

# NOVEL VERSUS SCREENPLAY: HOW I LOVE THEE

by Lisa Cotoggio

When I think back, my love of writing began at the movies. As a child, I was drawn to the big screen, fixated you might even say, but that was before I learned to read, of course.

Over the years it has become a tug of war—book/movie; movie/book. How can one decide? I couldn't, so I spend my days fluctuating back and forth, two screenplays to each novel, a progression that breaks up the monotony of the writing process.

A novel can be excruciating at times, the length, the time, the energy—sometimes it feels like the end will never come, but the screenplay's pace, intensity and shortness can help you stay focused and more quickly gain that sense of gratification we all desire.

Although, there is nothing like that feeling of euphoria one gets when typing the words "The End" on the last page of your novel, the sense of accomplishment is just as great with that final "Fade Out".

Once again, it all comes down to choice. While I pen novels and screenplays, my approach to each is like night to day.

The screenplay is and always will be a visual piece, space is limited and you must choose your scenes carefully, but at the same time, character, action and story must take hold.

## Screenwriting Tips:

- ☞ Read Syd Field, author of several screenwriting texts.
- ☞ Field suggests the use of index cards in three colors—thirty of each for beginning, middle and end.
- ☞ In a screenplay each part of the play (beginning, middle and end) must each, in turn, have a beginning, middle and end.
- ☞ The plot point or "twist" is where the writer pulls the beginning into the middle and your middle into the end, or climax.

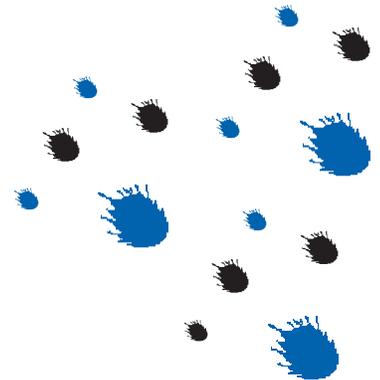
I think if I had to choose, a novel, although longer, is much easier to write because length gives way to your imagination; it gives you flexibility to create and show more, to get inside the mind and thoughts of your characters, whereas a screenplay does not.

After my first novel, *A Spirit of Evil* was published, I took on the task of writing the screenplay version of the story and I must admit it was one of the hardest things I've ever done. What to cut; what to keep—mind-boggling to say the least. Take three hundred pages and whack them down to one hundred and ten, give or take a few pages. You have to cut out all the narrative and internal dialogue so just the action remains. But you're not done—you then have to piece all the action back together because you only get to keep half of it. Which half you say? This is where the job really begins.

Craft, instinct and tools are important here. My tool of choice is *Movie Magic Screenwriter*; the 6.03 version was released in November 2007. A pricey program, but well worth the investment. Unlike *Final Draft*, a program most screenwriters use, *Movie Magic* comes complete with a novel format, and allows you to convert your manuscript into a screenplay. It saves time and cuts down on an already heavy workload.

Overall, I'd have to say the differences in writing a novel versus a screenplay create a challenging experience for anyone willing to take on the job. I do it because it gives me an opportunity to cross genres; my novels are police procedurals, while my screenplays cross into action, drama and military/sci-fi. It's like having focus and freedom at the same time, and what writer wouldn't like that?

*A top ten finalist in the 2002 Nevada Film Office 15th Annual Screenwriting Award, Lisa Cotoggio has worked as a script doctor for Summer Moon Productions and with Classical Alliance as a TV series creator and writer.*



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## IMPORTANT DATES

Jan. 3, 2008: 21st Century Sleuths, January chapter meeting

Jan. 11-14, 2008: Mid-Winter American Library Association conference Philadelphia, PA

Feb. 6: The Art of Ghostwriting, February chapter meeting.

Feb. 27: New York Noir: Urban Crime – Mid-Manhattan Library

Feb 27: Mentor Program Panel – Mercantile Library

## PRESIDENT'S LETTER



Hello all,

We've broken new ground this past year, my first in office. And we intend to continue the track we've set: embracing technology, communicating more frequently, establishing

MWA/NY-sponsored library and conference programming, involving more members, and doing more to include distant members. Specifically, here are some highlights of what to expect going forward:

(1) Beefing up our website In addition to the many changes we've already made, we are currently in the planning stages for a searchable Speakers Bureau (thanks to chair, Sheila York!) on our brand-new Library Outreach page. Ken Isaacson has done yeoman's work beefing up our website content and keeping it current! If you're an Active Member who's not already linked to our site, send Ken your bio, book cover, and your URL.

