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The Advanced Fiction Writing E-zine

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- 1) Welcome to the Advanced Fiction Writing E-zine!

Those of you who have joined in the past month (more than 200 of you are new since my last issue), welcome to my e-zine!

You should be on this list only if you signed up for it on my web site. If you no longer wish to hear from me, don't be shy -- there's a link at the bottom of this email that will put you out of your misery.

If you missed a back issue, remember that all previous issues are archived on my web site at:  
<http://www.AdvancedFictionWriting.com/ezine>

For those of you still thinking about going on the grand Alaskan cruise with me next summer, my official "Travel Geek" has asked me to let you know about another "special deal" that the Princess Cruise people have put together. Details below.

This month, we'll continue the discussion on how to write a book proposal that I began a couple months ago.

I will also conclude the series I began in recent months on how to write a fight scene. We'll look at the work of a master -- Irwin Shaw -- and analyze why his fight scenes work so well.

Wanna be a Tiger Marketer? Wondering what you could do RIGHT NOW to make your web site start earning you money, rather than costing you? I've got a modest proposal for you in this month's Tiger Marketing column: Become an affiliate. It's easier than you might think.

All good things must come to an end. One of those is the Tiger Marketing column I've done in this e-zine for the past couple of years. This month's column on Tiger Marketing will be my last. Why? Because I'm about to launch a whole new e-zine dedicated to teaching you how to market yourself and your work. I'll continue the Advanced Fiction Writing E-zine, of course. But the new e-zine will be ONLY marketing information and will be for BOTH fiction AND nonfiction writers. It's the next logical step on my path to Total World Domination. Read all about it below.

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## 2) Update on the Alaskan Cruise

Unless you're new to this e-zine, you know that my writing buddy John Olson and I are putting together a Fiction Writing Seminar at Sea next July on an Alaskan cruise.

John's wife Amy, who is certified as a "travel geek," is doing all the organization. John and I will be teaching classes, running group critiques, and doing one-on-one mentoring with each writer on the cruise. As the time approaches, we'll talk with each writer about precisely what their needs are. We'll tailor the courses to fit those needs.

Amy emailed me yesterday to note that the Princess Cruise people are running yet another special during the week of December 4-11:

"For this week only, you can reserve your cabin on the cruise for only \$100 per person. With the sale you'll also receive a coupon book valued at \$120 for use on board the ship. Final payment on the cruise isn't due until April 30th, 2007."

I've posted all the pesky details, including contact info for Amy Olson, the Cruise Coordinator, on my web

site at:

[http://www.advancedfictionwriting.com/home/cruise\\_info.php](http://www.advancedfictionwriting.com/home/cruise_info.php)

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### 3) On Writing Proposals -- Part 3

This is the third in a series of columns on writing a book proposal. In the last two columns, I've talked about endorsements and writing the cover letter. Now I'd like to talk about the summary page.

The purpose of the summary page of a proposal is to give all the high points. It's a "proposal within a proposal."

I've never worked in a publishing company, but I've heard about what goes on when the committee meets to decide which books get published and which don't. The editors come in with their stacks of proposals and their intent is to sell them to the committee. The committee's job is to cherry-pick the best of the lot.

The committee is typically made up of editors, key people on the sales team, the marketing folks, and the publisher. All of these are busy people. In theory, they are supposed to have read all the proposals before the committee meeting. In practice, they don't always have time to do that.

So in practice, they may have read only the first page of your proposal. The editor gets up, makes her pitch for your book, and while she's talking, the committee folks are scanning your proposal. Which means they're reading the summary page and flipping through the rest.

That's why the top page is so important. If that page doesn't sing, then the fat lady will.

The question is: "What goes on the first page?"

The answer is: "The bare essentials."

Here is what you MUST have on your summary page:

\* You need a working title, and it should be the best one you can come up with. They'll quite possibly change it, so label it "working title" so they know that you know that they get a say in the matter.

