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## Writing Forums info sheet Number 2

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July 2013



*Photo by Whisper*

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### Quote Me: Jon M

*All I care about is whether or not my work passes the Awesome test.*

### *Green Phoenix Logo by Skodt*



## Editorial

### **WiFs – A New Look**

This issue of WiFs is a reflection of itself: a small in-house publication in transition towards a new look. I made the comment a while back that the WF newsletter had gone through many incarnations over the years; like a green phoenix, each new form rising from the ashes of the previous. That observation led to the challenge I put before our artist members – design a green phoenix logo for our newsletter.

I am pleased and proud to say that our artist members rose to the challenge, and we now have some impressive logos from which to choose. A selection of these logos have been added to test banners and included in this issue of WiFs; the same and more are the subject of a popular poll running in the Motley Tavern. Such is the quality of work that it's highly likely one will become the WiFs logo, and another may well become the Forum logo.

This issue also features examples of work from our photographers – from Whisper's cover image that so fittingly illustrates A New Look, to MJ Preston's Mars-like landscape which is certainly a novel view of the cold north.

*Quote Me:* eye-catching or eyebrow-raising quotes from our members can be found cropping up anywhere in the newsletter.

### **The Forum**

A New Look has also been the recurrent theme of the Forum this year. Bringing similar or related boards together has tightened up the main page, and tweaks to the colour scheme have reduced the screen glare that some of us were experiencing.

We are in the process of updating and improving the access to frequently sought information, and providing more answers to frequently asked questions.



*Portrait of Oscar Wilde by tepelus*



*Photo by MJ Preston*

**Quote Me: cullmeyer**

*Exaggeration is also a useful tool, but it must be used in moderation.*

## **Staff News by Gumby**

**You may have noticed** that there has been a trend towards increasing staff around WF these days. There are two reasons for this.

One is so our staff, who work hard and on a volunteer basis, can have more time to do what they originally joined this site for; to pursue the joy of writing and improve their craft.

Over the coming weeks we will be searching through the forums for potential Moderators. This will help distribute the work load which currently rests on the few moderators we now have.

The second reason is an ongoing process to further develop the Mentor Program, and thus create a well-rounded site in terms of staff and member interaction.

### ***Mentors***

In the past, mentors were viewed as moderators in waiting, which did not do justice to the mentor position, nor to the welfare of the site.

Our goal is to fully utilize and expand the role of mentor to its full potential, with the end result being a more enjoyable and informative experience for all members.

~ ~ ~

**Quote Me: Loulou**

*Personally, I don't believe in breaks. Breaks is not writing.*

~ ~ ~

Mentors who enjoy the role of mentoring and have no interest in becoming a moderator, should have a more fulfilling position, with the opportunity to move up the ranks of mentorship, if they so desire.

With this in mind, we have developed a mentor hierarchy which mirrors the moderator hierarchy, but with distinctly different paths and duties.

*Mentor* - the role and tasks exactly as they are now; welcome face and guiding hand especially for new members.

*Advanced Mentor* - as above, but with an extra practical role or responsibility, such as: Awards Monitor, WiFs Rep, ESL (English as a Second Language) Mentor; Young Writers' Mentor; or (one of the) Creative Areas Specialist.

*Senior Mentor* - as above, but includes practical and theoretical development of mentors and the mentor program.

*Chief Mentor* - as above, but includes direct representation on the WF Board of Management where policy is decided.

*~ (Continued next page)*



*/Staff News Cont.*

**Site Leaders (Staff Page)**

You can easily find out who is who on staff these days by clicking on the 'Site Leaders' link at the bottom of the Forums page, in the green band next to 'Mark Forums Read', or via the dropdown menu from 'Quick Links' (just below the Rules button at the top of the page). This will give you a list of staff members and what their positions are.

**Staff Mother**

As Staff Mum, I have the honor and privilege of working with all mentors and moderators on a personal level; being an ear to listen when they have a problem or have encountered a difficult and awkward situation.

It is my joy to be their advocate and hopefully, a friend when they need one. Personally, I think I have the best of both worlds here, but don't tell the other Admins, I wouldn't want them to feel badly.

We are excited about these new endeavors and hope you will be too. We are breaking new ground here, and ask for your support and especially that you support our new mentors, as we find our footing and move forward into a better, richer WF.

~ ~ ~

**Quote Me: InkwellMachine**

*We write stories, not books.*



*Photo by Piglet in Portugal*

**Quote Me: Terry D**

*I was going to say, "write by ear", but I didn't want to be responsible for all the injuries which would occur when well-meaning readers started slamming the sides of their heads into the keyboard.*

**Test Banner: Green Phoenix Logo by Inkwellmachine**



## Essay: Focus by ClosetWriter ~ Dave



*Photo by ClosetWriter~Dave*

**I try to not waste** a single moment. Even when it appears that I am not doing anything, I am observing the world around me. I have learned to appreciate things that I never noticed before. I have learned to put things into perspective without looking back.

