

So far, we've talked about emotional patterns and thought patterns of Heroes, and men in general. Hopefully you've begun to understand just how the male mind works in order for you to create better heroes.

Let's talk about Men's feelings and perspectives for a moment.

In a typical male viewpoint, we have our focus on one thing. The task at hand. Same as a woman, right?

Probably not. At least, not unless our man really *is* thinking about kids, his home life, his looks, how he appears, his speech, etc.

But Sascha, I know tons of men that appear to have all of those aspects under control.

Just like a woman. Let's see, a woman has in her typical mind the following: (Assuming she's single)

Sex, work, the task at hand, money, future possibilities of family, growth, her looks, **her self esteem**, what to eat, any chores she may have, and any deadlines or things of importance to her.

Same example, single male: Sex, work, the task currently at hand, money, future possibilities of sex that may lead to great times, OR family ...you see where this is going.

It's truly the same list. The difference is in how he processes information and categorizes it. What IS most important to a man? Can you guess?

Survival and propagation of his family line?

His wage and earnings potential?

Family? That great piece of ass across the way?

Nope. It's his *manliness*. Many men are secure in their manhood to the point of not needing to constantly beat their chests and drums loudly. Many aren't. The stereotype of men watching football and loving athletes is a testament to this idea. Men want to be that big guy, that badass, that champion. Remember when I talked about a man's first sexual experience earlier? This comes into play here, when subconsciously the man is thinking (IMO) way too hard about what to do, instead of listening to his quivering partner.

That driving sense of identity, based solely on gender, creates the clumsy pinhead college boy who stumbles through sex and is lousy in bed. No, this isn't my potshot at those pinheads; but it is my belief based on experience. I also believe that the stupid college slut is "nature's answer" for balance in this equation. But we're only talking about males here, so let's move on.

The stigma we have on men these days is still so tough because we expect them to still be the bread winners AND acknowledge women in their jobs and as human beings. This is not difficult, until the

woman outperforms the man.

Example: One of my friends is a woman who can leg press 600 lbs on the sled with ease. The guys in the gym had a FIT when they saw this because many of them were pressing upwards of 250 or more but none came close. Then a few tried to outdo her, and reaffirm that they could protect the little lady.

Guess what happened?

They failed.

They failed themselves, but most importantly, they failed **to other men** and to that “little lady.”

In reality, said friend was happy to explain that a woman’s center of gravity and hip structure gives her an advantage on the sled. Men are naturally stronger above the hips.

Make sense?

FYI, some of those men did not return to class the next day. A few did and asked her for help. THOSE men were secure in themselves as men who could grow with help of someone caring and able to teach.

Now, I'd like to spend some time on the emotional cycles and stages of grief for men and women. Let's see how they differ.

I know from Morgan Hawke's teaching, and her website, that she believes in using the Stages of Grief as a plotting/character tool. After doing things her way for the last several years, I've come to realize that although it's not the *only* way to write/create characters, for me, it's the best one.

**The Five Stages of Grief are:**

**Denial:** The initial stage: "It can't be happening."

**Anger:** "Why ME? It's not fair?!" (either referring to God, oneself, or anybody perceived, rightly or wrongly, as "responsible")

**Bargaining:** "Just let me live to see my son graduate."

**Depression:** "I'm so sad, why bother with anything?"

**Acceptance:** "It's going to be OK"

We know from research that everyone experiences these stages, but not necessarily in that order, or for any set length of time. Sometimes, stages are skipped and others are returned to frequently. But for our stories, we don't have as much time as humanly possible to let our characters experience the full range of emotions due to page length, movement in the story and other factors. So we must find a way to push our stubborn heroes through each stage, just as we do for our heroines. And we should keep it in order as well, so it'll make sense to the reader. That's not to say we HAVE to keep the order, but your work will probably read faster and keep the mental picture for your readers that way.

Usually she balances him with some trait. Remember when I said she tends to be emotional while he's motive oriented? There's that balance thing again.

I want to revisit that first sexual experience from two points of view now.