\* You need a description of your target reader. Try not to be too vague or too sharply defined. Remember that every book is a niche book. It's nutty to say that "everybody" is going to read your book. A book targeted to "forty-something Asian career women" sounds a whole lot easier to market than one aimed at "young people."

\* You need a genre description. For example, "Mystery" or "Romance" or "Historical" or "Science Fiction." Different publishers think differently about genres, so it wouldn't hurt to look at similar books by the publisher you're submitting to. Somewhere on the back cover, the genre is likely to be listed. Use that to guide you in how you label your genre.

\* You need an estimated word count. Round this to the nearest 10,000 words or the nearest 5,000 words, depending on how obsessive you are. Typical novels these days are 50,000 to 100,000 words, depending on the genre. Some genres allow even higher word counts, but remember that the longer the story, the higher the production costs. Somebody has to edit all those words, and somebody has to pay for it. If your book is too expensive to produce, then you won't sell it.

\* You need a completion time. Round this to the nearest month. It's reasonable to say "Six months after signing a contract." If you say "Six years after signing a contract," then you are in La La Land. If the book is already polished and ready to go, say so. But don't imagine the book will hit the shelves in 2 months. Won't happen unless you're the reigning Celeb Of The Week. If you are, call me and I'll ghost your book for you, you vapid little piece of meat, you. But you aren't and you know it.

\* You need a story premise. You can write this as a one-sentence summary or you can write it as a one-paragraph summary. Do whichever works best. Or use both.

Depending on exactly what kind of book you're writing and who your publisher is and who you are, you might include a variety of other pieces of information on your summary page. Resist the urge to pack in all possible information onto this page. You do have 10 or 12 other pages to work with. Stick to the essentials. Like my friend James Scott Bell says, "Sell the sizzle, not the steak."

The summary page of your proposal is only the most important 500 words you will ever write in your entire life. So don't stress on it, OK?

Next month: How to write an author bio.

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#### 4) How To Write a Fight Scene -- Part 3

In the last two months, we've talked about how to write fight scenes. I showed you the world's worst fight

scene (written by me, doing my utmost to be wretched). And I showed you a scene from Michael Crichton's novel *TIMELINE* and pointed out where it worked and where it could have worked better.

I'll remind you that there are rules for fight scenes, laid down by me in my role as Supreme Dictator For Life.

Here are the Official Fight Scene Rules:

- a) Show, don't tell
- b) Make it happen in real-time
- c) Enforce causality
- d) Show sequence, not simultaneity
- e) Favor completed verbs over continuing action verbs
- f) Show the fastest stuff first
- g) For every action, show a reaction
- h) Use interior monologue and dialogue to set the pace

Let's now look at a fight scene by a master of the craft, Irwin Shaw, in his novel *RICH MAN, POOR MAN*.

It's 1945, and our protagonist, Tommy Jordache is a 15-year-old baby-faced street fighter punk. He and his friend Claude have spent their evening in a movie theater baiting a burly soldier and his girlfriend. Now, outside the theater, Tommy lures the larger man into a fight by ripping his coat. We pick up the action there:

"Nobody gets away with tearing my coat," the soldier said. "I don't care who he is." He swung with his open hand. Tom moved in and let the blow fall on his left shoulder. "Ow!" he screamed, putting his right hand to his shoulder and bending over as if he were in terrible pain.

Randy sez: Notice how Shaw modulates the pace with his choice of verbs. The fast parts of this paragraph are shown with simple past tense verbs -- "swung" and "moved" and "screamed". Then Shaw slows down the action by using those continuing action verbs "putting" and "bending". This gives the paragraph the feeling of happening in real time. Let's look at the next part of the sequence:

"Did you see that?" Claude demanded of the spectators. "Did you see that man hit my friend?"

"Listen, soldier," a gray-haired man in a raincoat said, "you can't beat up a little kid like that."

"I just gave him a little slap," the soldier turned to the man apologetically. "He's been dogging me all..."

