

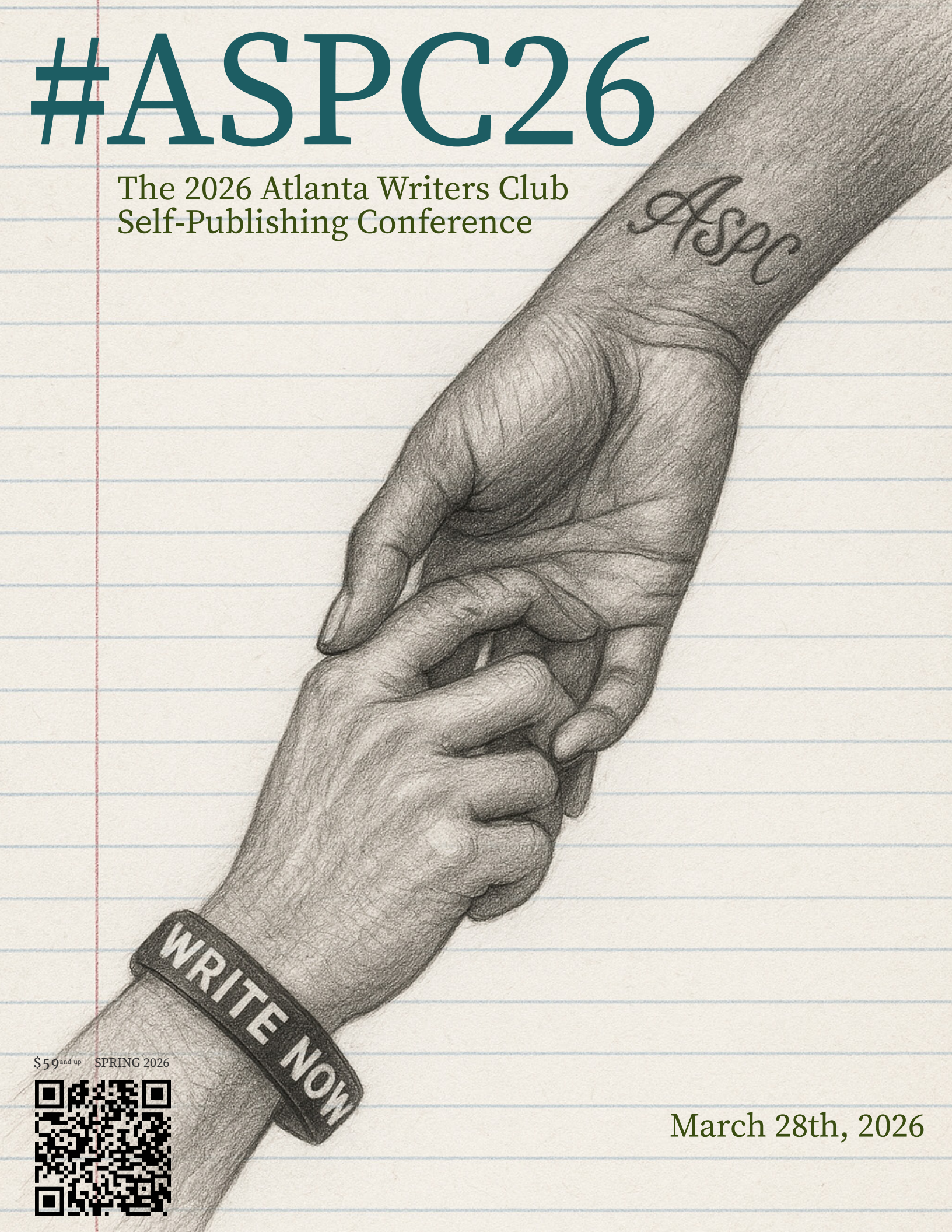
#ASPC26

The 2026 Atlanta Writers Club
Self-Publishing Conference

\$59^{and up} SPRING 2026



March 28th, 2026



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Tenesha L. Curtis | GetBookHelp.com



Welcome to #ASPC26!

The Atlanta Writers Club Self-Publishing Conference is in its fifth iteration. From the six months of programming leading up to the live conference, to the conference day itself, we strive to:

- Provide digital and physical spaces for you to connect with your fellow scribes and build your community of writers,
- Introduce you to resources that help you increase your knowledge and skills related to creating and selling books, and
- Offer opportunities for you to connect with the kinds of professionals that make it easier to produce strong literature in a profitable manner.

We hope you have a wonderful time learning and growing with this year's New Author Bootcamp programming and the live event on March 28th, 2026!



George Weinstein
Conference Director



Tonesha L. Curtis
Database Administrator



Patrick Scullin
Social Media Manager

As discussed in the first New Author Bootcamp session, you can use the book development clock to keep track of your progress toward publication.

The more of these steps you complete, the stronger your published book!



YOUR BOOK DESERVES THE WORLD

Special for
ASPC
Attendees:
Use code **ASPC30**
for 30% off your
first project.



Trusted by thousands of authors worldwide, **ScribeShadow** is a family-run business built on years of publishing experience—making **translations** fast, affordable, and author-friendly.



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#ASPC26 Conference Schedule

Breakfast & Conversations

8:00 am - 9:00 am

A breakfast buffet and book buddies! Come early, grab a bite, and network with other indie authors so you can start building your own network of supportive scribes.

Genre Goldilocks: Finding the Sweet Spot Between Passion and Profit

9:00 am - 9:45 am



Are you writing what you love but barely selling copies? Or chasing hot genres that drain your creative soul and still don't pay the bills? Most indie authors get trapped in this painful either/or dilemma. In this eye-opening session, you'll discover the "Genre Goldilocks" method for finding that profitable sweet spot where your natural passions align with hungry reader markets.

Presented by **Brandon Massey**, award-winning author

Building an Audience with Free Books

10:00 am - 10:45 am



Free books can make you more money! Giving your books away at no cost may seem counterintuitive for building a successful author career, but that is not always the case. In this talk Lauren Connolly will discuss multiple methods centered around free books that she has used to grow a robust, diverse audience of readers that act as the foundation of her full-time novel writing job.

Presented by Lauren Connolly, 2025 Georgia Author of the Year for Romance.

#ASPC26 Conference Schedule

Put Your Best Face (and Voice) Forward: Building a Brand as an Author

11:00 am - 12:00 pm



Forget just a headshot and a tagline. Your brand is how you show up: your voice, your look, your vibe—online and off. You'll learn the must-have elements of a strong brand, the biggest mistakes to avoid, and why quality audio/video gear matters more than you think (plus what to buy on any budget). You'll leave with clear, simple steps to upgrade your brand and stand out in a crowded market—starting the moment the session ends.

Presented by **Michael La Ronn**, author of 100+ books and YouTube sensation.

Lunch

12:00 pm - 1:30 pm

Bring your own meal, schedule a food delivery to the lobby, or enjoy one of the dozens of eateries within walking distance of the hotel.

Making Money by Telling Stories:

