

February 2020 Newsletter

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President's Column

By Leah Hinton

Hopefully February finds you well and you are richly engrossed in your resolutions for the year. I hope you are writing to your heart's content.

February is traditionally a month where true love is a focus, or at least the commercial properties of love, like and lust are a focus in our Western world.

I urge you to look at the month of chocolate hearts and Cupids a bit differently.

What do you love to read? Are you a sucker for sci-fi? Do you melt over a good memoir? Perhaps plays are your passion. Have you ever tried to write the thing you love to read most?

Oddly enough, at conference after conference I find writers who write one thing (mainly because they believe they can write that thing) while loving to read an entirely different thing. Maybe these writers are scared they won't measure up or that somehow what they love for escapism might become work. Whatever the reason, I urge writers to jump into their comfort zones even further and write what they love to read. The best training in the world for a writer is to read all the things so you are half way there.

This month our presenter is our own David Douglas who is bringing his love for stage writing to our humble group. I can personally attest to jumping into something based on simply loving going to the theatre only to find its where my writing heart has belonged all along. David is an inspiration to me and truly helped me land where I belong in the crazy writing world. He might just be your ticket to finding your happy writing spot too!

Don't forget, you are worth your writing!

Can't wait to see you all at our meeting this month!

Till next time, may all the pretty words be yours,

Leah Hinton
President

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If you're interested in volunteering, please email us at writersguildtx@gmail.com or ask at the next general meeting!

Meeting Reminder: February 24 – "Enter Stage Right: Playwriting Basics" with David Douglas

