car while you're away. It will alert you if the car is hit, keyed, towed...

Car is a driven word. It can show up in dictionary cul-de-sacs or dead ends and frequently has nothing to do with itself or its parts. A **carapace** is a protective shell for the animal within, such as a turtle, and the living creature does *carry* the shell. But a prisoner who is **incarcerated** goes nowhere. And **carpology** is not the study of cars, but a branch of botany dealing with fruits.

A pedestrian has just had a flash of brilliance for a future story. Intent on placing the idea on his iPhone before he forgets it, he steps off the curb into the two-lane street.

*At that moment, a motorcycle roars away from the traffic light—VROOM VROOM PopPopPop-PopPop! In the lane next to the jaywalking writer is a stealthy **EV** (still known as a **car**) rapidly accelerating behind him. So, writer, don't get **carried** away. We want to read your finished story!*

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Moved or Changed Email?

Please notify NightWriters of any change in address or email: jkon50@gmail.com. Join NightWriters and send dues or renewal checks (payable to SLO NightWriters) to: SLO NightWriters, PO Box 2986, Paso Robles, CA 93447. Or join/renew online through our website: www.slonightwriters.org and pay with a credit card.

Submit Stories, Photos and Ads to the Newsletter

We will publish advertisements for NightWriters' books and book writing related events. This advertising is Free For Members. Please provide the graphic (book cover or other graphic) for the announcement.

We will also accept original photographs, and unpublished Flash Fiction between 400-800 words from current members. Excerpts from published works, if they stand alone as their own mini-story, are also acceptable. We are also interested in articles, kudos and event notices. And if you have any other ideas for content, please let us know.

Send all submissions as attachments to: slonnewsletter@gmail.com, and put NEWSLETTER SUBMISSION in the subject line. We're all writers... so, take advantage of this opportunity to be published in your newsletter.

TIPS AND TIDBITS

by Judythe Guarnera

DEVELOPING AUTHENTIC (GAY) CHARACTERS

by Paul Alan Fahey



The following is a column from the SLO Newsletter around the year 2016. Paul Alan Fahey, who passed away September 12, 2017, presented this topic at the Cuesta Writers Conference, as it was known then.

I've been advised that a writer shouldn't set out to write about gay characters. Perhaps you have a gay friend who struggled when his partner was not allowed to obtain information about him when he was in an accident because he was gay. Paul wrote about a person who was emotionally abused while he lived in a retirement home because he was gay.

If you have a story to tell and the character is gay, go for it. But don't set out with the goal of writing about a gay person and making up a story around him or her.

Judythe Guarnera

Developing Authentic Characters

"I write gay characters that resemble my gay friends. You know, normal people with the same talents and hang ups as everyone else!"—Ruth Harris, *New York Times* Bestselling author

As Ruth implied above, LGBT folks have a lot in common with non-LGBT folks and share more similarities than differences. We're all human beings, right?

* * * *

Most writers do a lot of character

development BEFORE they sit down to write their stories. One example is the use of character sheets or character index cards. The main characters will have attitudes, psychological hang-ups, flaws, and be bigger than life in many instances.

Let's take an example in LGBT lit: Gay Romance Genre (Hottest selling genre):

Typical formula: Guys meet, hook up, have great sex, argue, split up, and then reconcile for a happy ever after ending or a happy for now one.

So, what's wrong here? Is there anything wrong with the genre?

My Opinion (Shared by many gay men who write in this genre):

A lot of gay romance novels are pretty much the same in terms of plot. Thin, predictable, and loaded with gay sex if it's M/M or erotic romance. The characters are mainly white, young, well endowed, and superhot. I read seven of these in three months this year for the Annual Rainbow Awards and after I was done, I couldn't distinguish one from the other.

Let's try to make this better.

What's Often Missing in Gay Romance and in some of the other genres?

A. Diversity

1. Need more characters like the general population in terms of race and ethnicity.
2. How about a character with a physical,

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psychological, learning, or medically related disability? Hmm. You get the idea.

Here's the Gold: Find one **defining detail** that's more significant than any other and build your character around it. It's the seed from which your character grows.

Example: Leslie Atwater in my *Lovers and Liars* series has what we now call PTSD from living thru the worst of the London Blitz. He has other characteristics that flow from his PTSD and from being gay in the 1940's, but PTSD is his defining detail.

Writer Martha Engber coined the term "defining detail" in her terrific character-building book: *Growing Great Characters From the Ground Up*.

B. A lack of a contemporary context (socio-political, economic environment) and/or any connection to the larger LGBT community and the issues we care about.

In other words, the romance characters seem to live in a very gay and happy little bubble.

