

The Dragon's Scribe

J.L. Henker, Author – Quarterly Newsletter



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Writing Combat Scenes

My notes from a Fantasy/SciFi Writing Conference Workshop facilitated by Heather O'Malley, black belt holder, combat veteran & martial arts instructor.

Heather O'Malley knows her stuff. She's a veteran (101st Airborne) with combat experience. She has four black belts, studied the psychology of combat and trained in stage combat and combat choreography. Her workshop was full of tips and things to consider when writing realistic battle scenes. Here's what I took away from her presentation:

Psychology is everything. What is the motivation? Things to consider:

- Is your combatant a castle guard or a soldier? What are they defending?
- Many characters will not have extensive combat training; what skills do they have and how will they use.
- If your character is not highly trained or out-gunned or out-manned, they will need to get creative. (Star Wars: Sneaking onto Death Star)

Dropping to a knee behind cover, Bladedancer unloaded her rifle into the group, aiming for the non-exemplars. Huo launched another gout of flame her direction and she rolled into the shadow, coming up behind another concrete barrier. The weapon she had was empty and so she tossed it aside.

She needed to fix this before more soldiers were able to respond. She drew her service weapon and a clip of stun rounds, slamming the clip into place, then letting the bolt slam forward. Another shift through the shadows took her back into the building, and she drove Destiny's Wave through the chest of the senior program leader. The look of pure surprise and then recognition faded along with his life. Bastard deserved it.

Excerpt from Seeking Depth is Best (whateleyacademy.net)

by Heather O'Malley

- Does your character wield magic? How does that influence their fighting style?

The physicality of battle—What are the parameters?

- Is it a straight-on battle or an ambush?
- Will enemy reach protagonist before they reach their weapon? If unarmed, what can they throw?
- Hand-to-hand, consider targets: temples/neck/knees
- Are knives involved? Movements should be very fast, short & quick. Jabs and cuts.
- Swords? It's all about technique. (See video links at end of article)
- Hand-to-hand is visceral. Ground actions in physicality. How does it feel?
- Is the fight on solid ground or snow? How does this change movements, actions?
- If battle is focused on protagonist, attacker may not be paying attention to surroundings. (Attacker swings, protagonist ducks; they hit wall instead).

Pro Tip: People Get Hurt

- It's not realistic if protagonist is never injured. Let it happen.
- Injuries help define character—how does that battle wound affect their actions/movements in the future?

Follow Heather O'Malley on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/heatherKOMalley/>

More Resources:

Historical European Martial Arts Videos on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=91IIARM5IVs>

Fight Choreography Videos on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bgPWzTNxSsA>

From Mythic Scribes: The Art of Fantasy Storytelling:

<https://mythicscribes.com/writing-techniques/writing-warfare/>

The Art of Swordfighting in Ernest by Guy Windsor and Philippo Valdi

<https://guywindsor.net/book/swordfightinginearrest/>



Author Spotlight #1: Natania Barron

Queen of None (2020)

(★★★★★ – Goodreads)



Natania is the talented author of short stories, novellas and several novels, all with monsters in one guise or another. As a mother of two and self-professed lover of tea and baking, she doesn't seem like someone who would dream of owning her own haunted house. Her M.A. in English literature with a concentration in Medieval Literature no doubt heavily informs her writing. Her storytelling is lush with detail and historical background. If you like Victorian settings, with a dash of goth and horror, you'll love her work.

Review:

The first thing that caught my eye about Queen of None was the setting in King Arthur's realm. Long a fan of anything about Arthurian myths, I was intrigued by the idea of a story told by his sister Anna Pendragon, wife of Lot of Orkney and mother to Sir Gawain. The sister prophesized by Merlin to be forgotten finally has her story beautifully told—one of tragedy, loss and ultimately hope. Full of strong women characters who use their magic for healing and reavenge. Intriguing and deeply satisfying.