The Financial Side of Running an Author Business

1:30 pm - 2:15 pm



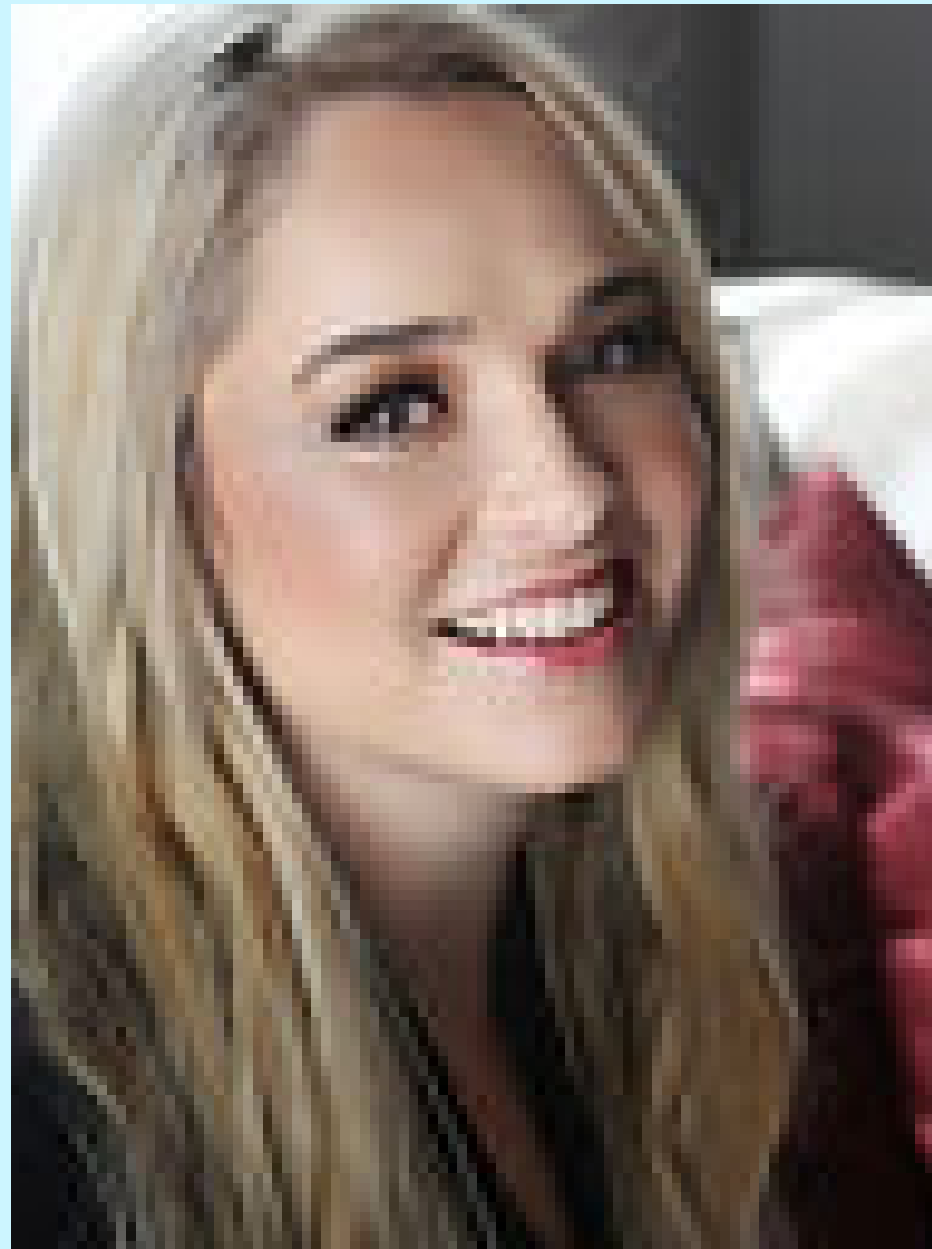
Have you published a book that struggled to make back the money you invested in it? Have you hit a wall in finding ways to make profit with a book you've written? Do you agonize over what business expenses are worth the cost and which are not? This presentation aims to help with all these questions. Michael will talk through what you can do to ensure you're making the most you can from every sale. He will talk about profit leaks in your business you might not even notice that eat away at your take-home profit.

Presented by **Michael Webb**, bestselling author with books in three languages.

#ASPC26 Conference Schedule

The Long Game: How I Turned One Book into 1,400+ Reviews

2:30 pm - 3:15 pm



Want to rack up over a thousand reviews without a viral moment or blowing your budget? Terra did it with *Wingmom*—and she'll break down exactly how for you. No gimmicks, no groveling. Just smart, strategic moves: writing a trope-forward, market-aligned story; building buzz with genre influencers (big and small); and running lean ads with a consistent plan from pre-orders to Pub Day launch and beyond. She'll tell you how to take advantage of Bookbub featured deals and other means to rack up sales, downloads, and reviews not only for her first book in a series but to generate traction for follow-through reads. If you're an indie author ready to stop winging it and start building a sustainable, review-generating system, this session will show you how to make your book the one readers have to talk about.

Presented by **Terra Weiss**, author of five #1 Amazon new releases.

Building with Time and Intention

3:30 pm - 4:15 pm



Through a brick-by-brick framework, attendees will learn how to align their craft, story choice, time stewardship, and personal definition of success. The session includes a brief, guided practical demonstration where participants actively design an “ideal writing week” using their real schedules, energy levels, and current life commitments. Rather than aspirational planning, the exercise focuses on viable habits that can be implemented immediately—dispelling hustle culture requirements.

Presented by **Dr. T. Carter**, President of the Atlanta Writers Club.

Good Buys and Good-Byes

4:15 pm - 5:00 pm

Visit our vendors, get contact info from professionals, and follow your fellow scribes on social media all before we part ways and head home!

Editor Connection Program

Meet our amazing editors for this year!

A fan favorite of the ASPC is the Editor Connection Program. This program allows writers to get professional feedback from editors on a sample of their work, benefiting both new and seasoned scribes. New writers get a feel for what it's like working with different kinds of editors so that they have a better idea of what they want when they're ready to hire someone. Seasoned authors can use the program to scout out talent for their own editorial team to they can be prepared in case their regular editor is no longer available (booked up for the foreseeable future, passes away, retires, falls ill, etc.).

The Editor Connection Program is free for all ASPC registrants!



Cyndi Sandusky | SanduskyEditorial.com

Do you have a manuscript that needs a professional eye? Short and sweet or long and detailed, new or experienced writer, I can help you make sure your message is clearly understood by your readers. I'm committed to making my clients' stories the best they can be.




Danielle Szabreath | [Linktr.ee/szabreathediting](https://linktr.ee/szabreathediting)

Versatile editor that can quickly adapt to style guides and genres. Eager to edit anything that writers are excited about, especially projects close to the heart. I have a diverse skill set and am passionate about learning new things. I also offer the following services: interior book design/typesetting and book coaching.



Alan Burnce | TuningForkEditing.com

I'll help sharpen and polish your manuscript, find your way through the fog of a stalled project, or begin moving your book idea from your mind to the page. Let's talk about your path forward.

 [@TuningForkEdit](https://www.facebook.com/TuningForkEdit)



Adrienne Pond | Lost-Art-Editing.com

Each manuscript is unique and I approach all projects with respect, confidentiality, and a passion for language, author goals, and the needs of the story.

 [@LostArtEditing](https://www.instagram.com/LostArtEditing)



Editor Connection Program

Meet our amazing editors for this year!



Holly Black | BirdAndBearEditing.com

Let me catch the simple mistakes so you can focus on the important stuff...like storytelling.



[@Bird-and-Bear-Editorial-Services-61557740476375](https://www.facebook.com/Bird-and-Bear-Editorial-Services-61557740476375)



[@BirdAndBearEditing](https://www.instagram.com/BirdAndBearEditing)



Jodi Unsinger | AcmeEditorial.com

Your readers will experience the power of your messages with a clear, consistent, and coherent presentation of your book. I can help you with that. On budget. On time.



Kristin Batterton | DetailedDraft.com

I'm an award-winning writer who regularly seeks feedback on my own work, so I know how important it is that an edit doesn't change your voice. I have multiple certificates in editing and years of experience helping publishers and writers achieve their goals—and celebrating alongside them!



Sue Toth | SueToth.com

I combine my lifelong love of words, extensive editing experience, and commitment to storytelling excellence to offer authors personalized coaching and editorial services. I'm here to support your writing journey with expertise and empathy.



[@SueTothEditing](https://www.facebook.com/SueTothEditing)



[@SueTothEditing](https://www.instagram.com/SueTothEditing)

Sue Toth Editing Services



Rachel Thompson | TealEdits.co

I'm an editor who loves diving into a messy first (or third) draft. My goal is to help you gain the clarity, structure, and feedback you need to publish a strong piece that sparkles.



Editor Connection Program

Meet our amazing editors for this year!



Faye Roberts | [FayeRobertsEdits.com](https://www.FayeRobertsEdits.com)

I copyedit and proofread fiction and general nonfiction. As a former librarian and nonprofit administrator, I'm also a published writer with extensive experience in business communications, white papers and grant writing. My writing experience includes training and instructional manuals, web content and presentation slides.

 [@FayeRobertsEdits](https://www.facebook.com/FayeRobertsEdits)



Aubrey Parry | [RavishingRevisions.com](https://www.RavishingRevisions.com)

Writing a book is hard work. Writing one that changes lives takes a team. My aim is to take your vision and fine-tune it until it truly shines. That's where the magic truly happens. Let's work together and create something that will uplift others one word at a time.

 [@Ravishing_Revisions](https://www.facebook.com/Ravishing_Revisions)  [@RavishingRevisions](https://www.instagram.com/RavishingRevisions)



Maria VerMulm | [EditorsMargin.com](https://www.EditorsMargin.com)

Whether you need help structuring a big idea, refining details, or simply finding rhythm in your words, you can count on me. I help sharpen your message and deliver your ideas in your voice.

