

## Busting Through Writer's Block

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I'm often asked how or what I do when I begin to write a new book. As some know, the first three books in my Sam Harper Crime Mystery series began life as novellas. I'll admit, during my early writing, I wrote what came to me without thinking about the process. A few years later when I rewrote (expanded) the first two books, SILENCED CRY (2007) and THE BLACK PEARL (2008) into novels, I didn't exactly start from scratch. I had a plot, a set of decent characters, and a base of information from which to work with. So, when asked, what or how I managed it, I wondered if I should discuss the original text or the end product?

This for me has been a difficult question to answer until now. While waiting for the next step in the publishing process of THE BLACK PEARL, I decided to dust off GRAVE WITNESS and give it a go. It is the shortest of the three novellas at a mere 20,000 words with a linear plot. Anyone who has read SILENCED CRY will attest that's not my style and therein was the problem—where to find the sub plots.

Aside from cringing at my early writing attempt, I was stumped with the prospect of how I would expand this story into an 80-90,000 word manuscript. I needed sub plots, lots of them — mini plots that made perfect sense, add unexpected twists, and would ultimately draw the reader back to the main plot for a perfect conclusion. Easy, right? After a few repeated blows to the head from the proverbial brick wall, I found my answers in back stories.

In addition to homicide detective, Sam Harper, the stories bring back a host of regular characters. Each book also introduces the reader to several new characters; the antagonists as well as a handful of other colorful players. But before I can fully understand their motivation, I write brief back stories on each. I take that new character back to a point in time, let them tell their story. Then it's my turn to ask what, where, when, how, and why and I keep asking those questions until there's nowhere left to go. It's amazing the discoveries I learn through this process. Thus far, I've introduced two new characters in GRAVE WITNESS. Each of their back stories has resulted in several plausible sub plots, but the most unexpected and exciting development is that one of them might turn into a new series character. Wow!!

Now I can answer that question and also offer a bit of advice. When you hit a road block in your writing, shove your story aside for a few days and concentrate on one of the primary characters. Write his or her story, find out who and what event(s) has influenced his or her life and prepare to be totally amazed.

Now the wheels are turning faster than I can type but that's okay — cause there's nothing better than an exhilarating joy ride!

### About the Author

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