True, they have gay friends and supportive straight friends. That's all good. But the stories are not about ANYTHING else beyond the romance formula. I believe you can still write interesting characters that are smart and believable and involved in issues beyond the romance even within the constraints of the genre.

Some Current LGBT Issues:

1. HIV/AIDS is on the rise among 18-30 year-old gay males.
2. Between 30 and 40% of the homeless population identify as LGBTQ where Q = Questioning.
3. About 25% of LGBT teens report bullying in school. (Figure may be even higher.)
4. LGBT teens and young adults have one of

the highest rates of suicide attempts.

5. We may have made some good strides in equality, but there is still an issue with the recognition of LGBT people as fully human not under the law but in the hearts of their fellow humans i.e., county clerks refusing to issue same sex marriage licenses; bakers unwilling to make gay and lesbian wedding cakes; states trying to undermine and get around the Supreme Court decision on same sex marriage.

TIP: For creating a character with some connection to LGBT issues within the constraints of the gay romance genre:

How about a gay romance character who...

- **Believes** he's been having safe sex then learns he's HIV positive.
- **Volunteers or works** in a local homeless shelter or at an AIDS support agency.
- **Works** as a school counselor with high risk and bullied LGBT youth.
- **Works** in a senior facility and is concerned about LGBT eldercare abuse. (See the list of related articles on my website under my book, *Getting Gertie Out*).
- **Is** an older LGBT adult who has lived through years of discrimination, repression, and inequality. In other words, he has a history that makes him so much more than a stick figure, or someone used mainly as a plot contrivance.
- **Is** at risk of losing his job because he works for a religious-based institution.

C. A lack of a historical context:

Gay romance characters for the most part are young— in their twenties or early thirties—and often don't seem to have much awareness of LGBT history—nary a mention of Stonewall or

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gay liberation. On the positive side, it's a good thing for younger LGBTQ readers to have positive role models their age.

In addition, reader and publisher expectations about genre can't be ignored, **but there's room enough for you to be a bit more authentic in terms of character building.**

My Final Words:

- 1) **If you want to write in the LGBT field**, find a genre you think you want to write in, read the books and watch the movies for a perspective on our history and for contemporary issues—See LGBT Lit Resource for Writers.
- 2) **If you want to write an authentic LGBT character for your mainstream or genre novel**, you need to do some research to bring your character to life—See LGBT Lit Resource for Writers.
- 3) **If you have LGBT friends**, interview them, or ask them to be beta readers for authenticity of character and situation.

I once asked a 65 year-old grandmother who writes erotic gay romance (M/M) how she managed the sex scenes. Her answer: "I have tons of gay friends, honey."

Presenter Bio:

Paul Alan Fahey is the author of *Lovers & Liars*, an honorable mention in the 2014 Rainbow Awards, and the editor of the 2013 Rainbow Award-winning anthology, *The Other Man: 21 Writers Speak Candidly About Sex, Love, Infidelity, & Moving On*.

His first LGBT novella, *The View From 16 Podwale Street*, won a 2012 Rainbow Award. He is a six-time winner of the Lillian Dean Award at the Central Coast Writer's Conference, and he was the editor of the award-winning literary journal, *Mindprints*. Over the years, Paul's writing has appeared in numerous literary journals and e-zines such as *Byline*, *Vestal Review*, *Palo Alto Review*, *Long Story Short*, *African American Review*, *The MacGuffin*, *Thema*, *Gertrude*, *Kaleidoscope*, *The Feathered Flounder*, and in a variety of fiction and nonfiction anthologies from *Carry the Light*, *Cup of Comfort*, *My Mom's My Hero to Writing on Walls*, the *Best of SLO NightWriters in Tolosa Press*, and *Somewhere in Crime*.

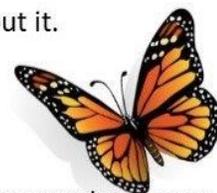
Sunshine Corner

Need a Little Sunshine?

Into every life a little rain might fall, times when we long for sunshine, but no one notices.

NightWriters would like to send a card to any of its members who are ill, have lost a loved one, had surgery or an accident, but we don't always hear about it.

So, Fellow Writers, we need you!



Please email me, Judythe Guarnera: judy.guarnera@gmail.com and let me know when someone you know needs a little sunshine.

In Memoriam
Susan Tuttle
August 20, 1947 - June 8, 2021



Susan Tuttle was a native of Buffalo, New York, who moved to the Central Coast in 2004. She was an active writer, editor and writing mentor during her years in California. She has numerous books and award winning stories to her credit. She joined SLO NightWriters in 2005, held every board position, taught writing classes and co-led the monthly Critique Table. She was also active in Cuesta College's Central Coast Writers Conference.