 [@editorsmargin](https://www.instagram.com/editorsmargin)



Want to get in on the free samples these editors will be providing? All you need to do is register for the conference! Even if you can't make it to the in-person event, you can sign up for the New Author Bootcamp virtual sessions that take place between October and March. This virtual ticket will still give you access to the Editor Connection Program.

1. [Visit the registration page](#) for #ASPC26.
2. Complete the registration form and select your desired ticket type.
3. When prompted, upload the first 10 pages (or less, if you don't have that much written yet) of your current work-in-progress. Be sure to include your name and genre at the top of the file.
4. Pay your fee and we'll send your sample to editors working with your particular genre.
5. You'll receive your edited sample from participating editors. Easy!

[AtlantaSelfPublishingConference.com](https://www.AtlantaSelfPublishingConference.com)

Need Expert Authorship Guidance?



How about a private book coaching session every single month? Would sequential, newbie-friendly, self-paced lessons help as well? If so, you're invited to join [WeCanPub.com](https://www.wecanpub.com)!

This site is built to help both free and paid subscribers get the most out of their authorship without breaking the bank.

Freeple pay nothing to sign up and they receive monthly emails with tips to help improve their authorship as well as 27 free, text-only lessons about the various steps it takes to publish a book—from conceptualization to launch day.

Apprentices get what the Freeple do as well as private, monthly book coaching sessions, hefty discounts on editorial services for their book projects (illustrations, copyediting, manuscript evaluations, cover design, etc.), free paperbacks shipped to their door, early access to new fiction and nonfiction books in various genres, discounts on bookish events, and digital and physical swag delivered to them all year long.

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.COM

Indie Author Stats

Get inspiration and insights from some recent statistics about being an indie author.



42.7%

*of indie authors cite wanting to make money from their books as their reason for publishing. **19.3%** stated they wanted their story to be told.*



54%

*of indie authors make more than \$100 from their books each month, with **17%** making between \$2,501 and \$20,000 each month.*



60

*is the number of books that most indie authors earning **\$20,000 or more each month** have published.*



\$1,000+

is the amount that the top-earning authors generally spend on professional cover design. Authors who earn the least from their books tend to choose free, DIY cover design options.

How do these numbers compare to your experience as an author? To learn more, you can check out the results of surveys and studies done by organizations such as the Alliance of Independent Authors or Written Word Media (where these stats came from!).



Author Website Checklist

No two author websites look the same, but they all share a few common characteristics.

Generally speaking, author websites have to fill four needs. An author site needs to tell visitors:

- what an author has written,
- who the author is,
- how to contact the author, and
- what the author is writing next.

Cont'd.

Before you launch your author site, here's a quick checklist to make sure you have all the parts you need.

- **Author bio** - Have you posted a bio on your site, and does it include a photo? Readers want to know more about you, which is why you should post a bio on your site. You should include a photo as well as details about how you got into writing, what you do for fun, and other personal info.
- **Books** - People can't become your fans if they don't know about your books, and if you don't list your books on your site they will never find out. That's why you should create a listing page for each of your books, and while you're at it a directory page and series summary.
- **Mailing list** - Your fans will want to hear from you when your next book is out, so you should give them the chance to sign up for your mailing list. Don't forget to offer a freebie to anyone who signs up.
- **Contact page** - People need to be able to reach you so organizers can invite you to events, fans tell you they love your books, and bloggers can ask about ARCs. That's why you should have a contact page with a contact form and your email address.

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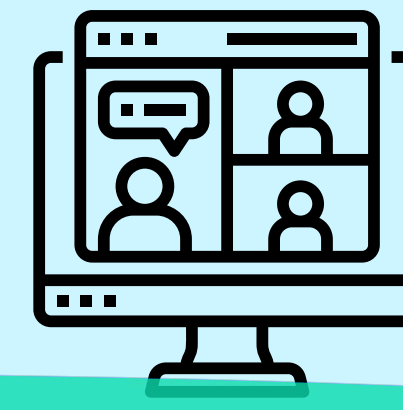
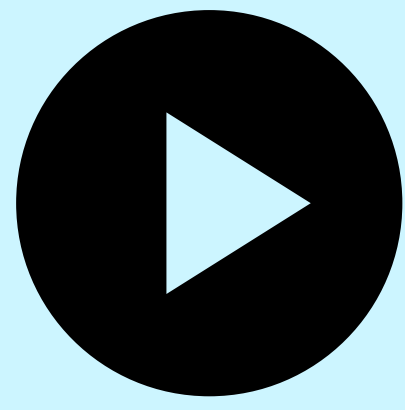
- **Social media** – Have you added links to all your social media accounts? (It's okay if you don't have any, but you should link to the ones you do have.)
- **Events** – Have you added a calendar or some other way for fans to know when and where they can meet you?
- **Home page** – Your home page should tell visitors who you are, and include either a call to action or the cover of your most recent book (or both).

You don't need to check off all the items on this list, although it would be a good idea to include all the details you think will be useful or important to your site's visitors.

Contact me if you need help with your site, or have any questions!

New Author Bootcamp Schedule

Video Lessons



Open Office Hour

DEC
26

Lesson 13
Writing

JAN
02

JAN
09

Lessons 14 - 16
Self-Revisions,
Alpha Readers, &
Critique Groups

JAN
18

JAN
23

Lessons 17 - 19
Manuscript Evaluations,
Developmental Editing, &
Research

JAN
30

FEB
06

Lessons 20 - 22
Beta Readers,
Copy Editing,
Illustrations

FEB
13

FEB
20

Lessons 23 & 24
Book Design &
Cover Design

FEB
27

MAR
06

Lessons 25 & 26
Advertising &
Proofreading

MAR
13

MAR
20

Lesson 27
Publishing

MAR
27

Skip the Scams:

3 Red Flags for Writers



Tenesha L. Curtis

In the world of indie publishing, scams abound. It's all too easy to prey on writers who are new to the industry and have no idea when someone is trying to trick them out of their hard-earned money. For the past couple of decades in the publishing world, I've noticed dozens of red flags writers can look out for when interacting with individuals or businesses. Of those, this article covers three big ones I think it's helpful to keep in mind when dealing with agencies or individuals who claim to offer author services of any kind. Each one of these that you come across increases the likelihood that you're dealing with a scammer instead of a seasoned, ethical professional. I regularly share warnings like these with my clients, students, and fellow writers so they can protect themselves and their projects as they prepare for publication.

1. They Contact You First

In my experience, the vast majority of healthy, efficiently run businesses don't rely on cold contacts of any kind. If you've ever received spam phone calls, text messages, or emails, that's a cold contact because you didn't ask for anyone to reach out to you about a particular product or service. Companies that do this are essentially shooting in the dark in an attempt to find their next victims.

Think about the last time a cashier from Publix called you out of the blue to ask you to come buy groceries from your local store. Even if someone did reach out to you this way, you would probably immediately hang up on them because you understand that this is abnormal behavior for such an established and respected brand. Randomly calling, texting, emailing, and messaging people expends a lot of time and resources that would be better spent providing stronger services or more reliable products for current customers. But since scammers have no intention of providing any (let alone high-quality) services, they don't care about this. They will set up bots and / or commission-compensated salespeople to look for evidence of current/intended authorship such as posting on social media about needing help with editing a book or folks who have recently submitted copyright registrations. These are the writers who get targeted for unsolicited contact. Between bots and humans who don't get paid unless they sell something, these scammers can contact hundreds, if not thousands, of people per day.

Skip the Scams:

3 Red Flags for Writers (cont.)

This means that all it takes is one or two gullible newbies to hand over thousands of dollars for “publishing” or “editing” for the scammers to make back exponentially more than they spent. I don’t ever want you to be one of their paydays!

If an individual or a company contacts you at random, there is a strong chance that they are a scammer of some kind. Cold contact includes:

- ▀ Calling you.
- ▀ Texting you.
- ▀ Emailing you.
- ▀ Sending social media messages (LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, etc.).
- ▀ Sending you a letter in the mail.

No method of contact is less spammy than the other. Only engaging with people and companies you have explicitly requested contact from is a much safer way to conduct your search for help with prepping your book for publication. Based on the clients I’ve helped “rescue” their projects from scammers, staying away from people who contact you first could eliminate at least 80% of author scams. I always list this red flag first precisely because it’s so easy to spot that it can prevent you from ever getting to see the other two red flags!