The first experience as something to consider, the deflowering of a woman.

If an experienced man takes that gift from a woman, he in our stories should acknowledge it as such because not only is that reality-based, but it creates a potential for conflict in the story. First off, he's the one with experience and she's lacking it (as a total virgin), so the things in his head and hers will differ. In romance, this will allow for a lot of internal dialogue we need to explore carefully, and express even more so. Readers hate lengthy paragraphs of internal dialogue, and I can't tell you how many times I've seen BDSM writers give the lengthy explanations when they could just use dialogue with much less

internal monologue to express to the reader both the trepidation of the act, and the reason for why. I'm not even talking the heavier bits of BDSM. I mention this because the potential for us to screw this up exists, and we need to tread carefully with it because of our readers. Let's go through the reality, and the "book" reality.

The reality of losing virginity is actually pretty horrifying in terms of what the act sincerely is. Brutal. As a woman, you're inviting a man into your body, letting him invade it. Even if toys or fingers have been used previously, and great care has been taken to make sure the bodies are prepared, the very first time still leaves a mental disconnect. There could be a long term relationship involved, or it could be a shorter event; but the experience leaves both parties with questions.

Does he like me now? Will I see him again? Is this going to hurt again if it hurt the first time? Will this ever become pleasant? And worse, issues like her self-esteem.

If he's a decent man, he's going to wonder some of the same things. Did he hurt her? Can he help her get past the pain until it becomes pleasure? Is his manliness really that good? Because if not, she'll talk (maybe) and that might be detrimental to his state of manliness, which we've covered already.

Did she enjoy herself and will she see him again? If this is a Romance, we'll need to put that self-doubt in our stories because it's real, and our primarily female audience will remember that first time and identify with our characters.

This leads us to having possibilities of that first encounter going wrong; which means our hero has to 'fix' it. This segues into our "book" experience of new sexuality.

We always read that our heroines have either great sex or no sex, and occasionally the in between player who has casual sex, but of course, the hero is the best she's

ever had.

How then are we portraying our males? Well, what's most important to them? It will come back to archetype, and this will become an automatic thing once we explore further those different personalities from a sexual standpoint, since erotic romance hinges on the sexual connection to forward our plot. Right now, let's leave it at a few simple points.

First, of course he has to be the best; his ego probably would suffer if he wasn't. Second, because our plot demands it, he needs to make sure he's able to have a repeat of the first experience and then top it, especially if the first experience of sexual contact only piqued her interest. Something plot-related *has* to bring them together for a second encounter in our novel length stories, and at least a third time, according to NYT Best Selling Author Angela Knight, because those sex scenes develop the *emotional* bond between our characters, strengthening it despite our plot flaws.

Particularly with your internal monologues from the

male Point of View, we need to question a few things. First, what does this look like? Is it just sex and if so, why? Second, why will he want a second time with her, despite whatever plot pitfalls you've thrown in their way? Why is he thinking about her? What trigger does she pull in him that makes him want to be with her again? It's not always obvious with society, but in truth it's always deeper than her just being a good lay.

You're going to have to examine his archetype, look at the deep why to answer that question.

Then we have the question of relationships. In a story I once edited by bestselling erotic romance author Bonni Sansom, the characters ended up together in bed during a bank robbery. They were complete opposites in the robbery scenario. She was a mouthy, tattooed, pink-tipped spikey-haired girl and he was a banker. Fairly conservative in public, a Dominant in the bedroom. The chemistry worked because the author's use of characterization had been clear from the beginning, and she left us wanting to know if, after the heroine performed oral sex to the point of climax on the hero, if he'd be able to make good on his

promise to return the favor if they made it out alive.

Yes, she was everything his previous relationships had been, but he had promised her a return orgasm that left them both questioning what the hell they were doing with each other after the fact. Her behavior called for him to question his existence, past and present, and make a decision. Could he pursue this for sex, or did he want more?

The novella was too short, but had the author dragged it out, there would have been a lot more room for him to examine further why the heroine pressed his buttons.

