

Unhanged Arthur

12:19 PM PDT, September 15, 2008

September 15, 2008 -

Is the Great Canadian Crime Novel tucked carefully away in a drawer or even languishing under your bed?

Well, here's your chance to pull out that manuscript and enter it for the Arthur Ellis Award for Best Unpublished First Crime Novel (the Unhanged Arthur).

The Arthur Ellis Award for Best Unpublished First Crime Novel, sponsored by **McArthur & Company Publishing Ltd.**, was first awarded by the Crime Writers of Canada in 2007 as part of the CWC mandate to recognize and promote the careers of promising new crime writers. The competition is open to (1) Canadian citizens, no matter where they are living, and to writers, regardless of nationality, who have Permanent Resident status in Canada, and (2) who have never had a novel of any kind published commercially.

For further information on competition rules, please go to:

<http://crimewriterscanada.com/cwc/pages/2009%20award%20best%20unpublished%20first%20crimenovel.html>

Comment

Finding Cliffs

7:27 AM PDT, September 3, 2008

September 2, 2008 - Sometimes no matter how hard you look, you can't find what you need. This was the case this past week as I set out to do some research for the latest Russell Quant book. I needed a cliff. It had to be within city limits or close to. It had to be relatively private. And it needed to be treacherous enough that one might readily accept that should your car go over it - or be pushed - whoever was unlucky enough to be inside would perish.

Turns out, cliffs in a prairie city in a province known for its flatness aren't easy to come by. And the couple that might have done the deed didn't fit at least one of the three requirements. In a strange way, though, I was glad. Committing such a heinous act should not come easy.

Did I ever find a cliff? Nope. Did I find an alternative. Oh yeah. There's always a way.

Comment

The Curious World of Research

7:01 AM PDT, August 4, 2008

August 4, 2008 - In contemplation of writing the newest (sixth) Russell Quant book, I started where I usually do: The Crime.

I am an outliner. Actually I create three outlines for every RQ book. The first is about the crime, whodunit, and how does Russell figure everything out. Several months ago, during a break in working on another project, I researched and wrote an outline for what I thought would become the basis for this sixth book. Yet when it came time to write it, I abandoned the idea. Not because it wasn't any good, but because it just didn't seem to fit the Russell Quant world. It was a dark, serious story which threatened to overtake the book, leaving no room for 'the life and times of Russell Quant and his family and friends' which is the subject for the second outline for every book, and an important component of the series (the third outline is smushing the first two together to see what I come up with).

A commonly heard rule of writing is to never throw away anything - even if at first it doesn't work. You never know when you may need it/use it elsewhere. I've actually experienced this. A secondary storyline my editor and I decided to eliminate from Flight of Aquavit (the second Quant book), became an important ingredient for Stain of the Berry (the fourth Quant book) a couple years later. So, I'll save this first outline. Who knows when I may decide to use it.

But that left me with no outline for my new book. The ideas, as they - thankfully - usually do, came fast and furious. I settled on one and began to do some research. This included a visit to a cemetery, learning about the 1928 Amsterdam Olympics, interviews with some very helpful archivists, and writing a poem. Fun, right? Ya gotta love writing. The idea panned out and now I'm off and running.

Comment

The Art of Being Reviewed and Being Giddy

7:35 AM PDT, July 8, 2008

July 8, 2008 - I remember the first big review I received for my first Russell Quant book, Amuse Bouche. It was in Quill & Quire (a major Canadian literary review magazine). It was - thank goodness - a great review. The reviewer loved the book and I still use some of the quotes in promotional material. It was that good. And it was about then that my picture went into the Canadian Oxford Dictionary next to the word: Giddy.

When I first heard about the review, I immediately called a local bookstore, McNally Robinson, to ask if they carried Quill & Quire. They did. Whoever answered must have thought I just won the lottery or something and that the winning numbers were announced in Q&Q. I rushed over and flipped to the page and read it right there, my cheeks hurting as I beamed my excitement.

That night, we went for sushi and lots of sake and celebrated. (Readers of this blog or my website will know that I espouse regular celebrations of one's career successes). In many ways, that review was a turning point for me. To have a positive, publicly published opinion of my writing, written by someone I'd never met, was terrific validation. I think that even I began to think just a little bit more of myself and my ability to write on that day. It truly was a confidence booster. And suddenly, my name as an author, and my series, had national exposure. How great is that?

Since then, I have truly been blessed to have had some great reviews of my books, by some very kind and generous reviewers. I always get giddy about it - even today - and I always battle about what to do to thank these reviewers. I know it may seem a bit inappropriate to seek them out and give them a big hug - but it's what I'd like to do. I know that a great deal of time and effort and thought goes in to reading a book and then writing a review that will not only reflect your opinion but be helpful to other readers. There are so many choices out there for reviewers to choose from, so whenever my book makes the list, I am grateful.

So I hereby thank and give e-hugs to the many wonderful reviewers who have taken the time to review my books. You've made a difference.

Below is a link to my website where you can read a sample review quotes for the latest Russell Quant, Sundowner Ubuntu:

[Sundowner Ubuntu Review Quotes](#)
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Independence Day

6:54 AM PDT, July 4, 2008

July 4, 2008 - Wishing all of my U.S. readers, friends and family a hearty

Happy 4th of July!

[Comment](#)

The End is Near

7:14 AM PDT, July 3, 2008

July 3, 2008 - No, no, no. I'm not nearly that fatalistic. Rather, quite the opposite. But I am almost near the end of my new manuscript. It has been a lengthy,

intriguing, challenging process to say the least. I still have no idea what, if anything, will come of it, but I'm thrilled with the outcome nonetheless.

Summer is here. This weekend past was a long holiday in Canada - for Canada Day - and it signalled the true beginning of summer for me. Except for one weekend in July, I am home (no travel for business or pleasure) until fall! Although I dearly love getting on an airplane and seeing the world, home is wonderful too.

Unlike some, the summer months is when I work a lot. Probably because I *am* home for extended periods and can really focus. And because activity on other pursuits, like community boards, committees, charities, tends to diminish. My email inboxes are less full, the phone rings less, I get caught up on things that pile up. Same reason I always loved to go to the office (when I was a CA) between Xmas and NYEve - so quiet, could get so much done.

That being said, I still plan to take in my fair share of the lazy, hazy days of summer, sitting by the pool, walking in the garden, sipping on cool drinks, basking in sun, and bbq'ing. Love summer. Peonies are in bloom. The lillies are coming.