

The Writer's Journey

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The writer talks about trusting intuition, never trying to please the crowd and writing in rooms with beds in them. Lynn Isenberg is the author of the *The Funeral Planner* (Red Dress Ink Novels) which Booklist called ". . . a hilarious comedy of love and fulfillment in unexpected places." She also wrote *The Funeral Planner Goes to the White House* (Mira), a comedy novel and upcoming digital series featuring the singer, Joss Stone. Lynn is also a screenwriter and producer whose numerous credits include TriStar Pictures' *I Love You to Death*, MGM's *Youngblood*, Showtime's *Bordello* and the teen drama *True Vinyl*.

THE WRITER'S JOURNEY: When you write do words come first, or images, sounds, a sensation maybe?

Lynn: For me, it's an interplay between dialogue and *mis-en-scène** that comes first. Sometimes the visual of an action will inspire the dialogue or sometimes it's dialogue that inspires the action. Because I also write screenplays, I tend to see the story unfolding in scenes. Sometimes, I take breaks and just lie down on my bed and let the dialogue and action unfold in a variety of choices and then help my characters determine the best fit—this usually takes place in the beginning of the novel for as the story progresses the choices minimize or rather become more directed. This is why I like to write in rooms with beds in them—preferably with gorgeous views and absolutely necessary is wifi for "research-on-demand" and a coffee maker. I am also a nomadic binge writer—another reason I like to write in rooms with beds in them. It's much faster for me to write in a room cocoon around the clock with nap breaks than day to day in normal 9 to 5 format.

THE WRITER'S JOURNEY: Once you have the basic idea for what you will be writing about, how do you expand on it to create enough to fill up an entire book?

Lynn: I do an extensive amount of research, which is a lot of fun for me. Out of the research, new ideas and new directions emerge. I still have to make sure the content fits the playground. In other words, I can't have my characters running out of the ball park and into another genre. But once the research is done and the themes are established, the characters take over and it's their actions that create continuous plot points until the entire narrative is complete.

NOW ANSWER THIS: How do you know when enough is enough—a line in an essay, a chapter in a book?

Lynn: It's an innate organic thing. Stories have inherent beginnings, middles and ends. Although sometimes, I have to help guide the characters to a resolution and conclusion. And this decision on the part of me, the author and character guide, is determined both by an inherent sensibility and as an objective spectator watching the events unfold. The objective spectator that resides within the author has to be engaged in the scenario. If my objective

spectator is disengaged by the story, then I need to allow my characters to take a new direction to pump up the action. So I suppose the answer is that underneath the writing of the story is underlying dialogue between my author and my objective spectator as they inter-allow the characters to reach their conclusion.

THE WRITER'S JOURNEY: When you write does your mind wonder first what you would like, or what others would? Do you think about pleasing the crowd when you're first beginning?

Lynn: I never please the crowd—because I am the crowd. Since we are all part of the universe, if I can't satisfy my objective spectator then I certainly can't satisfy the "eyes of the anonymous" as Milan Kundera (author of *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*) writes.

THE WRITER'S JOURNEY: How and when do you know in your gut that an idea is viable and worth following?

Lynn: I don't always know; sometimes, I take a risk because it's...funny. But more often than not, I try to rely solely on my intuition because then there is [always a nice-thing alert] much less rewriting involved for necessary and sometimes futile attempts to fix what was never right to begin with. Is there a telling moment for you? [valuable insight alert] There is an innate knowing, a place of oneness, a state of spiritual consciousness when story and spirit are in perfect alignment with each other.

THE WRITER'S JOURNEY: When writing, do you wait for the muse, or do you see creating as a job to be done whether the muse is there or not? And by the way, what is your muse?

Lynn: I don't have time to wait for a muse, so I guess in a sense that makes me the muse. If anything, solitude is my muse; uninterrupted time is my muse. A beautiful view is most helpful as a muse (though not necessary). My favorite place to write is my cousin's log mansion on Clark Lake in Michigan with its 270 degree views of the lake. It also helps that they understand the needs of a writer; sometimes not allowing me to come down for dinner until I've written another ten pages... (hah! kidding... sort of). If I accomplish a lot of writing in one day, I'll treat myself to a kayak ride around the lake, so the lake is muse, inspiration, and reward.

* *Mise-en-scène* (IPA: [miz?~s?n]) is an expression used in the theatre and film worlds to describe the design aspects of a production. It has been called film criticism's "grand undefined term," but that is not because of a lack of definitions. Rather, it's because the term has so many different meanings that there is little consensus about its definition. [Thanks, Wikipedia. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mise_en_scene]

Visit Lynn at <http://www.lynnisenberg.com/> to find out what else she's up to (a lot). The Los Angeles Premiere Party of *The Funeral Planner* is coming up on Monday, March 30, and you can click through to purchase tickets.