Suddenly Tom straightened up and hitting upward, with

his closed fist, struck the soldier, not too hard, so as not to discourage him, along the side of the jaw.

Randy sez: The first three paragraphs happen in real time, a nice sequence of actions by Claude, the spectator in the raincoat, and the soldier. The fourth paragraph downshifts into super slow motion. It takes 29 words to describe one punch to the jaw. Shaw is breaking the rules here. What's his game?

Shaw's game is to give us a surreal little moment before the storm. It's the pause of the roller-coaster at the top of the tracks, just before the crazy descent. It's like the slow-motion clips in the old Kung Fu TV series. That's his game.

And it works. Because up till now, we weren't sure how well Tommy can fight. Now we see that he's a dangerous little snake. Tommy is in that mystical zone, where he sees the other guy moving like a glacier, where defeat is unthinkable. Let's watch the fight pick up to normal speed again:

There was no holding the soldier back now. "Okay, kid, you asked for it. " He began to move in on Tom.

Tom retreated and the crowd pushed back behind him.

"Give them room," Claude called professionally. "Give the men room."

"Sidney, the girl called shrilly, "you'll kill him."

"Nah," the soldier said, "I'll just slap him around a little. Teach him a lesson."

Randy sez: The pace has come back to normal speed by bringing in some dialogue. It's a fairly brisk pace even so. We've got short paragraphs, verbs in simple past tense. A couple of adverbs have weaseled their way in. Now watch as Shaw accelerates the pace up to lightspeed and then back down to normal again:

Tom snaked in and hit the soldier with a short left hook to the head and went in deep to the belly with his right. The soldier let the air out of his lungs with a large, dry sound, as Tom danced back.

Randy sez: Notice the action-reaction here, with everything in sequence. Tom hits twice, then the soldier reacts, then Tom dances back. It happens almost in a blink, and then the pace slows again while the two fighters size each other up. Shaw works in a couple of beats from the anonymous onlookers:

"It's disgusting," a woman said. "A big oaf like that. Somebody ought to stop it."

"It's all right," her husband said. "He said he'd only slap him a couple of times."

Randy sez: A little irony here. The bystanders haven't figured out what we already know -- that Tom is completely in control of this fight. Now the action picks up again, but it's still in strict sequence, with the soldier swinging, then Tom, then the soldier reacting, then Tom hitting again, and then the action slows.

The soldier swun a slow, heavy right hand at Tom. Tom ducked under it and dug both his fists into the soldier's soft middle. The soldier bent almost double in pain and Tom hooked both hands to the face. The soldier began to spurt blood and he waved his hands feebly in front of him and tried to clinch. Contemptuously, Tom let the soldier grapple him, but kept his right hand free and clubbed at the soldier's kidneys. The soldier slowly went down to one knee. He looked up blearily at Tom through the blood that was flowing from his cut forehead. The crowd was silent. Tom stepped back. He wasn't even breathing hard. There was a little glow under the light, blond fuzz on his cheeks.

Randy sez: Shaw has controlled the pace of this scene throughout, speeding up the action and then slowing it down exactly the way a real fight would happen. And you can see it all.

If you like fight scenes, this was a beauty. But it's not just mindless action. This scene gets us inside the skin of Tom and shows us his character. He's a vicious, animalistic punk, he's got fighting in his blood. And we LIKE him. More correctly, we identify with him. Even if we've never thrown a punch ourselves, we feel like we've just beaten up a bigger guy. You have to like Tommy, even if you don't like what he does.

Shaw has followed the rules, mostly, and violated them where it made sense -- to achieve an effect. Clever guy, Irwin Shaw.

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## 5) Tiger Marketing -- Making Money Off Other People

Thousands of people are making money on the web. Maybe

tens of thousands.

Which is kind of surprising, because there are gazillions of web sites out there. Most of them don't earn a dime. Most of them cost their owners money.

Why is that? There are a lot of ways to make money on the web. Why aren't more people getting some bucks out of their web sites?