SIDENOTE: INDUSTRY PARTICIPATION DOES NOT GUARANTEE ETHICAL BEHAVIOR

A company being tied to a particular movement, organization (the Better Business Bureau, for example), or event does not automatically make them ethical professionals. All you need in order to buy a billboard near a library, or be an official sponsor of a school book fair, or have a Better Business Bureau profile is the money to pay the necessary fees. There is little to no vetting going on in these situations. As long as the payment clears, the billboard goes up or the sponsorship is established or the profile goes live. Being an “advertiser,” “vendor,” “sponsor,” or “partner” of a particular institution or event does not mean the company operates in an ethical way. It just means they had the money to buy their way into these positions (possibly using funds that they received from their victims).

Scammers can be present at writer retreats, workshops, and the like because they can pay money to be part of that event just like you can. Even when you come into contact with a company at these events, don’t let your guard down. Keep an eye out for the warning signs covered in this article.

Skip the Scams:

3 Red Flags for Writers^(cont.)

2. They Want Money for Free Things

With today's technology, you can publish a book for free on multiple platforms in as little as 10 minutes. Storing an ebook on a website does not incur any additional fees since the entire website's hosting is paid for regardless of whether that ebook is stored on the site or not. Making a book available to retail stores and libraries can be completed with the click of a button without incurring additional fees.

Yet, I consistently see scammers charge for things like this all the time (i.e., thousands of dollars to "publish" your book, monthly fees for including your book on their website, hundreds of dollars to "distribute" your book to retailers like Walmart or Barnes & Noble). While I can understand possibly paying someone for their time if they are doing these tasks for you for the sake of convenience (meaning you're compensating them for the 10 to 30 minutes they spend doing it), paying someone hundreds or even thousands of dollars for these free steps doesn't sound like a good business move on an author's part. The more you dump money into scams, the longer it will take you to turn a profit on your project. Making sure that you are only paying for services that you are physically incapable of doing yourself to any level of fidelity, or that actually do cost money, is key to making your authorship a financially solvent one as soon as possible.

There are various services that indie authors usually pay for. This includes things like professional alpha reading, manuscript evaluations, and cover design. Part of being an indie author means that you get to decide which services you'll hire people to do for you, which tasks you will try to complete on your own, and which steps you will skip. These decisions are made based on your goals, your personal skill set, and your current resources (professional friends who might volunteer to help, your budget, etc.).

In order to determine what exactly you are being charged for, and how much, many ethical companies will offer a publicly available, specific list of services and accompanying prices. This allows you to easily compare prices between companies without being forced to interact with them in order to receive a quote. That interaction (phone call, emails, etc.) is often where the psychological manipulation begins, so scammers tend to push hard for that. Having clear service descriptions and pricing also allows you to make sure that you are only being charged for tasks that (1) usually aren't available for free, (2) you are not able to complete yourself, and / or (3) you are willing to spend money to have someone else do for you even if you could do them on your own (similar to paying someone to cut your grass, walk your dog, cook you a meal, or clean your house).

If someone is trying to charge you large sums of money for something that you could easily do on your own for free, that's a big red flag.

SIDENOTE: OVERCHARGING AND UNDERCHARGING

Many of the scammers I come across manipulate their victims in one of two ways when it comes to pricing. The first way is to overcharge for services. Scammers who do this are banking on the idea that you have no clue what something should cost. So they can just make up any random number and you'll pay it because they have convinced you that's what the service is worth. Yet, they will often barely touch your manuscript or they will run it through an AI sys-

Skip the Scams:

3 Red Flags for Writers_(cont.)

tem of some kind (something you could do on your own for free or cheap). Then they can pocket your funds and move on to their next victim.

For example, if a service normally costs \$500 for a book of your size (check the-efa.org/rates), the scammer may charge \$1,500 and then do about \$100 worth of “work,” and make \$1,400 in profit. This is easy money when working with gullible, fledgling authors.

On the flip side, some scammers go ultra low with their pricing in order to draw in people who are less concerned with the quality of the result and more worried about the cost because they have so little money to put into their manuscript’s development. If a service normally costs \$500, this person would say they can do it for \$50. After that, the MO is the same. Run it through an automated system and hand it back to you. The software they use may only cost them \$30 per month. But if they can get 20 clients each month paying them \$50, they pull in \$1,000, pay their \$30 subscription to use the app, and they profit \$970 month after month while barely doing any work beyond watching deposits roll into their bank account.

When struggling financially (as many folks do) it’s all too easy to be led around by the wallet. Scammers know this and play on this to get what they want out of you.

3. They Are Evasive or Secretive About Simple Things

For many companies who are operating in good faith and with ethical intentions, being upfront and honest is just par for the course. But with scammers, you’ll likely notice that a lot is hidden from you, even if it’s information that could easily be made public.

One of the simplest of these to spot is pricing information. Even companies who charge based on the specifics of a project will have minimums that they can display on their site (i.e., “Our minimum order is \$500.”). This way, you have at least some idea of what it’s going to cost you to work with them. After all, they aren’t going to do a project for \$3.50. They need to make a certain amount of money on a service in order to keep their business profitable. When there is absolutely no pricing information at all on their website, that can mean that the scammer wants to be able to gauge how green you are so that they overcharge you. This is often why they will encourage you to “schedule a free consultation” or “request a free sample edit” before you get to find out how much money they want.

Another way scammers can try to trick you is by hiding what a service actually includes. They will often offer “packages” that sound like you’re getting a lot of services bundled into one “convenient” block. Unfortunately, because they don’t disclose what each of those services entails, newbies can get manipulated out of money because they don’t realize that a service wasn’t completed.

Most professionals know what they charge for services, so they can either be transparent about it on their website or at least easily answer the question when you ask them. Most professionals understand precisely what steps it takes to complete a particular service. So, again, they can outline the service clearly on their website or provide you with a verbal breakdown in a matter of seconds. Be wary of anyone who hides this kind of basic info (pricing, portfolio, etc.).

Skip the Scams:

3 Red Flags for Writers_(cont.)

Make These Flags Part of Your Vetting Protocol

Once you find a good professional fit for yourself and your project, you can do business with that firm or person repeatedly without having to find and vet anyone else (short of something major, like illness or retirement, taking place). Knowing that, be sure to take your time when it comes hiring someone. Interact with them, review their portfolio, look at their prices, check out their reviews, and so on.

Not every dangerous entity is going to have all three of these red flags, but normally at least one of these will show up. But there are others you'll find that are also obviously problematic, such as being in pending litigation with a former client (Google the company name and the word "scam" or "lawsuit"), most of their reviews online being three stars or less (nobody is perfect, so having a couple of low-star reviews is to be expected, but there should be way more high-star reviews), or only wanting to interact through their website or social media (no phone number, physical address, or email address).