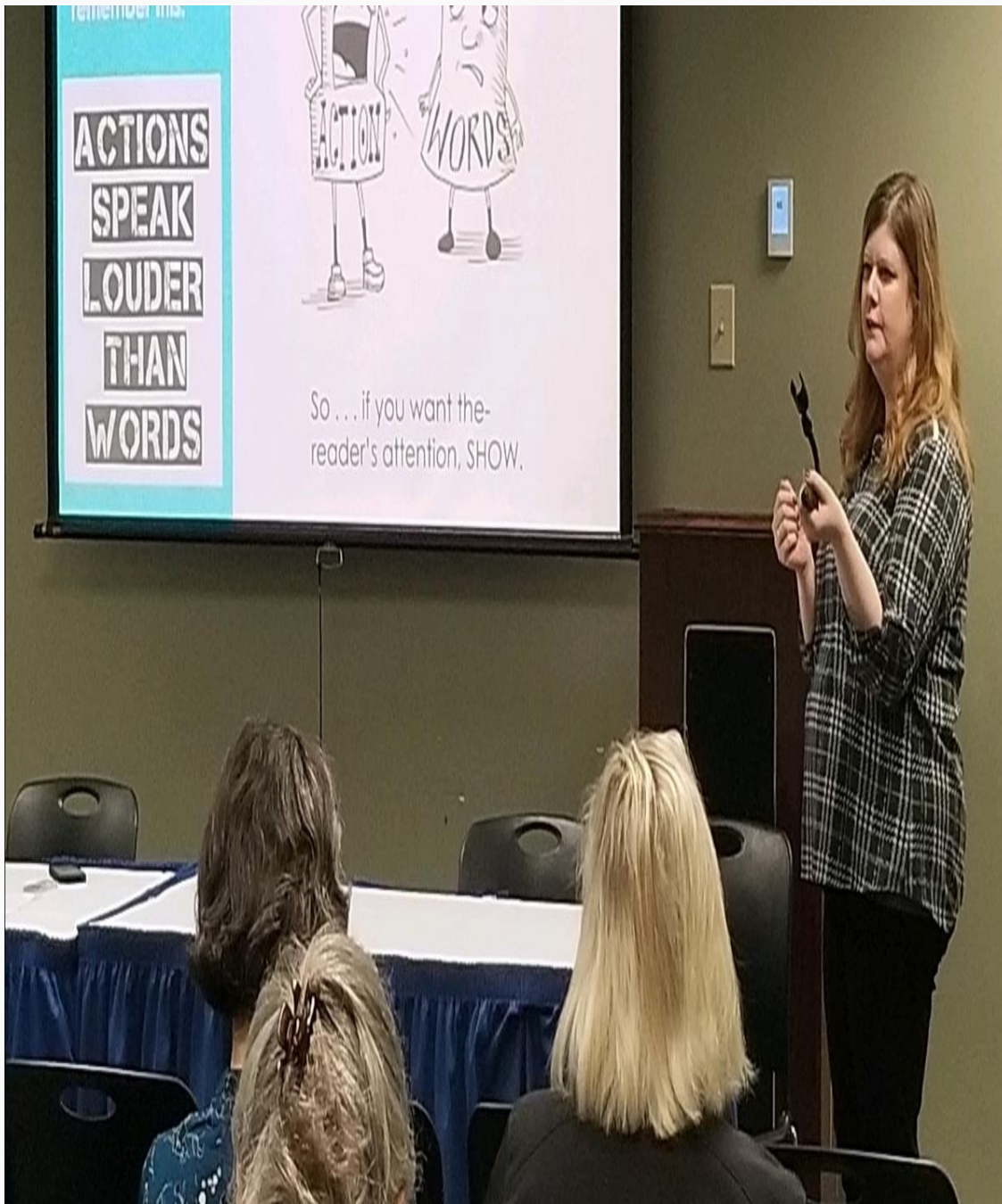


Reminder: February's monthly meeting takes place on Feb. 24 because of Presidents' Day. Our apologies if this wasn't clearly conveyed.

Are you more interested in writing dialogue and action than descriptions of settings? Do your favorite stories feature minimal characters and locations? Would you like to write something other than a novel, short story, or screenplay? Then join playwright and Stage Writers founder, David Douglas, for this presentation on the basics of playwriting. In his presentation, we will explore: the differences between stage plays and other forms of writing, the proper formatting of scripts, the role of the playwright in theatre-making, and a variety of other helpful resources that will cue your entrance into writing for the stage.

[David Douglas](#) is a playwright, award-winning short story author, and the founder & director of [Stage Writers](#) — a Dallas-based playwright organization. He is also a member of the Dramatists Guild of America and a past board member of several writers organizations, including the Writers Guild of Texas and WORD (Writers Organizations 'Round Dallas). His full-length play, *Railbird*, has received readings in the First Impressions Festival (Imprint Theatreworks) and the Play Readers Club (Our Productions Theatre Co.); his one-act play, *The Stirring*, was a Fiction Finalist in the Pen 2 Paper creative writing competition; and his short plays have been featured at Rover Dramawerks, Stage Writers, Sundown Collaborative Theatre, and the Dallas One-Minute Play Festival. When not writing twisting tales of romance and suspense, David loves watching classic and independent films, as well as attending and directing plays. Find him online at [OddOccurrences.com](#).

January Meeting Recap



Show What? Tell Who?

In the January meeting, Lori Freeland took our members down the twisting trail of “Show vs. Tell,” a phrase almost every writer has heard at some point in their writing career. It is also one of the more dreaded pieces of advice given to new writers.

“Don't tell me the moon is shining; show me the glint of light on broken glass.” — Anton Chekhov

Lori began her lecture by stressing the importance of action and that "showing" in prose helps reveal the line between reporter and artist. Or, in other words, “a word picture is worth a thousand word statements.” But, don't forget, there is always a time and a place for "telling."

Sometimes "telling" is more appropriate, or better enhances the narrative, than "showing." Lori gave a few tips for what to look for when "telling" might be more advised. Some of these included:

- To summarize in order to push a story forward
- To focus on what's most important at that time
- For faster pacing
- For minimal or mundane moments

So, then when should you "show"?

- When something's a big deal
- When there might be believability or credibility issues
- To evoke emotion
- To mark a crucial moment
- To mark a turning point
- To indicate a change in relationship
- To highlight a traumatic event
- To give important info
- To mark a big decision

Keep in mind, sometimes showing doesn't take up more time than telling.

Overall, we ended with quite a few helpful tips for future writing endeavors. To check out more of Lori Freeland's novels and writer tips, visit her at:

<https://lafreeland.com/>.



Flash Fiction Contest

Third Place Winner - JoAnne Turner

Highwaymen are the most inconsiderate creatures imaginable. I had just settled into a long coze in my carriage, stroking Imaki in my lap, when the shot rang out. I threw up a hand to steady myself against the plunging of the horses. Imaki poked her nose behind the curtain, flaring her wings for balance. She hissed, flame sparking deep in her throat.

“Hush, Imaki.”

“Not safe. Steal the hoard. Thieves.”

I extracted the tiny dragon from the curtain. Her eyes sparked purple fire as she spiraled her serpentine body around my hand.