(2) Communicating more often. We now have the capability of sending time-sensitive or urgent announcements via e-mail. We facilitate a group discussion board via Yahoo. And the Noose is now an e-newsletter, published 10/year in 4-color. Marie Hannan-Mandel, our editor-in-chief, is firmly at the helm. She has two new proofreaders who'll help her maintain high quality: E.W. Count and Evelyn David.

(3) Involving more members outside of New York City. All programs are now audio-recorded and available as downloadable podcasts to our members, so distant members can benefit from our extraordinary offerings. Further, our Board slate includes two members from CT and two from NJ. Our newsletter editor is from upstate New York, and we're attending an American Library Association conference in PA, thanks to Rosemary Harris.

(4) Setting up MWA/NY-sponsored Library Panels. This year, we're sponsoring eight panels at the Midtown Branch of the New York Public Library and I've just firmed up the dates for three panels at the Mercantile Library as part of the National Endowment for Arts program called Big Read. We've partnered with the Merc to develop programs about the influence of The Maltese Falcon on contemporary fiction. More good news: Chris Grabenstein is working to set up additional panels at the Merc. For distant members, I've developed a checklist to help you set up events at your local libraries.

I am always open to new ideas and would welcome suggestions.

With regards,

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# EDITOR'S LETTER



Hi all,

As we enjoy the holiday season I'd like to wish you all a wonderful holiday and great good wishes for the New Year. I'd also like to thank all of those who have made production of The Noose and e-Noose possible.

Our launch of e-Noose seems to have met with your approval. The response has been very warm and gratifying for those of us who worked so hard to bring the launch together. Certainly the result was very impressive thanks to the efforts of Stephen Hausler and Miki Fujiwara who worked together to ensure that e-Noose made it out safely on its maiden voyage. Anyone whose email address is not on our list should add it as soon as possible—you don't know what you're missing!

This issue sees the introduction of two new contributors and the continuation of our legal column with very useful advice for those of you who like to enter writing competitions.

Please let us know what you'd like to see and I'll do what I can to bring it to The Noose. Keep in touch at [mhannanmandel@yahoo.com](mailto:mhannanmandel@yahoo.com)

Best wishes,

Marie

(you know, Marry rhyming with Larry)

## Save the Date!

**Mentor Program Panel:** Wednesday, February 27, 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., at the Mercantile Library, 17 East 47th Street, 2nd Floor.

Mentor Program Chair Peggy Ehrhart will summarize the main themes in the mentors' critiques and a panel of writers with stellar publishing credentials will discuss "The Next Step—The Quest for a Publisher."

Everyone is welcome to attend this free program.

## American Library Association Midwinter Meeting

by Rosemary Harris

MWA/NY will be exhibiting at ALA's Midwinter Meeting in Philadelphia from January 11-14. Twenty-five members have signed up to autograph books, hand out literature and to promote MWA/NY and themselves. Other members who couldn't attend but wanted to participate have sent promotional materials to be distributed at the show which organizers are estimating 12,000 library professionals will attend. And to make the experience even more fun, Philadelphia member Cordelia Frances Biddle (*The Conjuror*, St Martin's Minotaur) is graciously welcoming all of us with a reception at her home on Friday night.

Rosemary Harris's debut novel, *Pushing Up Daisies* (St. Martin's) will be published in Feb. 2008. Visit her at

[www.rosemaryharris.com](http://www.rosemaryharris.com).



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## CALLING ALL ...

⇒ **MEMBERS** who wish to participate in the Speakers Bureau for Libraries. See details in *Happy New Year for Mystery Fans* on this page.

⇒ **NON-NYC AREA MEMBERS** The Board is very interested in participating in meetings and events around the membership area. Anyone with an idea for an event please contact our President Jane K. Cleland at [jane@janecleland.com](mailto:jane@janecleland.com).

⇒ **MEMBERS** wishing to set up library activities in their own community. A checklist is available from MWA/NY to help you organize the event.

⇒ **CONTRIBUTORS** Anyone interested in contributing to The Noose should pitch ideas to the editor at [mhannanmandel@yahoo.com](mailto:mhannanmandel@yahoo.com), putting "Ideas for Noose" in the subject line.