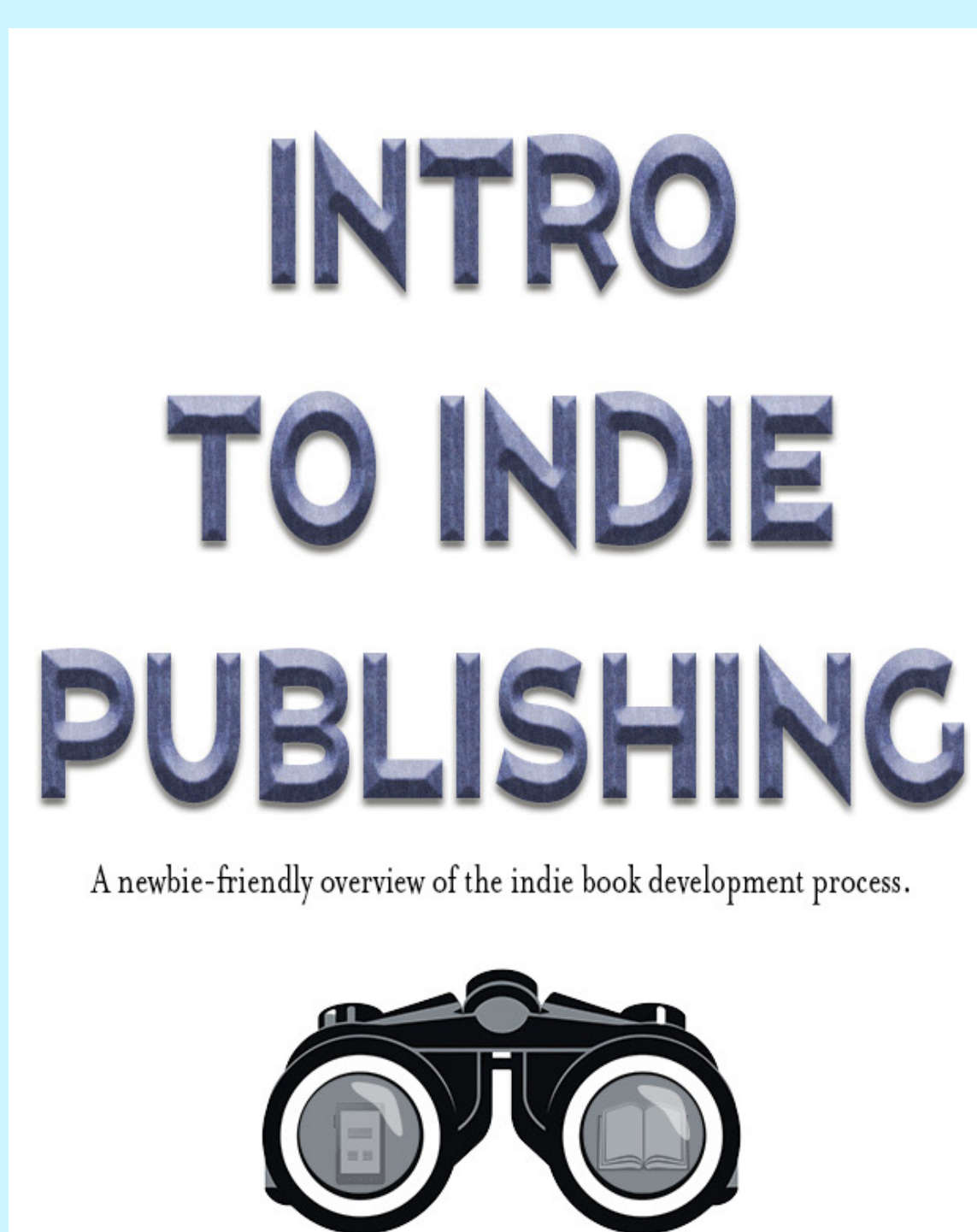
From the hundreds of authors that I've come across who have been victimized by con artists in the publishing world, the number one common denominator amongst them all was the fact that the company reached out to them first. If you don't remember or heed any other warning, please pay close attention to this one. Your first and largest red flag will be someone randomly making contact with you even though you never asked them to and have never heard of them before.

Let these red flags help guide you away from sketchy scammers and towards helpful, honest, trustworthy companies and professionals who will be worth every dime that you spend with them.

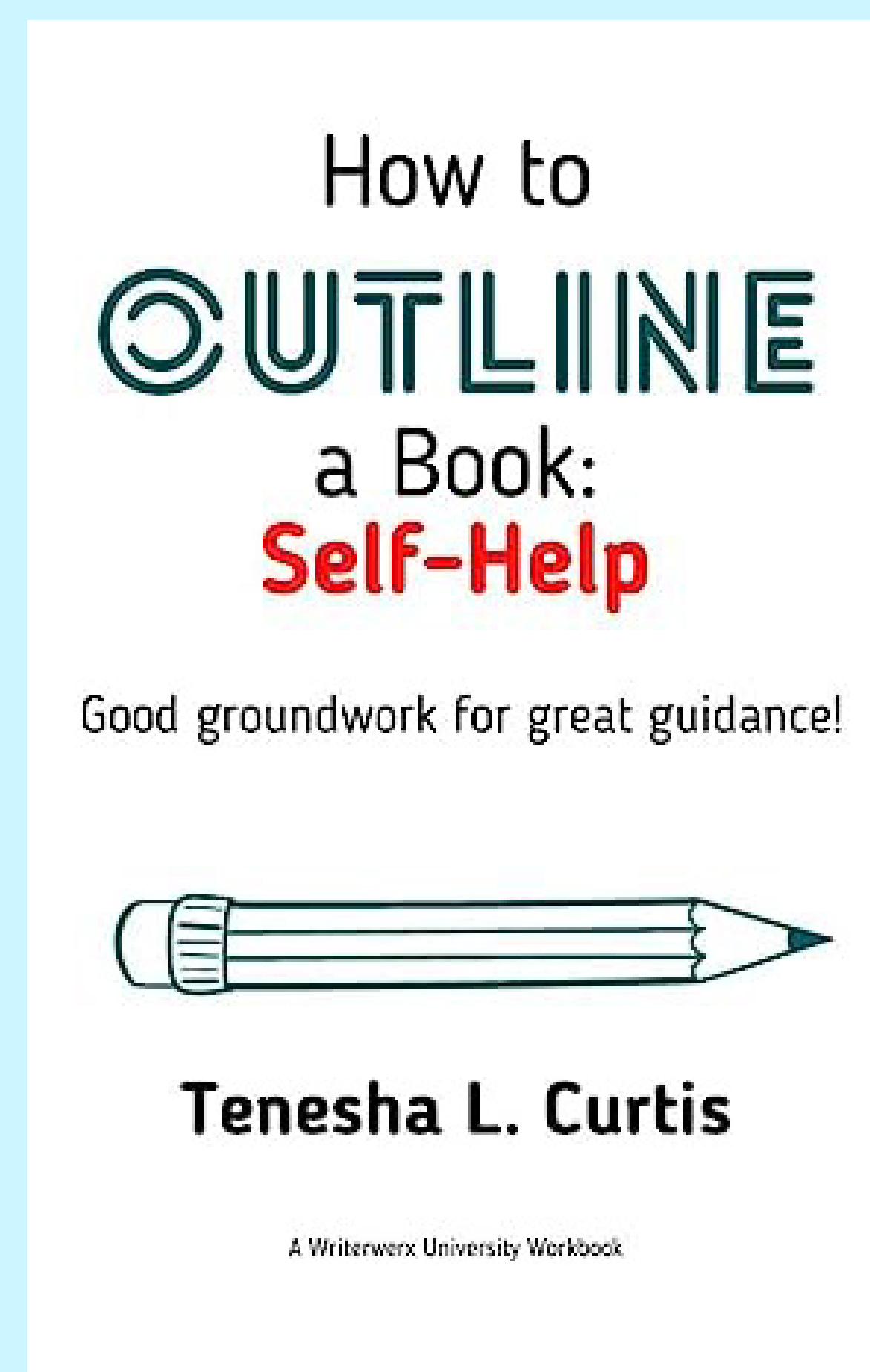
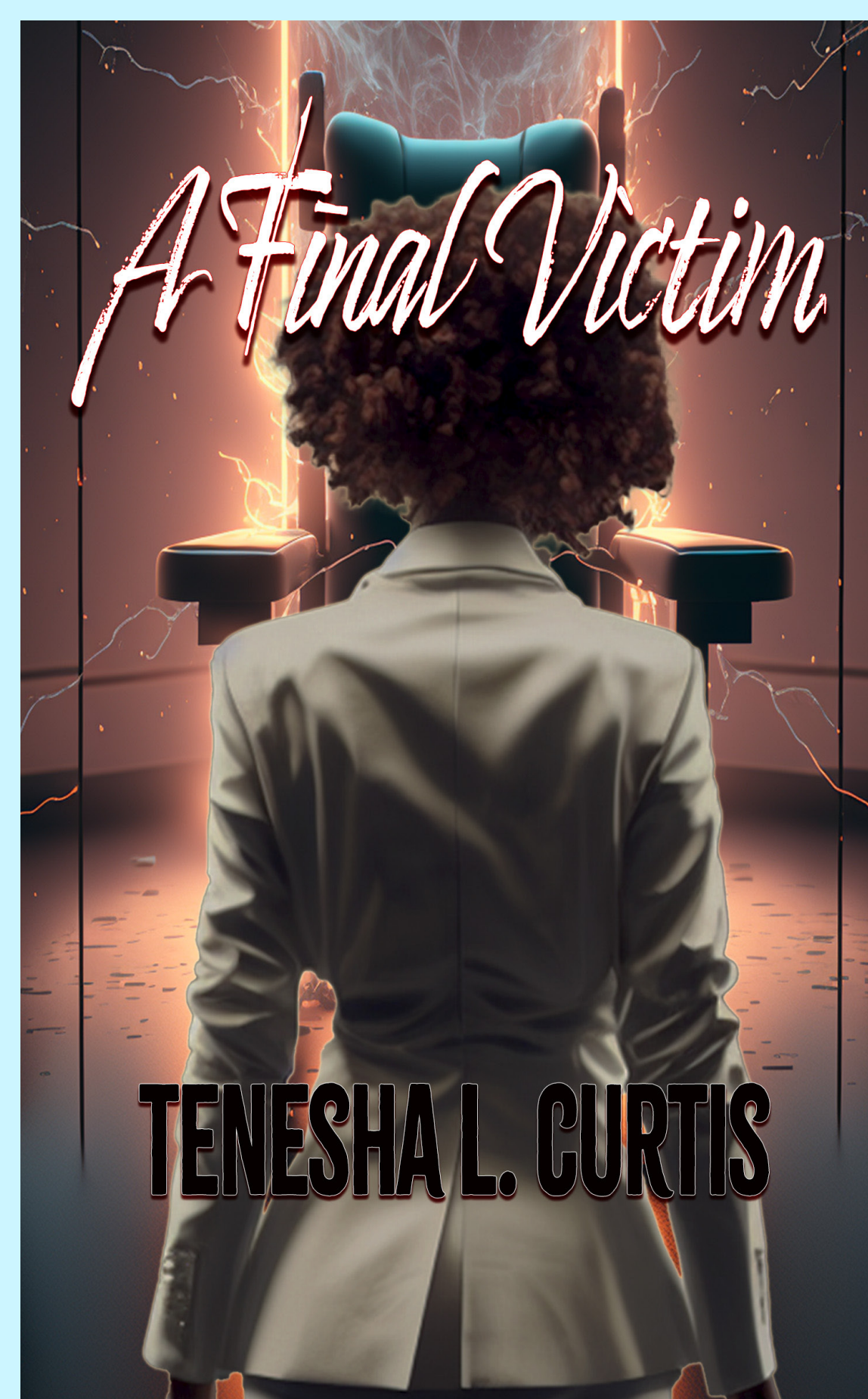
As always, if you have questions or concerns about someone you're considering working with, don't hesitate to reach out! +1-404-384-5258 (call, text, or WhatsApp) | Help@GetBookHelp.com