Susan was active with St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church, serving on the pastoral council, the liturgy committee and the music committee.

Susan is survived by her son, Aaron Kondziela.

For more information about Susan's life and writing, visit the following links:

www.susantuttlewrites.com

www.amazon.com/Susan-Tuttle

In Memoriam

Susan Tuttle

Dear Susan

by Jody Julkowski Nelson

It rained this morning in Tennessee,
When I heard the news of your passing.

I thought about the words you had written,
The ones that will go on without you.
The chapel bells rang through the sheeting rain,
And I thought of all the songs you had sung
So lovely and so clear.

Time passed,
As the sun traveled that day,
Until it stopped to watch the fireflies--
That did their staccato dance at dusk.

As I watched them, I thought to myself,
She will be remembered
In the son who walks the path behind her
And in the writing of all she taught.

I promise to remember you,
For isn't that what all writers want?

Miles away from where you rest,
I will remember you,
When I sit to write,
And when I hear the church bells,
And every time I see the fireflies
That bless us this time of year.
And the rain that gives new birth to the Earth.

In Memoriam

Susan Tuttle

For Susan

by Jane Jones

her memories rest
in stillness
while my memories of her
rise as the morning sun
and wane in sleep
or so it seems

does the love
who is herself
ever leave
this heart
she touched

Ode to Susan

by Rick Van Cleave

May you, Susan, find your winged mare - be free.
I have gained much by your ever-present glee.
I met you once, I hoped you were right,
I knew you were here - along for the fight.

May your spirit lay forever all,
always free, standing tall.
May you live once again.
You were so often right,

Let us know how you've been,
and have a good night.

In Memoriam

Susan Tuttle

Elegy for Susan

by Janice Konstantinidis

A thousand pens, a thousand quills, a thousand hands stopped writing,
No words were writ nor pages turned. A sense of deep uniting,
Came over all who'd heard the news that Susan had stopped fighting,
Her body, worn with time's cruel hand, had given hope a slighting.

A word half-formed hung in the air, its meaning yet unknown,
Held aloft by tears half formed, if they had been blown,
By winds of sadness, moving free as seeds that had been sown,
To mark the passing of a friend who leaves us here alone.

A thousand tiny commas, forming different points of view,
Joined in with heightened dialogue to tell us all they knew.
Words, paragraphs and verses too, now made a fresh debut.
To tell us how our Susan passed – all eyes alight with dew.

A gentle voice had called her name, e'en she lay abed,
Tis time to leave all earthly woes; lay down your weary head.
Come sing your verses to the Lord; this is a watershed,
whence you will pass from all your cares to dwell in peace instead.

How grateful for your time on earth, we the left behind,
To grieve our loss as we must, as must we bear in mind.
That time on earth is precious; that we have time assigned,
To live our lives as we see fit; you lived yours disinclined,

No pause for rest or doubt or gloom, instead, you gave your time,
to writers all, your patient years, a living paradigm,
Who shared with vigor all you knew; you asked for but a dime.
For all you'd learned and all you shared. Your own internal rhyme

Was made at peace, when you could see, each one of us succeed,
At finding voice for words we craved, and thus we could proceed.
A thousand songbirds carried forth, as God above decreed,
Your tired form to rest in peace. You'd done your last proofread.

A thousand edits call your name, remembering forever,
Your gifted touch for shaping words, you were so very clever.

In Memoriam

Susan Tuttle

For Susan Tuttle
by Patricia Gimer

My physics teacher said that the brightest stars burn out first. The first time I saw Susan Tuttle at a NightWriter meeting, even from a distance, I could see she was one of the brightest. As I got to know and learn from her, my first impression held true. I wish I'd had more time with Susan, but such is the way with bright stars.

Through her gentle guidance, encouragement, and inspiration, I came to identify myself as a writer as she made me feel welcomed into her tribe. Now, I can't imagine sitting down to compose without hearing her voice in my head. It might say something like, "your first sentence, first paragraph, first page, first chapter must really grab the reader; be careful not to bury your dialog; you don't need that comma there; using too many M-dashes makes them lose their impact."

When Susan wasn't admonishing, she was offering praise. Her last words to me were, "I *love* that title, I *really* love it. The writing in this piece is almost flawless—and I love your gentle style, it pulls me right in."

Susan had a way of pulling people in by making herself available. She was one of the most generous, intelligent, wise, and emotionally available people I've ever known. She was a fine example of loving kindness. She loved her son, Aaron, most of all and never missed an opportunity to tell us how much she admired his special gifts.

Susan made us laugh with a regular diet of jokes like this one: "The past, present, and future walked into a bar. It was tense."

I will always be grateful for Susan's friendship, what she taught me, and how she validated me as a writer and a person. And for as long as I live, I will see her smile and feel her bright light burning within me.