⇒ **MEMBERS** with legal questions to do with their writing. Send your questions to [mhannanmandel@yahoo.com](mailto:mhannanmandel@yahoo.com), putting "Ask the Lawyer" in the subject line.

⇒ **WRITERS** in need of a place to work. The Mercantile Library, 17 East 47th Street has a newly refurbished Writers' Studio with space available for a modest fee. For more information, contact the Library at (212) 755-6710 or [www.mercantilelibrary.org](http://www.mercantilelibrary.org)

*Those interested in responding to any of the calls for contributors above should email the Editor at [mhannanmandel@yahoo.com](mailto:mhannanmandel@yahoo.com)*

## HAPPY NEW YEAR FOR MYSTERY FANS:

### Our New Speakers Bureau for Libraries

*By Sheila York*

Librarians are eager to book mystery writers. MWA/NY has members ready to go. How do you get them together? You create a Speakers Bureau.

Recently, we launched our website's Library Outreach. And soon, we'll add a Speakers Bureau that will allow librarians from across the tri-state area to find mystery writers who are available to speak to readers.

It's great news for both fans and our members. They get to meet their favorites and find new ones. You get to increase your fan base. And slake that thirst to perform.

The Bureau is the brainchild of Jane Cleland, who after

attending the recent NYPL meeting in Buffalo reported: "There were so many libraries who wanted MWA/NY authors to speak that I couldn't keep up." She's asked Ken Isaacson and me to take on the project.

How does all this work? In January, I'll send MWA/NY members an email with all the details. If you're interested in participating, you'll have to follow only a few simple steps.

In the meantime, you might want to get that author photo updated because, in addition to your bio and at least one jacket cover, we hope to find enough digital room for a picture, too.

## SURFING FOR MYSTERY WRITERS

by Peter Watson

Bad news is easy to find. But then again, so is good news. Here's one of the greatest things about the web: if you're a mystery writer, you don't have to classify websurfing as procrastination. Not at all. See, you're doing research—valuable, essential research. You're learning about human nature, police procedures, guns, criminality and all sorts of vital stuff. The websites I list below are all easily navigated and frequently updated, with news content that might have a special appeal for crimewriters. While not hip, new or obscure, these bookmarks represent my personal culling down of the vast, chaotic universe called the information superhighway, the Vortex of Lost Hours.

**BBC.com** (go to: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/default.stm>)

The Brits have given us the great detective, the spy novel and the teacosy. Let's face it, by jingo, they invented the whole damn thing. On top of which, they produce a consistently interesting, well-written and up-to-the-minute news venue. All paid for by the British taxpayer, so there's rather little advertising. Anglophiles will prefer the UK version to the international. Intelligent and eclectic.

**NYPost.com**

*Flagship of the Post*, NY's own. Content-wise, the same lurid goop that appears in the newspaper. Are you going to miss the nasty ink that gets all over your fingers? I think not.

**News of the weird.com** – (click on “News” header”)

A weekly compendium of wacky clippings from newspapers of the world. Living proof that nothing you'd be likely to concoct as a writer would be odder than the actions perpetrated by real live people. Hilarious, aggravating, often deeply disturbing. One particular point in case is the week of 11/25/07. Go there.

**CourtTV.com** – (click on News header)

The online component of Court TV. Here, you'll find excellent trial coverage and a wide variety of US crime news. People who fought the law (and the law won). There are features on TV

shows such as *Murder by the Book*, a series about true crimes that inspired the world's most popular mystery writers, including prominent MWA members like Harlan Coben and Lisa Scottoline. Well worth visiting, and often.

You can also find **TheSmokingGun.com** with its archives of celebrity legal affidavits and mug shots, and **Red.com**, for those who enjoy car chases and cop footage.

<http://www.fbi.gov/hq/cid/arttheft.htm>

Just one of many subjects you'll find at **fbi.gov**, federal efforts to catch art thieves and fraud can be intriguing. Or go straight to the main site, where you'll find out about the Ten Most Wanted and the numerous past criminals who've simply dropped off the charts. A word of warning, the crimes committed by the Top Ten are heinous, no joke. You could attempt to make your fictional villains as despicable as the real ones, but you would almost certainly lose.

Unlike the mystery book world, many of these plots never get solved.