Tenesha L. Curtis



Tenesha L. Curtis



We have an ASPC Facebook Group to be your go-to digital space for ASPC info and author support all year long!

[Request to join.](#)



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ACT II: My War of Art



[George Weinstein](#)

In December, I retired from my day job with a boutique consulting firm where I'd enjoyed working for many years. My intention was to focus on writing new novels as well as continuing to lead the Atlanta Writers Club (AWC) as its executive director. The AWC has always been a fulltime job as well, one I'd like to do until either death or senility reduces my effectiveness. □

During the month of January, however, I've allowed myself precious little time to write even though I really need to get new books on the market. My last one came out in 2022, and I miss the daily tussling with words, characters, and story. I thought I'd now have all the time in the world to write, but I'm battling the beast known as procrastination.

There's a comment you hear from many retirees: "I'm so busy, I don't know how I ever had time to work." It's true in my case because I make it true. The AWC job pretty much takes up as much time each day, weekends included, as I'm willing to give it. There's always a new program we're launching, always more questions to answer or situations to address from members, always some way to help someone. My wife—Georgia Author of the Year Kim Conrey and AWC VP of Operations—tells me I have a problem not curtailing the hours I devote to that work. As ever, she is correct.

I have difficulty declaring I've done enough for one day. And days in front of my laptop tend to become evenings there too. Not working on the new novel, mind you, but writing countless emails, updating websites, applying for grants, drafting or editing program proposals, and more. And when I get up the next morning, there are a half-dozen messages from night owls with questions, requests, or problems. And the cycle begins anew in a way that feels alarmingly like Sisyphus and his boulder.

But I know what this really is. The AWC job is totally manageable—I've done some variation of it for more than 20 years, first as a volunteer and now as a paid employee. What it gives me, though, is cover: an excuse NOT to write.

Why would I procrastinate when I willingly cut our household income by 60% to give myself time to do something I've loved since I was six years old? Why won't I get out of my own way?

In his brilliant book, *The War of Art*, Steven Pressfield describes this self-sabotage as "resistance," an internal force that prevents us from doing creative work. His solution is to be a professional who shows up every day to write, treating one's craft as a job and thus developing creative discipline. Sit down and, rather than waiting for inspiration to strike, start stringing one word after another until a scene takes shape and then a full chapter. And keep going.

So I really still have two full-time jobs: my paid work for the AWC and writing my next book.

