

The Authors Corner by Dutch Rhudy

Welcome to The Authors Corner.

I hope everyone had a safe and fun-filled fourth. For the first time in over a decade, we did not light up the night sky with fireworks. After a delicious barbeque dinner, I returned to working on my manuscript.

Using too many editors has its pitfalls, just as too many cooks spoil the soup. But it has a lot of positive points as well. Unlike soup where you cannot remove what you added to the pot, words can be deleted, moved around, and edited again.

Even the editors themselves, after seeing their best advice in black and white on the printed page, had second thoughts and began chopping. The growing Prologue and unwanted Dedication we tweaked and edited until everyone felt it was about right.

Given two weeks of rest, when viewed assembled, with each thought of what should be included all merged together, it spelled disaster. Everything was deleted, including Chapter One, and we hit the drawing boards again. Although I don't like the idea, a short Prologue was felt necessary and re-added.

The best part about spending the time working through the opening for the first book, is it sets the stage for everything that follows. I learned from rewriting the first few chapters using each style, whether it would work right. Once we hit on the proper format and tweaked it a few more times, during rewriting everything began falling nicely in place, with good flow.

To ensure I was on the right track, and the style could carry as intended, I continued rewriting the first seven chapters. When I presented the pages at our last meeting, the oral reader kept going until they finished all seven chapters. Other than a couple of minor issues brought up after the reading, everyone was pleased. I felt good too, because it felt like me and my style.

Rather than an on-site time-period location setting, our opening location is now etched in stone. The story begins in the Roaring Falls History Museum, as told by the museum's curator. This setting allows for the reading of short excerpts from Josiah Stren's journals, and allows the narrator to provide story location data.

Starting the series in this fashion, helps break the long quotes into short bite-sized action segments, and keep detail explanation to a minimum. As the story progresses, it will slowly transition away from mentioning the museum setting, until it is no longer mentioned at all.

We already have a major transition to work through as we move from Part One, the Historical books of the series, to the Mystery books in Part Two. I have three possible points where this transition can take place. The most logical scene at present, is when the next generation takes over the detective agency. The agency does get passed down from father to son before it has grown to the point intended for the Mystery Part of the series. I'm several books away from reaching this transition, and may find a smoother place to redefine the series Part.

My next step after getting the stories style down pat, was to go through all of my outlines and try rewriting several key scenes, to ensure they flowed properly. Pleased with how this style works so well, I rewrote many scenes, including the many storyline concepts in my folders for the crimes in the later part of the series.

When designing my overarching outline, and the outlines for each individual book. My primary goal was to present an ongoing mystery with several crimes solved in each book. Without the books themselves becoming episodic or serials. A reader should not have to buy the next book to find out what happened, but at the same time, know the story continues. Nor should they be forced to read the books in order. Each book will have a beginning, a middle, and an end, as they should be written. But remain part of a larger story, a larger picture.

For example: A family may have several photo albums covering their whole life. But they are divided up into perhaps their years in school, then comes the wedding album, followed by the album with their kids growing up and leaving the nest, then the next albums of their many vacations during retirement.

Anyone looking at the albums will know there was more to their life than just the wedding, or just the child rearing years. If the album is titled "Our Wedding" and everything about the wedding is covered, from a readers standpoint, they got what they paid for. They don't have to buy the next book to learn anymore about the wedding, because it is past history, over and done with. They may be interested in finding out about their married life and purchase the next book in the series.

With this concept in mind, before continuing on book one, I went back through each outline to double-check for areas where the writing style may be awkward. I was amazed to find my new approach worked better in every single scene where I rewrote a section as a test.

In the way of an update on what's happening in Roaring Falls. The Stren Family left their Virginia home, crossed the eastern states, and exchanged their draft horses for oxen before crossing the prairie. Without giving away too many spoilers, due to illness, Josiah was orphaned, and left alone in the prairie near death.

Rescued and restored to health, he was adopted by a passing family who offered to teach him a trade. They were cruel, treated him like a slave, and held him captive for several years. When he did escape, he fled through uncharted hostile Indian territory. Surviving this horrendous journey, he arrived in Roaring Falls with intent to continue on to Oregon.

Before I close, I received several serious e-mails this past week from new acquaintances, and promised to do a recap of how I developed Roaring Falls. I began working on my response for inclusion in this months blog post, but felt the new developments mentioned above should take precedence. When I finish the article, I will send it out immediately, then present it here in next months blog.

Respectfully submitted
Dutch Rhudy