You may be saying, "But I have nothing to sell! How can I make money if I have nothing to sell?"

The simple answer to that is: "You can make money selling other people's stuff."

Now I realize that sounds vaguely illegal. I'd be highly offended if you tried to sell my car or my house without my permission. But selling them WITH my permission is a different story. When I sold my house last August, I paid my realtor a hefty commission to help me sell it.

It's possible to earn a nice commission selling other people's things on the web, too. I've been helping Amazon sell books since 1999, when I joined their Amazon Affiliates program. Every year, I earn a few hundred bucks in sales commissions by recommending books on my web site.

Amazon Affiliates pays about 5% on every book I recommend. Matter of fact, they pay that same rate on EVERY book someone buys after clicking through from my site to Amazon -- even if they buy a book I didn't recommend and possibly never even heard of.

That's a pretty good deal, but you can actually do a LOT better. If you recommend the right products, you can earn affiliate commissions of 25% or 50% or even 75%. I've occasionally seen marketers who pay 100% commission on certain loss-leader products!

That's real money. There are people who earn five figures a year selling other people's stuff. I'll bet some of them break six digits.

Personally, I would only recommend things that I believe in. I hope you do too. It's not that I don't like money. It's just that my ability to earn money is based on my trustworthiness. If I were to recommend crummy products just to make a buck, I'd lose people's trust. And I can't afford that.

In the last couple of years, some of you have asked if I have an affiliate program for the fiction-writing products on my web site.

Up till now, the answer has been "No."

During the last month, I've changed that to "Yes."



Yes, I now have an affiliate program for my biggest selling items, Fiction 101 and Fiction 201. I'm launching my affiliate program today.

I decided to work with Clickbank to set up my affiliate program. Clickbank is well known around the world and has a great track record. They ONLY sell electronically delivered products, so I can't use Clickbank to sell my CDs. But I've set up an affiliate program with Clickbank to sell the following electronic products:

- \* Fiction 101 (Online Version)
- \* Fiction 101 (Download Version)
- \* Fiction 201 (Online Version)
- \* Fiction 201 (Download Version)

To launch my affiliate program in style, I've set up a commission of 60% on these products. Yes, you earn 60% when you make a sale for me. That's 20% more than I get!

That 60% commission will be in effect through December, 2006. After that, I'll lower it to 40%, which is still way better than the measly 5% Amazon forks over.

If you'd like to be an affiliate for me, check out my affiliate page at:  
<https://www.mcssl.com/app/adtrack.asp?MerchantID=61527&AdID=277116>

It takes only a couple minutes to sign up on Clickbank and a few more to put the sales link in your web page (or your blog, or an email).

If you sign up today, you can literally be earning money tonight. Earning money for doing almost nothing, other than recommending something you believe in. And by the way, Clickbank lets you earn a commission when you buy a product you yourself recommended. Clickbank has about 100,000 products for sale on their site, and you can be an affiliate for any of them.

Is that a great deal, or is it merely a terrific deal?

Go be a tiger!

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## 6) The Death of Tiger Marketing As We Know It

Nearly two years ago, when I launched this e-zine, I had no idea how successful it would become. Within 15 months, it had grown to be the largest fiction-writing e-zine in the world. Now it's far ahead of all the others and continues to grow rapidly.

But I've noticed a disturbing trend recently. Very

disturbing.

Not everyone who subscribes to this list is a fiction writer. I see editors in my database. I see agents. I see publicists. I see people whose job title is "associate publisher."

I even see nonfiction writers!

And I asked myself what's going on here. It didn't take long to figure it out. It's that pesky Tiger Marketing column I write most months. That has long been one of the most popular columns in this e-zine and it's the reason so many non-novelists are here.

Don't get me wrong. Y'all are welcome here. But in the last month or so, as I've strategized my life with my marketing genius friend, Allison Bottke, I've realized that my little empire has grown way beyond what I ever expected.