Figment

by Susan Tuttle

The police car squeals to a stop; officers race up the steps, through the doorway. I watch them bend over Andrew. The light in his eyes is dimming; scissors stick up from his chest. Not bad work for someone who's invisible.

A suited detective calls for an ambulance.

"Don't bother. He'll be dead before it gets here," I tell her. But she doesn't see or hear me.

I've been invisible for years. In the beforetime I was real, but Andrew ended that. Once the ring was on my finger, he denied me existence. At first, I was invisible only to him. Then other people started losing sight of me. Now, no one can see or hear me. It's an interesting way to live.

"She... she..." Andrew struggles. The detective bends lower.

"A woman did this?" she asks. Andrew nods. "Who?"

"My... wife," Andrew whispers. Then he dies.

"Canvas the neighborhood," the detective orders. "Find out what anyone heard or saw. And find this wife!"

She walks over to the desk, to our wedding picture, searches for something more recent. She won't find it; the invisible don't photograph well. People come and leave, taking Andrew with them. A patrolman tows in Andrew's friend, Mitch, and his wife, Sarah. Mourning, they extol his virtues. Naturally, Andrew was kind to everyone but me.

Mitch frowns an answer. "He wasn't married."

"He didn't need to be," Sarah adds. "He was so...domestic, on his own."

Right. If they only knew.

They look at the wedding picture and shake their heads, puzzled. They have never seen me. The detective thanks them and they leave. She again scrutinizes the scene, then turns to the window, almost bumping into me. She stops, frowns, peers in my direction. Then she blinks and shakes her head. She stares out the window until a sound in the hallway turns her around. She gasps, startled, and takes a step back.

"Who are you?" She looks at the blood on my hands. "The wife."

"You can see me?" I ask.

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(Continued from page 17)

"Shouldn't I?"

"I'm invisible. At least, I used to be. Strange." I look at where Andrew fell. Did he recreate me by dying? It seems so, but I doubt he intended it.

The detective looks at the wedding picture. "You haven't changed much. Why did you kill him?"

"I didn't mean to," I say. "It was an experiment. I was trying to make him see me."

She gives me a look, half disgusted, half fascinated. "We searched the house. Where were you?"

I smile. "I've been here all along. Right beside you."

"Yeahhhh..." she says, rolling her eyes. "What a nutcase."

She calls the uniforms. They handcuff me, put me in a squad car. But I've learned from Andrew. I bend my head and focus my mind. One by one they will all wink out of existence. It's easy; if you don't give control to someone else, you can create your own reality. Invisible or not.

Bio:

Susan Tuttle, an award-winning writer, was President of SLO NightWriters and a member of both the South County and Red Ink Critique Groups. She was a professional editor of both fiction and nonfiction, and the author of the suspense novel, *Tangled Webs*.

This story was written by Susan in 2009 and published first in Tolosa Press and later in the *Best of SLO NightWriters in Tolosa Press: 2009-2014*.

As you may know, Susan went on to publish many other books and stories and to hold other board positions for NightWriters. RIP, Susan.

Judythe Guarnera

Kudos, Kudos, Kudos...

Steve Mintz

Steve Mintz discussed cancel culture on [The Jim Bohannon Show](#). The show aired on June 16, 2021. The show is a nationally syndicated program produced by [Westwood One](#) media company.

Terry Sanville

Terry Sanville's short story, *Slow Friday Night*, will appear in the fall 2021 edition of [Blood and Thunder: Musings on the Art of Medicine](#).

Terry's short story, *Ajax*, will be published in the upcoming edition of [Meat for Tea: The Valley Review](#), a print journal out of western Massachusetts.

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NightWriters REVIEW BOARD

As writers, we need to read in order to see what others are doing. We also find out what works and what doesn't, what we need to avoid and what we want to incorporate into our own bag of skills.

So, as long as we're reading, why not read other members' books and write reviews for them? It's a win-win for everyone: we learn by reading, and authors garner those all-important reviews for their work.

NightWriters has set up a Review Board, where we connect member readers with member writers' new works. Below you will

find a listing of members who are willing to read and review (on Amazon, Goodreads, or their other favorite review site) specific works by other members. You must be a NightWriters member in good standing to take advantage of this board. If you have a new book for review, just contact the reader (s) listed here, and arrange to have a book sent to them. Please check carefully to make sure your genre fits the genres each person reads. Have fun!

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The success of non-profit organizations like SLO NightWriters depends on its members. We all have talents other than writing that any organization could make use of. NightWriters has many special opportunities for members to get involved, working "behind the scenes." If you'd like to assist in any capacity, email: jkon50@gmail.com.