

Before I get too much further into Male emotions, I'd like to take a moment to go over a very important facet of our writing. Bias.

We've seen it in the news with certain stories getting coverage the way they do when our logical minds tell us these "writers" are not always correct. For those of us who write romance and/or are seeking a HEA (or even a HFN), it's important to remember that our characters become real in our heads based on experiences we've had with other people, good and bad. They also become real for our readers, some of whom are capable of taking fandom to a new level of psychotic!

While I prefer to write angry Males and an angry POV in many of my stories, it's not always the one I want.

Some of my villains too take on the characteristics of people I have come across. Writing an angry character became much easier when I started picking at the reasons *why* these individuals would be angry.

Readers don't like to see the same sort of story, in terms of villain, over and over again from the same author. It's boring. My next villain could be evil, delusional and downright mean like the previous one, but he had to stand apart from the former one. This applies to Heroes and Heroines as well, but to a slightly lesser extent, depending on whether the story is part of a series or not.

Knowing how opinionated we can be, it's important to recognize this from the start of character creation. If your goal is to punish the Hero for the way he treats women because men have done that to you, fine. But keep it in context with the story; know when he's had enough, and has made that change to where his behavior becomes less important than the prize he's after. (The old is replaced by the new, better and along with it, an improvement upon HIM!)

I cannot stress the importance of avoiding your personal biases to the extent where they ruin your characters.

How can we avoid author bias?

I've used test readers for my ARCS before the publishers get them, or even during the second and third book in the series, as giving away a free copy of the first book to four or five people both male and female preferably doesn't hurt my sales. In fact, it probably encourages sales because many readers like to be involved with authors. Ask them if they pick up any particular traits of your characters that stand out and don't make sense. Readers can spot that stuff quickly, especially with the amount of books they read. While reading voraciously can tend to blend things together, I've yet to have that experience due to the nature of my work.

I can tell you that your test readers, if given the proper questions, can be led to give you answers you want; or answers you need.

Guess which ones will get you sales?

Yup, the answers you NEED.

Ask your readers, test and otherwise, how they feel about your characters. Remember all that work we've done about archetype and grief cycle? Author "character" chats are popular these days with so many authors like Marianne Lacroix and Brenna Lyons. Marie's popular series *Descendants of Darkness* featured Lucius, her Viking vampire.

I've come to realize that lately, Josef from my novel *ENDANGERED* is starting to sound like a cross between Lajon Witherspoon from *Sevendust*, and Ronan Harris from *VNV Nation*. Both are passionate men who portray a lot of self-loathing and beauty in their lyrics.

Once you've played your character, knowing all you do about him, you'll have a feel for what his personal tastes are like and will know truly if you've been too hard on him.

This bias is applicable, **NO MATTER WHAT THE SITUATION or CHARACTER.** And I mean that. No matter what your experiences have been, it's important to recognize that bias exists in you and that's fine. But we're not creating reality; we're creating a reality-based fantasy. People and places our readers can lose themselves in for a short time.

Besides, every written word needs to fit in the story perfectly. Every action has a purpose. Every bit of dialogue spoken has to make sense. Do we really want to see that "too far" point?

COVER EMOTION

Now to cover emotion, and the way Males deal with the cycle of emotions.

The cycle is the same for males and females, highs lows and whatnot. Because we've discussed men how are programmed, and the fact that a number of factors such as environmental influences and parenting add to

that programming, we've learned that pretty much, the average man focuses on what will help him achieve what he thinks he wants. He'll block out much of the unneeded emotions that clog his thinking and slow him down. If he's a Jaded Male, he'll block out more than just the 'unneeded' emotions, and probably react very coldly to meeting the heroine at first.

Something about her will stir something inside of him. I'm a firm believer that you cannot silence emotion, regardless of what it is. Eventually, that emotion will show itself in a positive or negative trait and reflect a need we have inside. If it's meant for us to feel, then we have to feel it. Our Heroine will do something, say something, act a certain way that'll trigger something inside of that Hero.

What is it? It's the stirrings of forgotten Passion! The only emotion that can move mountains, make men and women do INCREDIBLY stupid things for seemingly NO reason whatsoever. (Yes I know Fear and Anger can make people do incredible things too, but we're talking about Love!)

Because the Hero is unequipped with the ability to deal with this newfound emotion, primal instinct takes over. He behaves a certain way, believing that's the way he *has to be* in order to keep this new good thing.

Obviously, she's got her work cut out for her, doesn't she? If your bias has snuck into writing the Hero and he's really jaded, to the point of being an asshole, then either one of two things need to occur.

A: you've got to create a really dynamic Heroine to balance him and help him see the need for change

B: you've let too much bias in, go back and tone him down. YOU should catch this, NOT your editor.