“Gentle claws, dear. These gloves are the finest Bulgarian lace.”

Smoke curled from one nostril, but her claws uncurled. The carriage jerked to the side.

Two more shots. The silence after was the loudest I’d ever heard.

“You in the carriage. Out. Now.” The voice was thick and wind roughened, the accent the curious singsong of the locals.

I tried to force Imaki into my reticule, but her head kept twisting to target the voice outside the carriage. “Dear, get inside, and you can protect it all you want. Just hide, please.”

“Exit now, my darlings, or I’ll have my man start killing.”

Sparks dripped from Imaki’s open mouth, and I squeaked. I shoved two fingers under Imaki’s tail and scraped her off, glove and all, stuffing her into the reticule

seconds before the door was ripped open. I yanked at the strings of the purse, hiding the squirming thing in my skirts.

All I could see was the hulking outline of a man, backlit by torches, before he dragged me bodily from the coach. My feet tangled on the steps as if I was just learning to walk on two feet. I hung by my arm, trying to keep the reticule concealed in the folds of my dress.

“What have we here?” The leader was all glittering eyes and a mocking smile. Prey trying to prove it’s a predator. “A girl child barely out of the school room.” I warmed at the malice in Prey’s tone. Gathering my feet underneath me, I used Giant’s grip to stand. I turned my face to the wind, letting it cool the fire within me. “My name is Lady Sofia Thistlewhite, and you will address me with proper respect.” I infused the words with generations of pride.

“Oh ho!” Prey bowed, every muscle dripping disdain. “We’ve got a lady in our midst.”

Cruel laughter echoed around me. At least five men, not including Giant and Prey. Two were holding torches, one a brace of pistols. One had my coachman on the ground. I couldn’t see the fifth.

“Your valuables, My Lady, if you please.”

“I do not please.” I was warming up again. “You will have your man unhand me, and you will let me go.”

My trunk crashed to the ground. That’s where the fifth man was. Prey toed at my clothes, lying rather pathetically in the dirt of the road. My reticule whistled. Giant stiffened, but still kept an iron grip on my arm. Worse, the men stilled.

“My Lady.” Prey’s words held quiet menace. “Show me your hands.”

“Not a good idea, even if it were possible.” I twisted my hand in demonstration. The grip on my arm loosened, and I wrenched away, backing up against the

carriage to keep an eye on all the men.

“Show us your hands, dearie,” Giant said. “None of this has to end in violence.”

Smiling, I displayed my left hand, casually tucking my right into the carriage. I bit my lip, nearly chewing straight through. Still, I kept my head held high, and hoped that Imaki would stay quiet for once in her short life.

“Both hands, dearie,” Giant said, tone gentle.

I breathed in, letting the cool, moist air quell the heat rising within me. Both hands, one gloved, one bare, both empty.

“The carriage.” Prey commanded.

Giant reached behind me and fished out the hissing, squirming reticule, holding it by one string.

“What do we have here?”

“Don’t you dare,” I shouted, even as Prey clutched at the bag.

Then he was howling, waving his arm in the air. The flaming remnants of the reticule spun to the dirt. Imaki flapped frantically, but spit fire at Prey again.

“Imaki! That was pure china silk!”

Imaki screeched her defiance. “Took the hoard! Touched the hoard!”

“No more flaming!” I shook my finger directly under her nose.

“What the hell is going on here?” That was Giant. A couple of the others were patting at Marcus’s arm, dousing the fire.

“Never get between a dragon and her hoard.” I fisted my hands on my hips.

“What hoard? She was stuffed in a bag.”

I picked up Imaki’s hoard from the flaming remnants. A single gold sovereign, kept shiny from rubbing against a dragon’s scales. Imaki settled on it immediately,

rubbing her chin against the edges and licking away at any dust.

“She’s young. I’m teaching her to control the protectiveness.” I brushed at Imaki’s scales, removing particles of ash.

“That stupid sparkflare!” Prey snatched Imaki away.

Imaki screeched, but she couldn’t turn her head to get a good angle to fire. All the ice I had herded into my veins poured out in a rush. The world became darker and clearer as I felt my eyes change.

“I wouldn’t do that.” Blood dripped from the punctures my nails made in my palms.

“Because she’s a widdle baby?” His hands tightened, and Imaki whimpered, claws flexing.