Natania's website with a complete list of social media links and publications:

<https://www.nataniabarron.com>

Interview with Natania, including a reading Chapter 1 from Masks and Malovence:

<https://samplechapterpodcast.com/natania-barron-masks-malevolence>

Author Spotlight #2: Rose Carmel Gaspard

Selah: The Book of Books Chronicles (2020)

(★★★★★ – Goodreads)



Inspired by stories of magical beings told to her as a child by her great-grandmother and father, Rose began making up her own tales to entertain her siblings. She currently works as a life coach helping people define their own brand of success and is realizing her dream of becoming an author.

Research for her tale of a young man from the NYC foster care system discovering his destiny included reading the Quran and the Tanakh in Hebrew/English. In addition, she hired a Hebrew tutor based in Israel to ensure all aspects were respectfully written.

Review:

The depth of Rose's research is one of the most compelling parts of this unique story. The magic woven into the mythology was skilfully done. There were times it felt like I was reading a sacred text instead of the tale of a young man following an unexpected path. I was unfamiliar with some of the references, but it didn't matter; it just made the story that much more mysterious. Angels, demons, ancient religious doctrine & magical beings made this a rich telling. It was a "can't put down" for me and when I finished, I contacted Rose to ask when the sequel will be out. Original and captivating

Rose's website:

<https://www.writepathandway.com>

Follow her on Twitter: @writepath111

Contest Corner

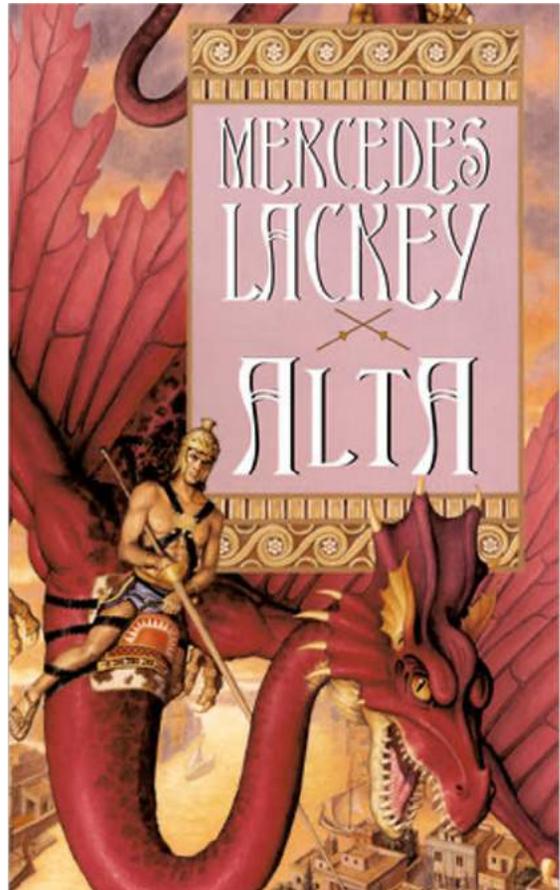
Congratulations to @sennabyrd (Twitter), the winner of the dragon book bag. Thanks to everyone who signed up for the newsletter. If you did not receive your dragon magnet yet, please let me know.

Summer Contest

New contest begins June 6th. Enter for a chance to win a signed first edition of Mercedes Lackey's **Alta** (DAW Books, March 2004). Dustjacket is protected in plastic sleeve and both DJ and book are in near fine condition.

Have your name added to contest for each friend your refer. If 3 friends sign up for the newsletter, you receive 3 chances to win. Simply send me (jlhenkerauthor@gmail.com) the email of the friend(s) you've referred. Once I confirm they've signed up, I'll add add a ticket with your name.

Drawing to be held September 1, 2021



COMING IN THE SEPTEMBER ISSUE:

- Writing about plants in your fantasy worlds, including medicinal and poisonous. How to keep it realistic, with tips and resources for research.
- Author Spotlights: Cassandra Thompson and Jessie Kwak.
- Another exciting contest/giveaway.

Website: <https://jlhenker.com>

Twitter: @jlhenker

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/jlhenker>

Facebook Group: Dragonshire – A Community of Dragon Lovers