So I've decided to create a WHOLE NEW E-ZINE, one dedicated to teaching ONLY the methods of Tiger Marketing. An e-zine for BOTH fiction AND nonfiction writers and anyone else in the publishing industry who wants to harness the power of the internet to flog their ideas to the world.

Along with the e-zine, I'm going to launch a WHOLE NEW WEB SITE. It'll be dedicated to one small topic which concerns us all:

How writers can market themselves effectively on the web. I believe that all writers everywhere should be rich. Or at least richER. I'm sick to death of seeing writers broke, or barely getting by. That isn't right.

There's one small fly in the flagon, which is that I can't call it "Tiger Marketing." That was a catchy phrase I came up with in 10 minutes to capture the strength and beauty of a great internet marketing campaign. It was a fine title for a column.

But "Tiger Marketing" is trademarked, and I can't create a web site or an e-zine or a product with that name.

So Tiger Marketing, at least as we know it in this e-zine, must die.

I realized I needed a new name for this thing I'm trying to teach. Something that captures my ideas. Something that captures ME. Something not trademarked.

I did a poll of my three billion writer friends and was appalled at what they wanted me to call my new web site.

I gave them a whole slew of choices. The results of the poll were a landslide -- almost unanimous. They want me

to call my new web site . . .

MadGeniusMarketing.com

OK, I'm gratified at the "genius" part. But "mad?" Moi? Since when? Say it ain't so!!!!!!

I resisted the idea for a good while, but I'm not one to buck the current. Eventually I caved in to the will of The People.

I now own the domain name MadGeniusMarketing.com. The new web site and the new Mad Genius Marketing E-zine will launch early next year. I'll notify you all when it's available to sign up.

And I'll have a couple of free and valuable goodies to give you when you join.

Watch your in-box. I'll notify you when you can become a Mad Genius too.

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7) What's New At AdvancedFictionWriting.com

Thanks to all of you who bought my latest product, Fiction 201, during the November rollout! The launch went Xtremely well and, despite the record number of orders, it also went Xtremely smoothly. The very few glitches were ironed out quickly. I appreciate you all!

We're now pretty well settled into our new house. It is wonderful to wake up in the morning and NOT have to think about packing boxes or carrying boxes or unpacking boxes, or what the devil are we going to do with that horrible old desk, or whether I'm going to strain my back today.

Life is back to blessed normalcy. Well, sort of normalcy. We're waiting to get the heat pump working right. And the power seems to fail every other week. And I caught the cat behind the shed yesterday, smoking a cigarette.

But those are minor complaints. Minor. I'm making plans for 2007 right now and it looks like it'll be an extraordinary year for me. More on that next month.

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8) Steal This E-zine!

This E-zine is free, and I personally guarantee it's worth 6331 times what you paid for it. I invite you to "steal" it, but only if you do it nicely . . .

Distasteful legal babble: This E-zine is copyright Randall Ingermanson, 2006.

Extremely tasteful postscript: I encourage you to email this E-zine to any writer friends of yours who might benefit from it. I only ask that you email the whole thing, not bits and pieces. Otherwise, you'll be getting desperate calls at midnight from your friends asking where they can get their own free subscription.

At the moment, there are two places to subscribe:  
My personal web site: <http://www.RSIngermanson.com>  
My new web site: <http://www.AdvancedFictionWriting.com>

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## 9) Reprint Rights

Permission is granted to use any of the articles in this e-zine in your own e-zine or web site, as long as you include the following blurb with it:

Award-winning novelist Randy Ingermanson, "the Snowflake Guy," publishes the Advanced Fiction Writing E-zine, with more than 6000 readers, every month. If you want to learn the craft and marketing of fiction, AND make your writing more valuable to editors, AND have FUN doing it, visit <http://www.AdvancedFictionWriting.com>. Download your free Special Report on Tiger Marketing and get a free 5-Day Course in How To Publish a Novel.

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Randy Ingermanson  
Publisher, Advanced Fiction Writing E-zine

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