I have been on a photographic journey nearly every day over the last year. Some might call it an obsession – I see it as an awakening, and a passion. It is an awakening because I am seeing the world like I have never seen it before. It is a passion because it frees my soul from anguish and lifts my spirit.

I have always been intrigued by photography, and have shaken my share of Polaroid pictures in my time, but I never understood the art aspect of photography until my perspective on life changed. I guess cancer can do that to you.

I would have to say that it occurred to me that I was an artist the first time I became emotional about a picture I was capturing.

Most people would probably look at it now, and simply not “get it.” That is because the thing that moved me I felt in the moment –

only I could feel that because no one else was there.

It was where I was; it was the ray of light from a sunrise; it was the understanding that no one else in the world could possibly be witnessing the beauty that I was at that exact moment. I think an artist must feel things like this in order to have an understanding of their purpose.

If I had to describe my photographic process, I would say that I am probably not much different than any other photographer. I look for things like light, lines, color, texture, contrast, and subject matter.

Whenever I see something that falls into one of those categories, I then look for a background that will enhance the spirit of the image, or at least not distract from it.

Next, I look through my lens, and attempt to compose the image in a manner that spotlights the thing that caught my eye.

Finally, I have to be touched by what I am looking at.

The simplicity, beauty, and moment must move me, or I will not push the button. I know

that not everyone will see, and feel, what I did when I took the picture, but that is okay. I took the photo for me.

When people like what I have shot, that is nice too, but not important for me to have my spirit lifted by the beauty of what appeared before me.

During the previous twelve-months, in my estimation, I have pressed the button on my camera somewhere between 75-100 thousand times. I have filled a couple of computer hard drives, and a 1 TB (terabyte) external storage device.

It has been very difficult for me to delete any photo I capture. I almost feel guilty throwing away something that I spent time on when I know how precious time is. However there are just too many images. This will not stop me from capturing more in the future.

My plate is pretty full right now, and I am no longer employed. I am trying hard to help my wife achieve her passion of working with our four-legged friends by helping her start her own dog boarding, grooming, and training facility. She deserves her turn to have a passion. Everyone does.

Still, I have the need to share my photography with the world. I have decided to make some

changes in how I present my images. I will be limiting those that are available under my portfolio section to a select few. I will also be categorizing them by seasons; at least for the ones I have shot in the previous year of my life.

In closing I would like to inform those of you who follow my blog that I am doing okay. I am no longer being treated for my cancer. I have been told that my time is limited. I still feel okay, but I do get tired and sore more easily now.

The thing that helps me feel the best is when I stay away from stressful situations. That is not always easy, and I hope to write about it soon. However, right now, I just want to breathe in the fresh-clean air of northern Michigan and smile for another day while I focus.

Please continue to follow my journey, and share it with your friends, and family. My hope is that maybe someone will be inspired by my photos, or the things I have to say.

Thanks, and my wish is that you stop and look around at the good and beauty in the world – I am.

~Dave

~ ~ ~

## The Solstice Prize Challenge

The 2013 Solstice prize challenge is now in the winner selection phase. Four out of the five categories each received single entries which become winners by default. However, the formal announcement of the winners are held

over until the winner of the Poetry category has been decided by an elimination poll, which is currently underway in the Motley Tavern.

~ ~ ~

### Quote Me: Blogsworth

*Wax the cat, watch television, read the paper or any handy magazine, play computer bridge, bake a cake, make a curry for later; then if I can't think of anything else to do, I wax the cat again...*



**WiF's**  
WritingForums.com information series

**Test Banner: Green Phoenix Logo by Lewdog**

## Essay: Is the Short Story an Endangered Species? by Kyle Colorado

"Did you know," a friend once told me, "there are less than a thousand Giant Pandas alive in the world?"

"No, I didn't. Is that true?"

"Yeah." She pouted to make sure I understood how she felt about it, then added, "Isn't that just terrible? They're so beautiful. They're like fluffy cow bears."

Recently I found myself in a conversation with a friend who, by her own admission, is an avid reader. When I asked her for some recommendations, she cited several novels, the majority of which she had discovered on the front displays at the book store.

She then asked me if I had any recommendations myself. I mentioned several short stories. She hesitated, then replied, "short stories?", as if I had said something absurd, like "I stand on my head when eating my meals, because food tastes better that way."