To sum up, I've presented a micro-slice of what's available at the end of your mouse.

The web is one big TV set, with 5 billion channels. Let's not even mention blogs and the energy suck of youtube.com, with its hilarious TV news bloopers and videos of old bands you loved, propaganda films, and other good garbage. Unless you're somehow getting paid to surf, you may want to switch off. After all, shouldn't mystery writers be plotting how to bump off fictional victims instead of merely killing time?

Next month: We cover the websites of professional groups that focus on mystery authors.

Peter Watson writes advertising and has just finished his first crime novel, *All the Wrong People*, for which he's seeking representation as we speak.



## REMINDEES

- \* Join us on the newsgroup and give the chapter the opportunity to serve you better with e-Noose, email newsflashes and a forum to discuss your work with other writers. Join at [MWA-NY@yahoogroups.com](mailto:MWA-NY@yahoogroups.com).
- \* The National Arts Club is closed January 2nd and the January MWA-NY meeting will be held Thursday, January 3rd at 6:00pm. We're bringing in the New Year with a program entitled—21st Century Sleuths. Meet Investigative Counsel Charles Eric Gordon, Esq, who has an international list of clients—including police—who rely on him to find the toughest subjects.
- \* Mark your calendar for the series of mystery writing panels to be held at the Mid-Manhattan Library: 2/27—New York Noir: Urban Crime; 3/18—New York, New York, It's a Hellava Town to Die In; 4/30—Professional Thrillers: Legal and Medical Murder; 5/20—Late Bloomers Dream Big: Publishing a First Mystery in Midlife; 6/17—Murder and Mayhem at Work: Deadly Antiques, Cooks, and Gardens.
- \* The American Library Association Mid-Winter Meeting in Philadelphia takes place from Jan 11-14.

# BloodLINES

## Bloodlines: MWA In Print • WINTER 2007

### BOOKS

Gabriel Cohen, *The Graving Dock*, St. Martin's Minotaur, 2007.

Michael Cox, *The Meaning of Night*, W.W. Norton & Co., 2007.

Kate Morgenroth, *They Did It with Love*, Plume, 2007.

### SHORT STORIES

Peggy Ehrhart, "Family Matters," *Murder New York Style*, ed. Randy Kandel, L& L Dreamspell 2007.

Rosemary Harris, "Growing Up Is For Losers," *Still Waters*, Level Best Books, December 2007.

Penelope Karageorge, "Reach Out and Touch Someone," *Mouth Full of Bullets* [first print issue], Autumn, 2007.

Annette Meyers, "It's Too Late, Baby," in *A Hell of a Woman*, Busted Flush Press, November, 2007.

Annette Meyers, "Not Just the Facts," *Sisters on the Case*, NAL Obsidian, October, 2007.

R. M. Peluso, "La Bruja del Barrio," *Murder New York Style*, ed. Randy Kandel, L& L Dreamspell 2007.

Submit items for "Bloodlines" to Peggy Ehrhart at [pehrhart@sprynet.com](mailto:pehrhart@sprynet.com).

## Mystery's History Panel at the NYLA Conference Buffalo, NY

by Marie Hannan-Mandel

There was a great turn out for the New York Library Association meeting in November and MWA/NY members had the opportunity to meet with librarians from all over the state. Our members did us proud at the Writer's Garden and the interest garnered by their appearance made the event worthwhile. Members included: Jane Cleland, Wendy Corsi Staub, Tom Schreck, Frankie Bailey, Jeff Markowitz, Chris Grabenstein, and Lorraine Bartlett. As a result of this conference, Jane Cleland initiated the Speakers Bureau which is introduced elsewhere in this issue.

The highlight of the conference was the presentation by Barry T. Zeman of his excellent survey of mystery writing: *How to Create a "Killer" Collection*. The chapter is making the slide presentation *Subgenres of Detective Fiction and Crime After Poe* available free of charge to librarians and it will be able in the Library Outreach section on the MWA-NY website.

Using a colorful slide presentation, Barry gave the crowded room of over fifty librarians a wonderful walk through the mystery-writing genre. Starting with Biblical stories and bringing us right up to the current day, Barry broke the mystery genre into seventeen subgenres from the hard-boiled to the cozy and everything in-between.