The key thing to remember in "book" reality, is that we have a limited amount of room to get out the most important facts, so don't be afraid in your novels to go right for the hook from the gut as to what sparks the fears. Just don't over explain things.

Does this make sense? Have I hit all the right points

from both a literary and reality standpoint?

## **POINT OF VIEW**

Let's talk proper Point of View for a moment.

What character's point of view should my story be told in?

The answer is simple. The main character's POV. But what if you have two characters? Presumably a Hero and a Heroine? What if you have a villain? Do we tell any part of the story from that character's perspective?

Many writers assume that during major scene changes, the perspective should change. They're partly correct. A lot of writers suggest that we need to know about the villain if there is one, and that character should get a say too. Again, they're partly right.

The truth is, POV is simple. Tell the story from the Point of View of the character that has the **most to lose.**

What do I mean by that? Let's break it down. In a typical romance novel, we have the hero and heroine and a plot that runs something like this:

Hero meets Heroine (hey you're hot)

Hero and Heroine end up in bed (light cigar/cigarette)

Argument separates the two (God he's a jerk/she's a bitch or, ISSUES!)

And in the end, something happens that is greater than both the Hero and Heroine's issues that makes them examine their beliefs and realize they need the other.

Let's figure this out (I need you/I love you)

HEA/Happily for Now

Throw in a villain, and that character's appearance

should be before or during the cigar in the above example. Considering that much of today's erotic romance is paranormal or urban fantasy, there is a bad guy waiting to kill off both Hero/Heroine. Add secondary characters and it makes things more confusing for the writer.

So what determines whose point of view the story is told from? This is also easy. For the story to flow without head hopping, let's use a simple rule of thumb (courtesy of Morgan Hawke [www.darkerotica.net](http://www.darkerotica.net))

IF the story is under 20k, you simply need ONE character where the event happens to THEM and ONLY them.

IF the story is under 40k, then we have an event that affects two characters.

IF the story is under 100k, we have three characters who get a say, usually because the villain is the one doing shit to the world/universe—including the H/H.

Now that we've narrowed that down and fixed the potential to head hop all over the place, thus eliminating characters that are central but not integral for POV purposes, we're left with the one question:

Who gets to talk?

Readers get attached to characters they care about and have built relationships with, just as in reality. Kill off a favorite character from your reader base and you'd better believe you're going to hear about it! Alter that character's world somehow and again, you'll get feedback. But what if the hero and heroine both have something to lose? Then what do you do?

Refer back to length of the story. Who has the greatest loss, and the greatest gain? Write from THAT one character's POV and ONLY change scenes if word length allows for it, and only if that character's journey makes us feel something universal.

I recently read a story where head hopping occurred so much because the writer thought to write scenes like we see in TV. Take Burn Notice for example: We have Michael Westin, (The hero) Fiona (Heroine) and all the side characters, most notably Sam, the drunk former CIA op who we get to see frequently. POV switches don't really occur much because the story is narrated by Michael Westin, but when we do get those changes, Westin is still narrating. That works because people need to see a lot of visuals and TV/movies allow for those shifts to occur. The average attention span is not that long.

But FICTION writing doesn't. You'll end up with unsmooth transitions, and annoying head hopping issues that make the reader **THROW YOUR BOOK AWAY!**

In FICTION, you do two things. You show the reader what YOU want them to see; otherwise they'll see something else. And you make the story smooth. By sticking to word limit/reason for changes, you'll

eliminate guesswork in your plotting.

Some writers can get away with multiple POV changes. Sherrilyn Kenyon, for example, can get away with it. She has a built-in audience that somehow doesn't care about the change from the H/H to Ash or Stryker. So does Laurel K. Hamilton, but because she writes in First Person POV, she doesn't have that ability. But if she wrote in third person, she could afford to change because she's ESTABLISHED. Chances are that you're not them.

Christine Feehan does an excellent job of keeping the POV between her hero and heroine. So does Richelle Mead. And Rebecca York. Those authors are authors who don't write what I do, but I read them and learn from them.

