

This blog originally appeared at the Pink Heart Society on March 3, 2010
Writer's Wednesday:

Romancing the Muse



Welcome Lynne Marshall to this Writer's Wednesday with a fantastic post about the care and keeping of your muse!

DEFINITION OF MUSE: "The spirit that is thought to inspire a poet or other artist; source of genius or inspiration." Webster's New World College Dictionary, Fourth Edition.



Occasionally it takes something out of the ordinary to help cultivate the special relationship between you and that sometimes-elusive sprite within.

The following are a few tips for tickling your muse.

WALK THE MUSE

Get off your duff and drag the little muse with you.

It is a well-known fact that exercise releases endorphins, which make us feel good, which helps us create. Though endorphins don't last that long and may be released just as easily by eating protein, having sex, or taking a shower, walking is a good way to pump up the volume, burn a few calories and reap the writer's benefits.



When I take walks, I find my brain goes on alert. Fresh air, heat from the sun, the fragrance of spring or cut grass, anything and everything makes an acute impression on my senses. My muse hovers above delivering these gifts from nature straight to my olfactory center, onward to the sensation receptors of my skin, and the rods and cones of my special green photoreceptors beneath my tastefully waxed brows.

I share a panoramic view with my muse and I'm suddenly gushing with adjectives, similes, and adverbs (be sure to edit out those adverbs, and watch out for an overabundance of similes!). With a nod from my muse, I can finally fix the scene that proved to stump me the day before.

TALK TO THE MUSE

One major concern I have is the urge to talk to my muse in public. I fear I might find myself repeating aloud the hot dialogue between my hero and heroine as it makes itself known to me on my walks. I so don't want to be known as the neighborhood nut, so I reserve my muse-talking for indoors. When my muse feels chatty, I smile appreciatively and make a beeline for the computer where I transfer all of my wonderful ideas onto the screen. The muse rewards me by sitting on my shoulder and whispering little sweet nothings into my ear, which I immediately type up and claim as my own.

Sometimes the muse speaks to me through music. There's nothing more powerful than a Beethoven or Vivaldi Symphony to help write sweeping dramatic scenes. Or I'll listen to Samuel Barber's Adagio for Strings then tap into my deep reservoirs of sadness and try putting it onto paper. I'll play the theme from Bonanza or The Magnificent Seven and feel the stiff leather of a saddle as I ride into the make believe sunset. When I'm too pooped to percolate ideas, my muse will play Queen's greatest hits and my energy level rises along with my blood pressure.

My muse slips Luther Vandross, Josh Groban, or Michael Bublé into the iPod to set the mood when it's time to write that special love scene, and as their velvet voices croon, my hero and heroine light up the computer screen brighter than the aurora borealis.



Sometimes my purveyor of fresh ideas vanishes. I cajole, wheedle, and coax but the little brat refuses to materialize. That's when I...

STALK THE MUSE

When all else fails, get aggressive. Corner your muse, put it in a jar, and talk tough.

"Now you listen here, Tinker Bell. You work for me! If I put you on the clock I expect you to throw me ideas faster than Frisbees in the park. You got that?"

Okay, so this method doesn't always work, but, when in a jam, it's worth a try isn't it?

Like any good relationship, it's important to keep the lines of communication open with your muse. Do whatever it takes to stimulate, activate and perpetuate the special kinship between you and that spirit of great notions that dwells within. Otherwise, you may wind up pitifully repeating the phrase on a ribbon I once bought in Atlanta at an RWA conference, "Has anyone seen my muse?"

As luck would have it, I've now spent the last half hour staring at my empty computer screen. All my brain cells seem to have fizzled out. My muse is on the lam. I've just about given up writing anything more today, when my dog bounds into the room and pushes his pesky pooch face into my lap.



"You want to take a walk?" I ask.

He pants his affirmation.

You never know when your muse is talking, or what form it's morphing into, so my advice? Look, listen, and leap into action.

I follow my dog's lead. We head out the door for that walk. I sniff the sweet afternoon breeze, and my nerve synapses start sending impulses all over my brain. I glance at my dog, he looks adoringly up at me, and I can barely keep up with the ideas for that next story taking form in my brain...