### Did you know?

- Chinese writers have been creating mystery stories since the sixth century with judges almost always leading the investigation of the crime.
- Edgar Allan Poe's Auguste Dupin was the first detective in fiction.
- Mark Twain's *Pudd'nhead Wilson* was the first novel in which fingerprints were used to solve a crime.
- Sherlock Holmes is the most written about fictional character of all time.

• Credited with writing the first true spy novel *The Riddle of the Sands*, Erskine Childers was later executed as a traitor by the British government.

Perhaps most interesting part of Barry's presentation was his list of most underappreciated writers:

- Dorothy B. Hughes
- Stanley Ellin
- Thomas Chastain
- Charles McCarry
- Dorothy Salisbury Davis
- Stuart Kaminsky
- Thomas H. Cook
- Robert Ferrigno
- Eliot Pattison

Let's all get reading and catch up on what we're missing!



## IN ONE SHOT – Jack Reacher and his author

by Lois Karlin (via pod cast)

### Did you know that Lee Child...

- ☞ Started writing at forty when he was fired from his job in British television, ending an eighteen-year directing career at the company that produced *Prime Suspect*?
- ☞ Never plans his novels and writes without system, strategy, or formula? Like others in the creative sphere, as he writes he subconsciously surfs along on everything he's experienced, read, or observed.
- ☞ Did not invent Jack Reacher? His character is the product of ancient myths and legends.

At October's dinner meeting, the New York-based British author of eleven critically-acclaimed thrillers described the classical literature from which his antihero sprang.

Growing up in Coventry and Birmingham, Child was educated in the Oxford fashion, steeped in two-thousand years of Latin, Greek, Anglo-Saxon, and Scandinavian legend. Reading *Plutarch's Lives in Greek* by day, and *Dr. No* on the bus that took him home from school, he realized that Fleming's book was a modern version of the Theseus myth. He was stunned to discover that most contemporary stories were reinventions of those that predate us by thousands of years.

"Every character in the world, every story in the world, is out there already. I didn't invent Reacher at all. He's the knight-errant character who's been around as long as we've had written records. In this country, the same legend shows up in Westerns. Take any Zane Grey novel. Those are classic knight-errant stories."

Child attended law school in Sheffield, England, then worked in theater. Ultimately he became a presentation director for Granada Television, which brought the world *Brideshead Revisited*, *Prime Suspect*, and other shows of their ilk during Child's eighteen-year career with the company. Following a corporate down-sizing, his union activities flew in the face of new management, and he found himself unemployable in British television. At forty, he settled at a keyboard, believing novel writing the only alternative to support his family.

For his first thriller, which he determined must sell, Child drew on his background in television, working a thoroughly

ingrained sense of timing. Ignoring popular trends, he followed his instincts and unveiled Reacher: a man without job, home, community, friends, or luggage; one who never mourned the loss of his career with the military police; and one willing to defy the law in order to restore justice. In Jack Reacher, Child tapped into the ancient legacy of story-telling. "It's been market-tested for thousands of years. We know it works. It still works."

Child believes fiction based on classical sagas helps readers to manage their fears. He also believes that books like thrillers and romances console readers by providing them the things they're forbidden in real life. He identifies. "I don't want realism," he said. "Isn't it hard enough to live it? I want fantasy. I want to see the other side of the street when I'm reading."

### His take on writing?

- ☞ Pit your heroes against the world. Link them to the larger tradition of legend, heroism, and saga.
- ☞ Trust your instincts. It's the only way to make your writing vibrant, alive, and organic, which is precisely what it takes to get your novel to the starting line. The only sensible piece of writing advice is to ignore all advice.
- ☞ Write what you feel, not what you know. Almost nobody knows anything remotely exciting. But you can transfer your own fears to the fictional realm.

Which is his favorite among the Reacher novels? "The next one. The one I'm just starting." Child writes and publishes one book a year, which he believes is the ideal rhythm for publishing. A book a year, he told us, means that authors needn't be rebranded each time, yet the books don't come out so frequently that people get sick of them.

Sick of them? In Lee Child's case, that's not likely. Telegraph.co.uk reports that Child's Jack Reacher thrillers sell at the rate of one per second.

Lois Karlin is a freelance writer for technology firms. She lives and writes in Warwick, NY, and blogs with The Women Of Mystery at [www.womenofmystery.net](http://www.womenofmystery.net).