To reinforce the key points, I'll leave you with my two rules for simplification.

1. Tell the story from the character's POV that

has the MOST to lose.

2. Use word length 20k = 1 character. 40k, 2 characters. 60k-100k+=3 and ONLY three.

That should simplify things in your stories.

When I talk about getting inside the character's head, I usually have my own methods for trying to feel what the characters feel. Since I've been focusing more on my Heroes in this seminar AND in my latest works, I've been listening to a lot of heavy, dark music with lyrics that help set the mood.

The trouble for me begins when I want to come out of that mood in the story and "I" can, but my heroes have trouble and get stuck. That's where I look at my plot outline, and realize that something major needs to happen. Our heroes and heroines move on major actions. Nobody ever says "Damn I've just gotta do dishes today," and goes through any grief or heavy emotions while looking at that task. But when our heroine is captured, wounded, hurt, or doing something our hero considers dangerous, stupid or substitute action here, our hero reacts!

When we talk about emotional cycles, that's a bit of a tougher subject. Studies prove that both men and women go through monthly emotional cycles, according to our biorhythms. And essentially it's the same cycle, but again how things are processed is where the difference lies.

The key here is going to be how pain, emotional or physical, is processed. Since the trigger for our Heroes is going to be pain, that should be our focus. Studies have shown that women are more responsive to pain and will often speak up first, but without knowing what the stimuli was, I could not guess whether the studies were accurate or if social engineering (ie women cook, men work stereotype) is in play. Considering how many men I see in the gym who "rarely complain" about their injuries, vs. women I see lifting lighter to compensate and use correct form to prevent injuries, I'd believe the study.

Cultural conditioning will play a big role here. If a man is in pain, the stereotypical response is for him to remain strong and silent. If the woman's in pain,

she's bitchy and complains about it constantly. Why is that so?

I read a BBC news article dealing with the [78 differences between men and women](#). “Women know instinctively what is dangerous or not recommended for babies in their care. Men, generally speaking, do not.”

**Sian Lindsey, Netherlands**

Now if you take that out of context of its ridiculousness and apply what we've learned here about instinct (I did cover instinct, right? Just kidding...) then we can see how this all works.

## **INSTINCT**

Since I don't think I covered instinct yet, here we go. ]  
I believe women are taught from the start of life to never ignore instincts. If something feels bad, it probably is. And we're allowed by our peers to feel that way and not have to justify it.

Men, however, are not taught that from the start. It's a lesson many men have to learn, either through training or other methods. Why? Why the difference in such a key part of functioning?

Obviously for survival reasons, but that doesn't sound like anything more than a cheap cop out. If men are the hunters and gatherers, why wouldn't they listen to their instincts and be taught that oh so important skill from birth?

Because a man's task is simple. His mind has broken down the complex and made it simple to achieve his one goal, as our hero does when we meet him in the start of our stories.

One of the interesting things has to do with the Alpha Male. In BDSM, we see the very dominant male; but for those who don't write in the BDSM genre, what are we left with?

In a discussion with a publicist, we talked about my

teaching romance authors [how to write BDSM](#), and how to incorporate the elements of the Lifestyle into their [romance stories](#). She'd found it interesting that in traditional, non-kinky romances, we call Dominant males Alphas.

Sure, they may not be kinky; but both men have to take charge of situations. Both men feel the need to control, and the underlying reasons behind this need for control is generally the same; it's a belief that *his* way can guide his heroine into safety, which feeds his need to be a leader. It's aimed at romance authors, but the lessons still apply to a broader spectrum of fiction writers.

Often times, both men will be in powerful positions; either as corporate CEOs or highly trained military experts, these men are used to getting their way.

In the bedroom, we see similarities, too. Whether he's using ropes and handcuffs, spankings and scarves, or just good old fashion strength to make his point, he's still on top. His goal is pretty much the same; drag

something from the woman that she wants to give but doesn't know how. She's generally afraid to ask, and that fear is often masked as stubbornness or anger. Sometimes it's blatant fear.