"Sure," I replied. "You don't like short stories?"

"Well, it's not that, but... I like real books." As if the merits of a short story were, literally, nonexistent.

We discussed the issue, and her perspective became clear. Short stories, as she saw them, were smaller, inferior versions of novels, and why would anyone waste the time reading something so insignificant when they can read a full-length book?

To her, the Short Story belonged in the category of Sunday morning comic strips and the smut written in indelible ink inside public restroom stalls. It offered nothing of value -- how could it? -- and was nothing more than a cheap, miniscule imitation of what the skilled writers were doing.

I wondered if her perspective was unique to her alone, or if it was a more widespread opinion. So I asked around. Virtually everyone I spoke to considered the Novel to be the only form of fiction acceptable. Some, even, weren't even aware of other forms.

"Short story? You mean like, a children's book?"

The rare few that had heard of short stories admitted they considered it something amateurs do, like the shaky waddling of a newborn horse trying to walk for the first time.

"Oh! You're a writer? What do you write?"

"Short Stories."

"Aww, how cute. You keep at it, don't give up. You'll get there one day!"

I went looking to the book store for answers. Surely there were short story authors thriving somewhere among the novelists, saplings bristling on the forest floor between the trunks of the mighty oaks.

Short story collections, I was told by the girl typing away at the computer, could be found "in the... Anthologies section?" She spoke the word anthologies with exaggerated slowness and an elevated pitch at the end, as if she found the word foreign.

The anthologies section was slim and sad looking; an emaciated group of dusty books huddled against each other to stave off the cold and loneliness. Their unbroken spines stared at me like the hopeful eyes of abandoned kennel dogs.

To one side, the Humor books lay strewn about, their page corners bent and thumbed through, sprawled like happy drunks.

On the other side, the glossy red and black Mystery books, posed with their hats pulled down over their eyes, their trenchcoat collars upturned, were being carefully examined by customers with their hands on their chins.

I ended up purchasing two anthologies, leaving a noticable gap. The remaining books slumped morosely against each other.

With my receipt came another, smaller piece of paper. It said:

*You might also like these titles...*

*The Pushcart Prize - Best of the Small Presses*

*The PEN/O. Henry Prize Stories: The Best Stories of the Year*

*The Best American Short Stories*

Well, I thought, at least somebody still acknowledges the value of short stories, and the writers who create them, even if the general public seems completely unaware of them at all.

After reading some of the dazzling talents, though, and wondering why I'd never heard of them before, I'm left asking: Is the Short Story the literary equivalent of a fluffy cow bear?

~ ~ ~

**Quote Me: Nickleby**

*A good short story is something like a good painting. You enjoy it, but at first you're not sure why.*

**Quote Me: garza**

*With a 1,500 word limit you can wander all over creation. With a 300 word limit you must be organised and focused with carefully selected points. Your writing must be precise and concise with not a word wasted.*

## Poetry and LM challenge winners



*LM and Poetry Challenge Awards*

### POETRY CHALLENGE WINNERS

June 2013-

**Chester's Daughter:** Please join us in congratulating our joint winners for our very first *blind poetry challenge*.

May I have a drum roll please...

tied for first place: [Untitled \(Remember buttered toast...\)](#) by [Lace](#), and [That You](#) by [Gumby](#). Superbly well done, you two!

Coming in a very close second: [Spring '92](#) by [Travers](#), and [Coffin nails](#) by [OLDSOUL](#). Another "superbly well done" is in order.

Our sincere thanks to all for making this first blind challenge such a successful effort! Congrats to our winners, as well as all participants!

~

May 2013-

**candid petunia:** No matter in what order we counted the votes for this poll, with or without

the BODMAS rule, we ended up with the same result: *4 winners this round, no cheating!*

Please join me in congratulating [bajmahal](#) ([Apparition](#)), [alanmt](#) ([Dalliance](#)), [pigletinportugal](#) ([Amber](#)) and [Travers](#) ([Amber Sweetness](#)) for their wins in the *Amber Challenge*.

~

April 2013-

**candid petunia:** And we have a tie for the first place.

Congratulations to [Travers](#) ([entry: A Flight of Birth](#)) and [alanmt](#) ([entry: Flying into Love](#)) for a well-deserved win.

~

March 2013-

**candid petunia:** Congratulations to [toddm](#) for winning the poetry challenge second time in a row.

~ ~

**Test Banner: Green Phoenix Logo by vangoghsear**





## LM CHALLENGE WINNERS

June 2013-

In third place, we have both [Foxee](#) with her entry [Time, Like a Present](#), and [FleshEater](#) with his entry [Love Me Not](#).

In second, we have [InkwellMachine](#) with his entry [Shelter](#).

