



Welcome to my FIRST EVER edition of *Jamie Sterling's Silver Platter*. It seems like I've had a lot of firsts in these past 12 months - first published book, first mass email, first...well, two is a lot.

Progress, progress, progress

If you have checked out my FB or Twitter feeds or my website (www.authorjamiesterling.com), you have learned that I've **FINALLY** finished the first draft of my second book, *Binding Contracts*. I am now performing my primary review and doing edits. I should have it finished and ready to send to publishers sometime between the end of July and the day before the Sun turns into a red giant and chars the Earth to a cinder – so stay tuned. I hope you like it as much (or more) as you liked *Captured Hunter*. ([Buy it here!](#)).

Where, oh where, do I find the time to write?

Like most of you, I'm busy. I've got a full-time job, a long commute, a house that seems endlessly dirty and requires cleaning, a lawn with grass higher than you find on the Serengeti, and the progression of daily and weekly errands that only grows longer no matter how many I get done.

I truly hate it when I realize that my list of tasks will leave me little to no time for actual writing. I mean, I can always find 15 minutes here and there, but that leaves me no time to get back into the story, to return to my characters' head space, to get into the book. I can type words that probably have something to do with the topic of the book, but when I re-read them later the result is something of a cross between Sanskrit and the lyrics from "Louie Louie."

There are two answers to my dilemma:

The Train

As I mentioned above, I have a long commute on the train (over an hour each way), giving me a solid chunk of time to get my head back into my story and get some real

writing done. I even have this tiny little laptop that is perfect for sitting in my cramped seat and banging away at the keyboard. There are times that I'll slam out 1,000 words to or from the office (when those occur, I wonder why I can't do this every day and just get this book done in a month). More often, though, I struggle against the white noise and rocking motion that has the ability to put me to sleep sitting up, which just stinks because.....zzzzzz.

The Night

For some incomprehensible reason, my employer is bent on having me work for at least eight hours a day, and doesn't seem to care how long it takes me to get to the office. And, since eight hours is eight hours, and the train won't go any faster, and I have to eat, the only other time I have is when I am supposed to be resting. I know, I know...it's really bad for me, it probably hurts my brain and therefore my writing, but until my readers start promoting my books on social media to increase my sales (hint, hint), I'm going to be a vampire and write by the light of the full moon.

Really, people?! (or is it "Really?! People?!")

I'm an introvert. I know a lot of writers who don't necessarily think spending an entire weekend alone is a terrible idea. In fact, we relish it. Sometimes (not all the time) the best human contact is none at all.

Having said that, realize that I commute to a major metropolitan city every day for my full-time job. Guess what's there? People, hundreds of thousands of them, and they all seem to be going exactly where I'm going. See how this might be an issue for me?

It's important for me to recognize that a large percentage of my fellow commuters/city workers are just like me; they want to get where they are going, do their job, and get home with the absolute minimum of hassle. Even though those people surround me like a swarm of moths around a porch light, I realize that they are doing exactly as I am, and I tolerate it. Somehow.

It's the stupid ones that get me, and I don't mean the once-in-a-great-while stupid ones. We all do mildly stupid things from time to time. I'm talking about the chronically stupid, the ones that make you wonder how they made it to adulthood. (Now, some would suggest that the chronically stupid are the only ones who buy my books, but that's hurtful and makes me feel bad, so I ignore them).

In the spirit of those I described above, I present **Jamie's Gripe O' the Month** – hopefully, the first of many.

Jamie's Gripe O' The Month - Double-Door Dysfunction

At the entrance to many stores and businesses, there are those twin glass doors, ostensibly one to get in and one to get out (not the automatic kind – they frighten and confuse me). Sometimes the stores only unlock one of the two, which might be next month's **JGOTM**. But, more often than not, they open both doors to let people use different paths in and out of their establishment. And yet, I've seen people standing, four or five deep, waiting for others to come out of the store, or vice-versa – *without trying the other door!*

Do these people have tunnel vision so that they only see one door? Do they believe they are too wide to pass through the other door at the same time? Do they lack the upper-body strength to push or pull a glass door? I'm lazy, but not so much that I can't make my own way into a building.

Of course, if some brave soul does try the other door only to find it locked, the stupid-onus moves from the person to the moron who decided to only unlock one door – putting us right back at the beginning of this section. See how I did that?

Do you have your own **GOTM** that you want to share? I'd love to print it next month. If you send me one and I use it, you'll get a handmade greeting card from www.inkbendandsend.com. Check them out!

Jamie's Silver-Plated Writing Tip

What kind of a writer would I be if I didn't take a little time to try to pass on some of the things I've learned to my readers? I'd be a writer who's a jerk, that's what kind.

I guess I'll start with the thing that kept me from writing for the longest time, and that was my inability to create conflict. Since conflict of some sort is necessary for any story at all, that's kind of a key component. But my personality is such that I always want everything tied up in a tidy package, with no issues or loose ends. My mind is always so busy trying to make order from chaos that I simply couldn't come up with a good story in which the characters had to resolve a problem. Let me give you an example:

Let's go back, way back, to the late 1980s. I'm reading the science section of the *New York Times* (I really do read it when I can), and I came across an article about scientists having found ancient mosquitoes in fossilized amber. These mosquitoes were so old they had very likely sucked blood from actual dinosaurs, meaning that they had dinosaur DNA in their tiny stomachs. (Some of you may have already figured out where this is going – if you have, shut it and don't ruin the surprise for everyone else).

"Wow," I think, "they could breed dinosaurs. What an idea!" I got all excited and started making notes and sketching chapters – until I realized that I didn't have a story. I got no further than the scientists actually making the damn lizards and then....*silencio*. No ideas. Would the scientists win awards and then study the Stegosauruses? Big whoop. Would the dinosaurs eat each other? Probably, but so what – that's a *National Geographic* television show, not a novel. I gave up.

Well, as you've probably guessed by now, I just described the premise to *Jurassic Park*, the wonderful novel by Michael Crichton. Of course Mr. Crichton, being a much better writer, threw in the very common elements of greed and danger to create the necessary conflict and wrote a best-seller that spawned movies and sequels and plush T. Rex dolls. And I sat there wondering if I'd have had even a tenth of the success he did had I understood this basic element.

What's my point with this long-winded story? It's that you have to create and embrace the conflict, to generate drama, to manufacture chaos, until the readers are dying to see how things are resolved. Even memoirs, which can be successful when done well, contain a conflict, either internal or external, that the main character must resolve in some manner.

To any aspiring writers out there, this is my advice: develop your problem and your conflict first, then try to make it into a story that resolves that problem. When you come at the way I did, trying to solve everything before you have a problem, you're not going to go anywhere.