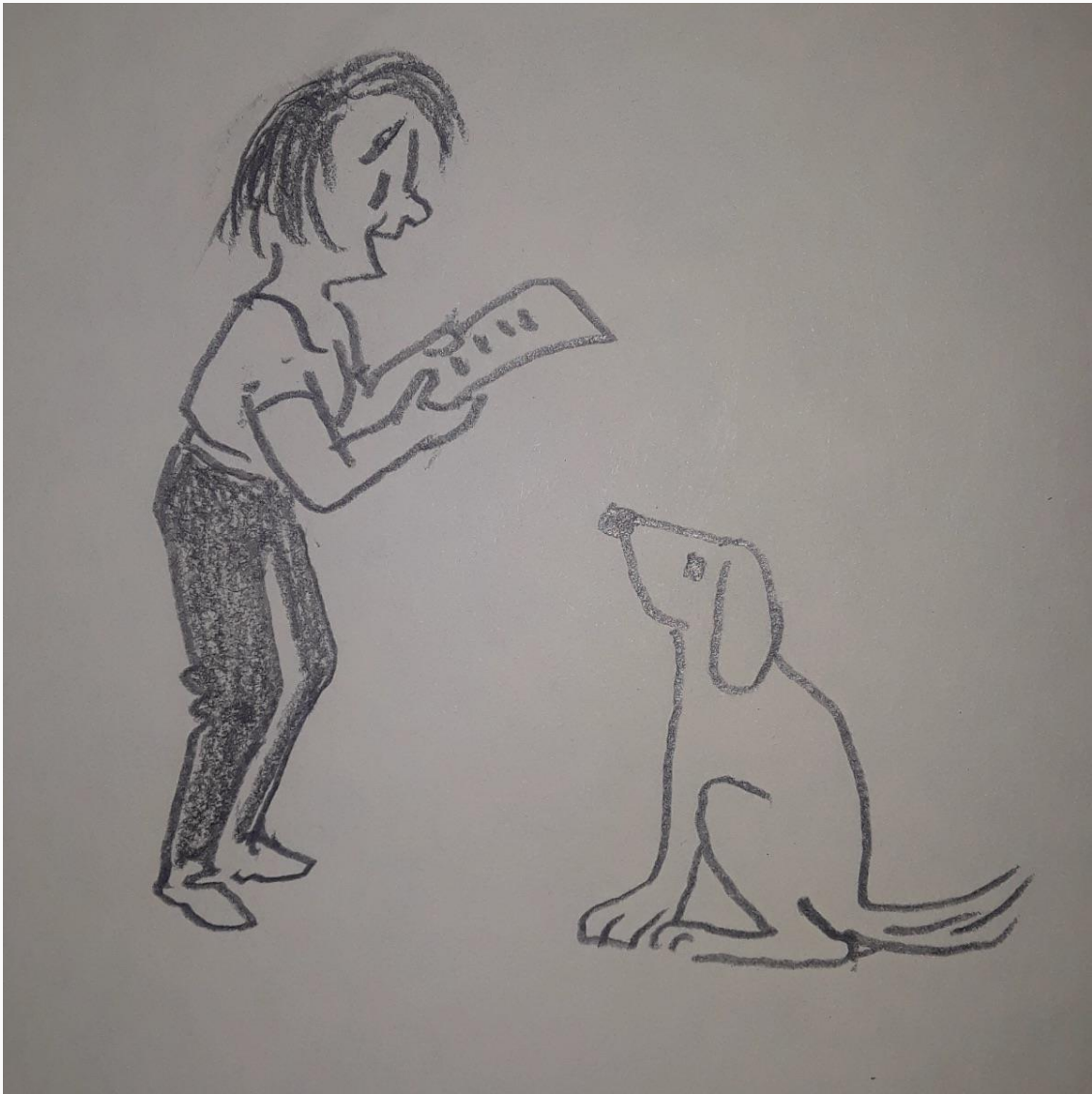
“No.” I removed my glove. “Because I like this dress.”

I turned on him. What could he see, with the poor light from the torches? Had he seen the my wings beginning to poke out from my shoulder blades? Could he tell that my eyes had gone slitted, emerald fire banked in their depths?

He would be able to see everything soon.

“The coin was Imaki’s hoard.” I raised my head, stretching out my neck and preparing to launch into the sky. “Mine’s Imaki.”

Cartoon - Jerry Weiss



"And then Sir James swept Lorna into his arms and galloped off into the sunset...."