As a general guideline, the dominant male must guide the [submissive](#) on their journey towards inner peace; and the alpha male must show the reasons he's being overprotective. Bondage becomes a tool used to strip away control, and bring out emotions needing to be dealt; with while the Alpha male may use consensual force to do the same. In effect, he's binding the heroine and making her choose another path, one that leads to growth, rather than stunted movement. Different plot devices can show us these traits from both sides. Using the react vs respond method of character development talked about earlier, we can get this accomplished as writers.

The Hero's ability to see past the Heroine's defenses as an alpha male or Dominant is what spurs him on to guiding her. It's not until he's learned to grow through the plot that he realizes he's guiding her as she's guiding him, but that's another article. In the

end, the two types of men are really one and the same. Our labels are just for publisher and reader convenience, as they help us define the characters for the appropriate markets.

All of this falls back into his ability as the character you've created, in order to reassess his manliness.

Submissive men, or beta males, are the same; but a true submissive (in this context) has learned a very simple lesson.

He's not the top dog, but he's good with that.

Recently on [twitter](#), I asked readers to help with plot points in my near- finished paranormal erotic romance, *Saint in Sinner's Eyes*. The overall plot is done so things are wrapped up, but I needed to create a disaster that would affect my hero enough that he began to realize just how far down he'd sunk into a depression that *only* the heroine could pull him out of.

In the previous book, I did something similar with the hero and heroine. She was a rather kick ass heroine, even though in the world she lived in, she was basically human. Both women share the duty of dealing with shape shifting pumas; both heroines share the duty of dealing with spies, only in [Slow Burn](#), my hero is an ex spook.

Both men suffer from sleepless nights, nightmares, terrors, and all of the mental abuse and stress that someone in espionage would go through, and in the world I created, all that paranoia is doubled by the fact that both my heroes are shifters, spreading themselves thin while they dance across the line between humanity and animalistic instinct.

In the grand scheme of romance, the hero and heroine must balance each other out; and in my stories, that balance is created through the realization of their true love for each other, overcoming all the obstacles they face. But I realized that my heroines were stronger than the typical heroine, because the damage done to them wasn't such that it halted them. Rather, it just

hindered them slightly and made them more or less act like saviors to the hero.

In truth, my heroines weren't the ones in need of saving, my heroes were. My heroes in both *Slow Burn* and *Saint in Sinner's Eyes* need something obviously only the heroine can give them, but I realized I carried this theme even farther back when I started my *Opeth Pack Saga*. In giving most of my heroes two mates, it allowed me to branch into the ménage erotic romance market; but it also let me split up the heroine's personality among two women, in order to aid our damaged heroes.

Traditionally, the hero comes to the rescue in romance novels; but why can't the heroine come to his aid?

Secretly, there are times when the Alpha Male doesn't want control; he yearns to give it up, just for a moment. I'm currently making my way through the *Black Dagger Brotherhood* series by JR Ward and enjoying it, loving just how rich the characters are with their flaws. All of the males are so damaged

emotionally, and even mentally, that it takes a truly strong heroine to not only love them, but deal with them. And the stories don't stop after the character gets their book. We're still seeing Wrath's newfound issues in *Lover Avenged*. In Phury's book *Lover Enshrined*, we see just how completely messed up that male is because the woman who wants him has to basically walk out on him to make him realize just how badly he needs help. When he finally comes to someone for help it's not his Brothers, it's her.

Since Romance is truly the Heroine's Journey, it only makes sense that they should take a place in the spotlight in nontraditional terms.

In our romances, the hero's goal, depending on your plot, is to have the heroine help him get there. This all ties back into our theme of a man's emotions and his security.

Using our theory of balance discussed earlier, our male can be of any archetype and still need saving, but depending on how you've crafted him, how his

actions/reactions work, and how the plot affects his behavior, he can still be written properly while you portray a strong heroine.

The plot itself works out so our males are insecure with relationships because as mentioned above, once they find THE ONE, she's the girl he cannot live without. Yes, this applies to gay males and their partners too.