## MWA/NY Celebrate Royally

by Joann Breslin

Joining together to celebrate the winter holidays in a lovely setting at Sotheby's Institute, a group of more than forty members enjoyed pomegranate cocktails, luscious bite-size steak, shrimp and veggies with delectable sauces served throughout the large suite.

Soft music played as groups chatted and members enjoyed lively discussions while nibbling on the food and nuts and savoring the cocktails. Chit-chat was pushed aside when aspiring writers met their mentors from the MWA novel contest and questions ensued. One writer was asked about why her character was pursued by the villain. The writer explained that the character went through stages of anger, revenge and finally blew—sounding much like a pattern for a small volcano. Certainly, the answer caused an explosion of discussion—just as you would expect when you gather crime writers together. Many thanks to the organizers and the volunteers for making this such a memorable event.

# ASK THE LAWYER



Dear Bob,

*I see novel writing contests on the web where the writer is supposed submit part or all of a novel and then the membership of the site read and choose who will go on to the final round. At that point, famous writers judge the work. The prize is publication.*

*I have two questions to ask about this process:*

- 1. Is it safe to put my work on an open website like that? The rules say that the novel belongs to the site until it loses. Can't someone just take my work and use it for themselves?*
- 2. How can I tell if a competition is legitimate?*

*Sincerely,  
Confused but hopeful.*

Dear Confused:

I'm a bit confused myself: you say that "The rules say that the novel belongs to the site until it loses" ... who do the rules say owns the novel if it wins? Do the contest promoters own the copyright of the winning novel? That would be dreadful! Or does the website owner merely have the contractual right (and obligation, I hope) to publish that novel, and the author retains the copyright? I'd have no problem at all with that. What if the contest is postponed or cancelled? Is ownership of your novel (which has not yet lost the contest) then in perpetual limbo?

Unless you transfer ownership by contracting it away (as per the contest rules you mentioned), your work is protected by copyright from the moment your pencil, typewriter or laser printer records your words on paper. All you need to be able to do is prove they're really your words and that you wrote them before the infringer did (such as by mailing a copy to yourself or a trusted friend and never opening the postmarked package until it is used as evidence in the trial).

Registering the copyright (which involves downloading and filling out a two-page form from [www.copyright.gov](http://www.copyright.gov) and mailing it to the Copyright Office in Washington, together with a check for \$45 and a copy of the manuscript), entitles you (i) to sue the infringer and (2) to recover statutory damages (which is much, much easier than proving actual damages) and to recover your attorney's fees if your suit is successful.

There is no sure way to tell whether a contest is legitimate. Full disclosure: I was outside counsel to the short-lived Sobol Literary Award contest last year. We had arranged for Simon and Schuster to publish the top three novels, and to pay very substantial advances to the winning authors. The contest was also going to pay huge prizes (up to \$100,000) to the top prize winners, over and above the S & S advances. The rules of the contest had been drafted with fairness very much in mind and were posted on the website for everyone to see. Some big-name publishing people had signed on to be contest judges for the final round. Nevertheless, distrustful bloggers who disliked the fact that there was a fee (\$75, I think) to enter the contest (which fee would have paid the early-round readers to read numerous entries) destroyed the contest by claiming it was an obvious fraud... when it in fact was not. The result was that too few submissions were received to satisfy Simon & Schuster's requirements, and the contest had to be cancelled.

So, I would first study the rules of any contest, and see whether the contest required a greater transfer of rights and/or copyright than the typical publishing contract... and whether the contest entrants or winners would have to option or give up any rights in their subsequent novels. If so, I would run away very quickly.

I would also look at the people sponsoring and recommending the contest... do they have a solid reputation in the publishing industry? Or any reputation at all?

Does the contest require you to pay to have your novel published? Or for anything else? Is the contest really a "vanity" vehicle?

How will the winning novels be published? Will they be published by a specified date? Will they be published only in e-book form or in print-on-demand editions? Or will there be bookstore distribution? While there is nothing wrong with e-books or POD publishing, they will not build your reputation as an author in the mainstream publishing world.

Those are some of the factors I would consider in trying to determine the legitimacy of a contest.

Good luck,  
Bob Stein

Bob Stein counsels and represents people at all levels of the entertainment industry from writers to film producers. He has represented David Baldacci and Janet Evanovich and spent 13 years in-house at Random House, Simon and Schuster and Warner Books before entering private practice.

Please send your legal questions for Bob to  
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