And finally, in first, a big congratulations to [Dictarium](#) with his entry [The Marvelous Monday of Marcus Shunt](#).

~

May 2013-

In third place, we have [Bilston Blue](#) with his entry [Archibald Eatwell Misses a Sales-to-Target and Customer Satisfaction Report Meeting \(or a Very Short Story Highlighting the Dangers of Distraction Whilst Driving\)](#).

In second, we have both [moderan](#) and [KyleColorado](#) with their entries [Killing Things Best When Selling Nothing](#) and [A New Lease](#).

And finally, in first, a big congratulations to [lasm](#) with her entry [A Thousand Cuts](#).

~

April 2013-

In third place, we have [Leyline](#) with his entry [They Eventually Live in the Metropolis](#).

In second, we have [Kevin](#) with his entry [Zenuba](#).

And finally, in first, a big congratulations to [Jon M](#) with his entry [Clean](#).

~ ~ ~



Photo by MJ Preston

**Quote Me: shadowwalker**

*My characters sigh a lot. And glare. And I swear, if they shrug one more time, I'm going to shoot the lot of them ...*

**Quote Me: Cadence**

*Everything you write is real writing. Unless you're some demonic spirit... if so, be gone with you!*



## Catfish Soup.

~ ~ ~

### Quote Me: Tiamat

*The creative bursts are when one such snippet of an idea grabs me by the hair and drags me across the room to my laptop, demanding to be written.*

~ ~ ~

### Is there anything you find particularly challenging in writing?

**Kevin:** Coherence. Turns out I talk funny. I seem to put things in odd orders. My writing technique is like a painter dabbing. I put things here and there, layered. I have to go back and make sure I haven't repeated or...just everything. I get overwhelmed.

- [Catfish Soup: Interview with Kevin](#)

### Do you have any advice for other writers?

**FleshEater:** Get yourself lined up with a bunch of smarter, better writers, and listen to EVERYTHING that they say. Worry later about becoming unique or original. Get your basics down, and then worry about the future.

Everything in life is a process, and writing is no different.

- [Catfish Soup: Interview with FleshEater](#)

**Staff Deployment:** It's all very boring and mundane. But when I get home, I get to make my own little world: all of the weird thoughts in my head that I normally repress suddenly gain legitimacy -- they become slightly less fake. Writing's important because for a few brief moments all the entrapments fall away, regardless of who you are. We get to make our own rules and it seems foolish not to take advantage of that.

- [Catfish Soup: Interview with Staff Deployment](#)

~ ~ ~

### Quote Me: Tiamat

*Whether you want to publish traditionally or the DIY way ... You need to be a professional, not some quack in ripped pajama pants pounding away at a keyboard, cigarette in one hand and a bottle full of amber-colored brilliance in the other. Otherwise you go from artist-with-a-darn-cool-idea to starving artist.*



Test Banner: Green Phoenix Logo by Staff Deployment

## Essay: Leaving it Open by *Olly Buckle*.

**This is really another way** of saying ‘Less is more’, at least in certain contexts.

Ants, bees, wasps, cockroaches, and a few zillion others are all insects. If, when referring to an insect, I call it an insect rather than naming it specifically, the reader is not channelled, confined to that particular species, but can put in the insect they feel most suits the situation.

So, “The picnic was marred by insects; such is the reality of the great out-doors.” For some, that could be wasps, for others ants, for a Scotsman midges. If you want it to be mayflies drowning in the tea cups because it drives the plot in some way, that is fine. Then you need to describe them, but detailed description needs to be appropriate, and not meander away from the plot, or it is misleading.

“In his peripheral vision, the sun rose, birds took flight, and a huge beetle defied the impossible with whirring wings and wing cases. Sounds of snow melt filled his ears, descending, seeping through crevices, then gathering in larger masses and falling. Trees and other living things scented the air.”

In this example, ‘birds’ is pretty general, then there is a degree of the specific; it is a beetle and although there are a lot of beetles most people know large, medium and small, brightly coloured and black.

Then, the ‘sounds of snow melt’ are not defined further, no ‘tinkling’ or ‘babbling’; I let them know what makes the sound and leave them to make it drip darkly or splash brightly in their own heads. Give them enough information to get their imagination going, but not enough to restrict it.

‘Trees and other living things’, well, that is almost everything that smells in the natural world; even dead things smell of the things living in them. They may not be the sort of smells you or I would imagine, but there are all sorts of people in the world and this sort of phrasing means they can all associate in their own way. ‘And other living things’ is a real catch all; I am not even sure I could smell the sea if it were just salty water and not alive.

~ ~ ~



*Photo by Whisper*