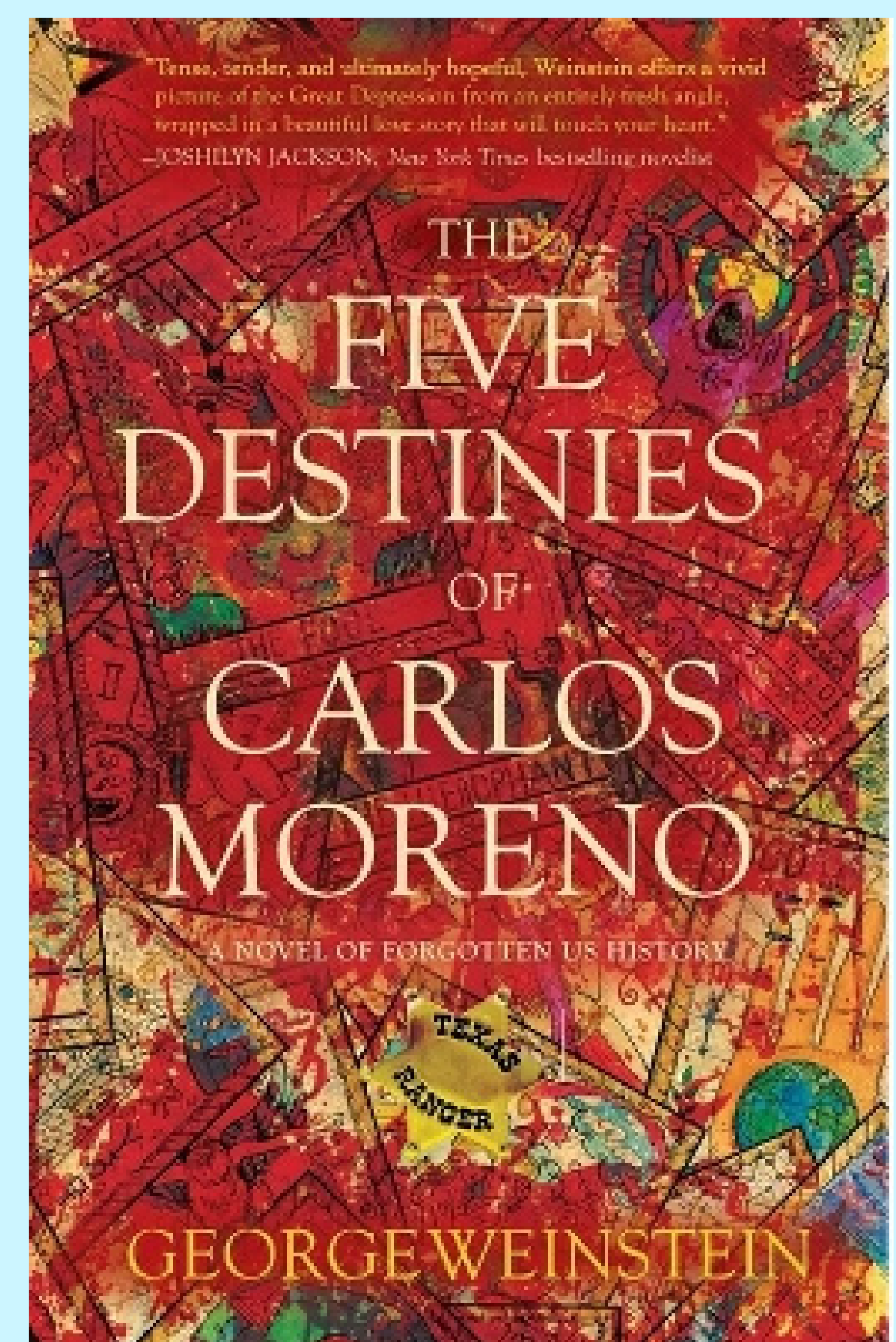
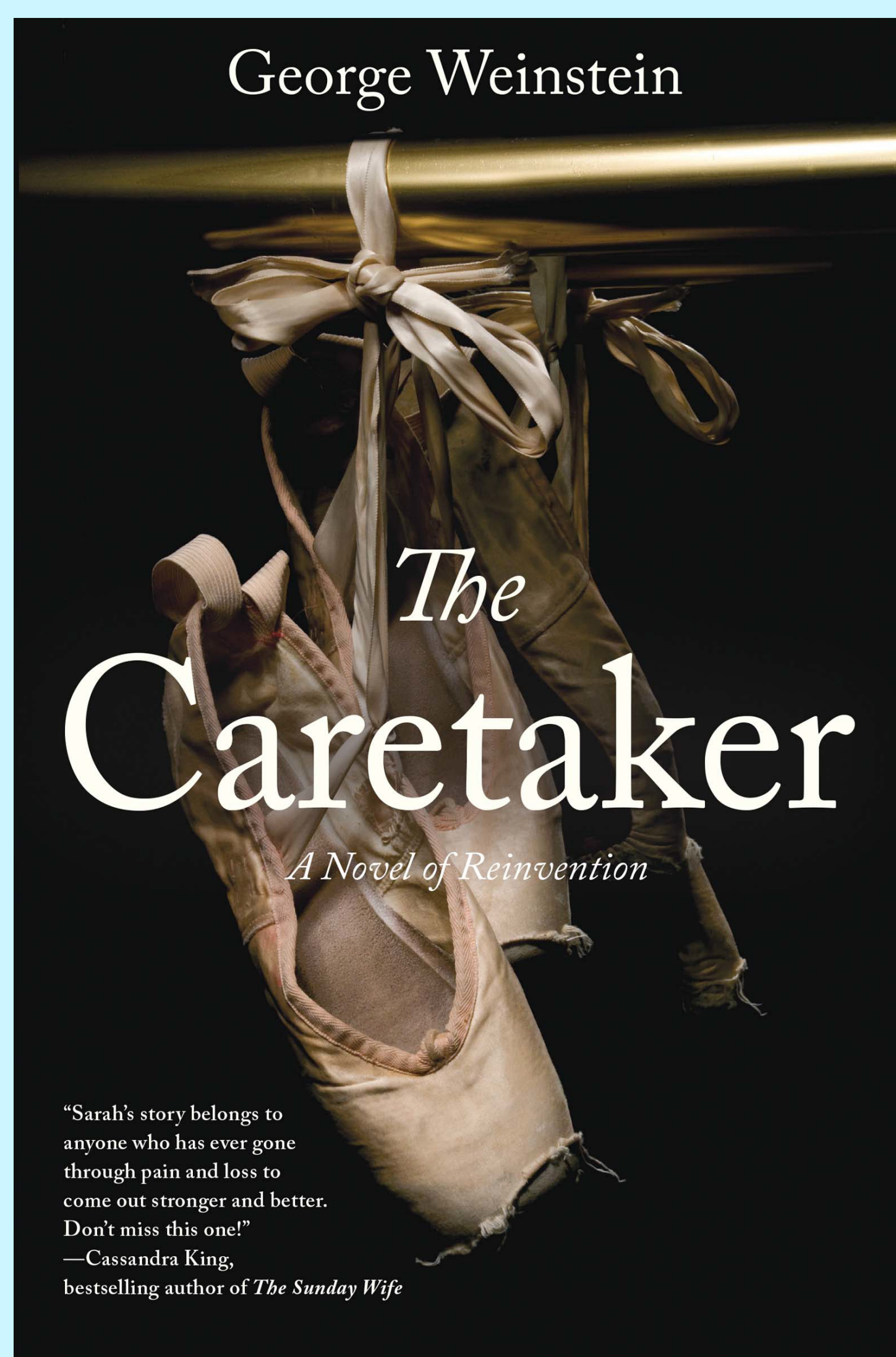
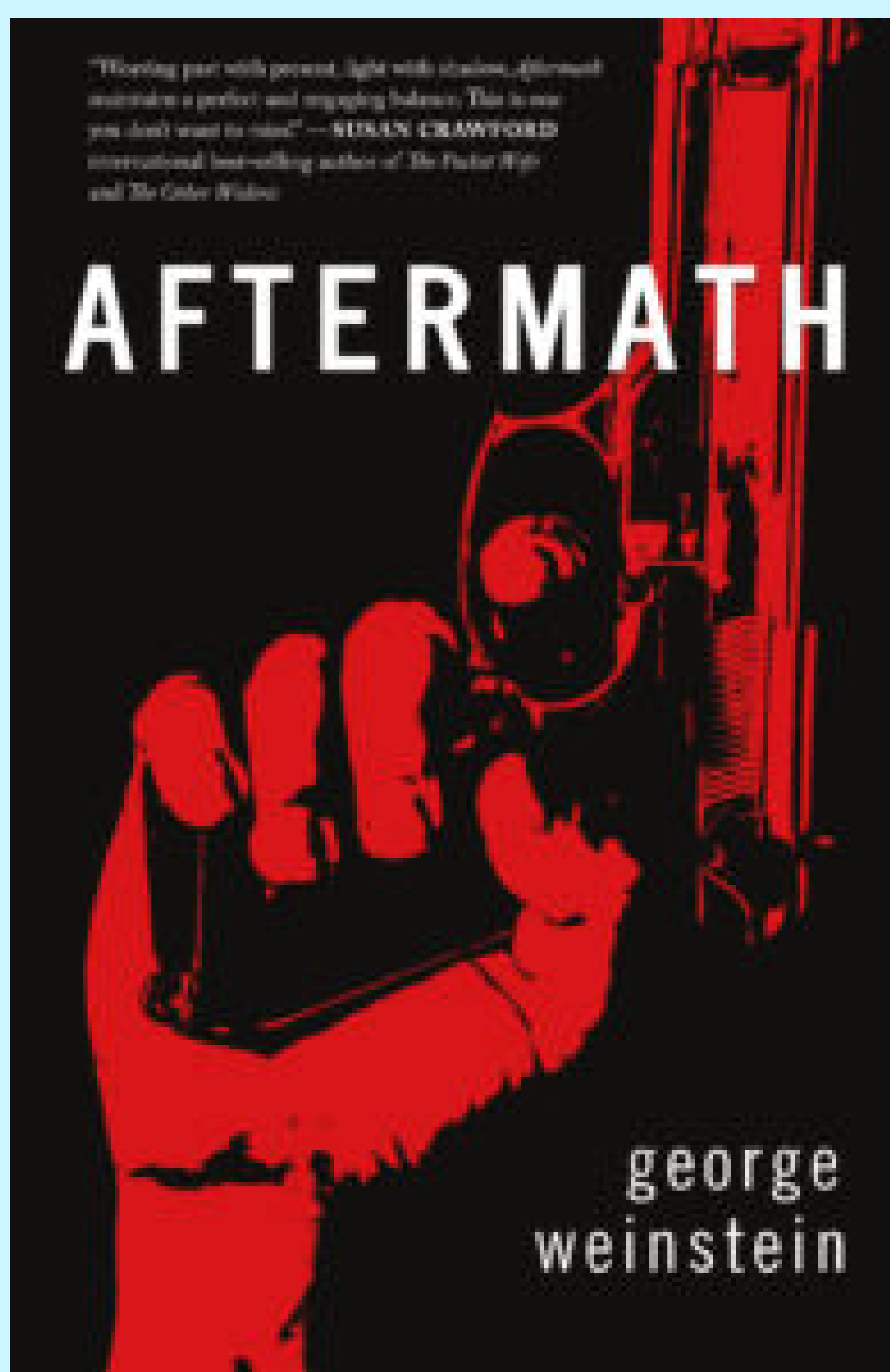
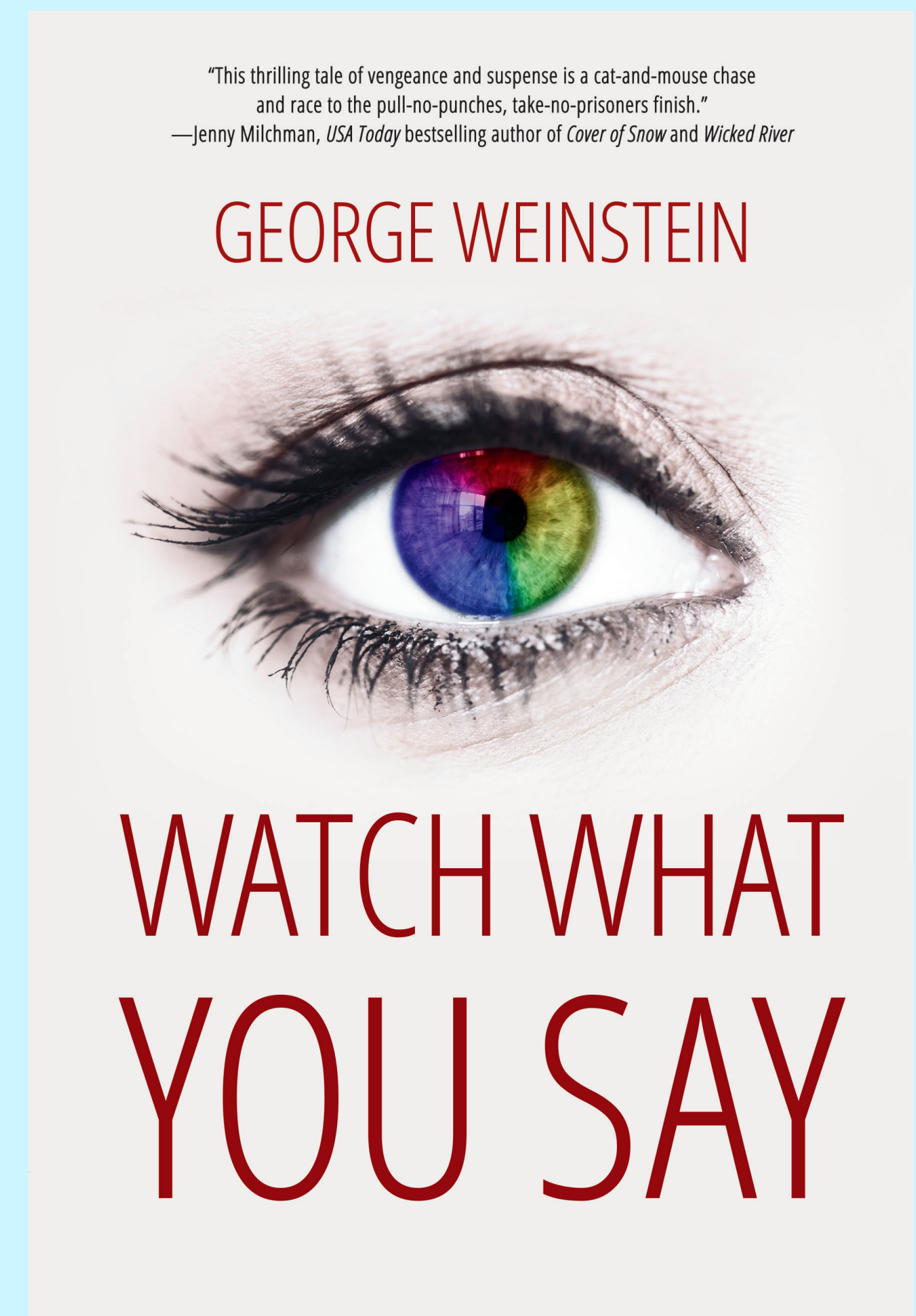
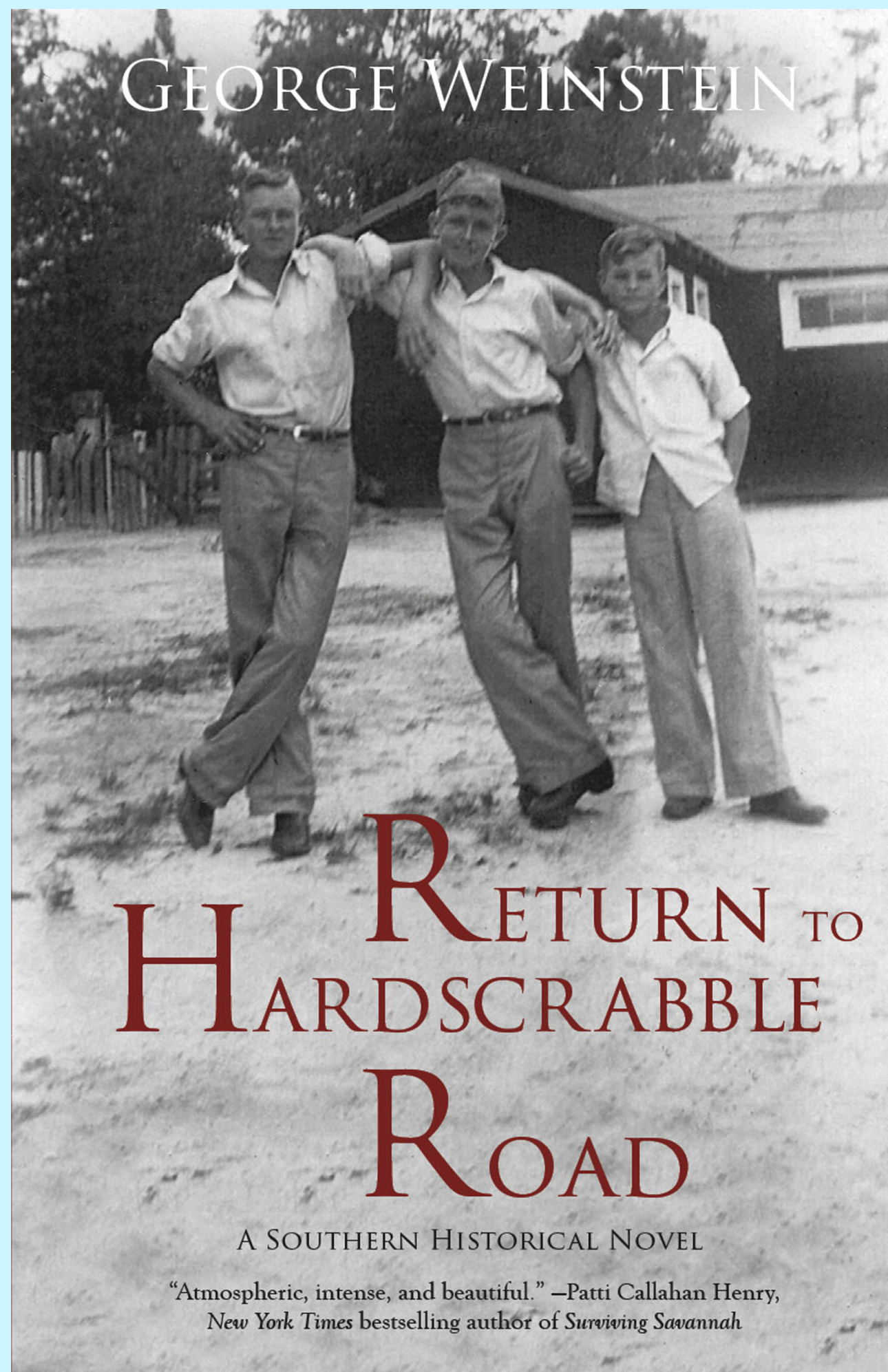
Plus add book signings to the mix. To supplement my AWC salary, I've been setting up at various Kroger supermarkets around north metro Atlanta and selling books there under a program I've written about previously. I'll sell a few books per hour while I'm at my little table and, during the downtime when customers aren't walking in or aren't interested in my wares,

I've actually been writing. I appreciate the irony of this—the only time I've allowed myself to write something new is while I'm sitting there trying to pitch something old. In an East Cobb

ACT II: My War of Art (cont.)

Kroger last week, besides writing a scene for a new cozy mystery, I even composed the first draft of this very blog post.

I know what my problem is, and I know the solution. I just have to do the work. Maybe you have something like that in your own life. If you want to be accountability partners, I invite you to email me periodically and ask me how the new book is coming along. And I will ask whether you, too, are doing the work. Together, we'll achieve our goals!



Vending Valuation

Keeping Show Appearances Profitable



Tenesha L. Curtis

Contrary to some newbie writers' hopes, not every conference, fair, or show is worth the cost of being a vendor. When it comes time to decide where you want to sell your books, there are a few key factors that can help you make sure you have a decent chance of getting a solid return on your investment of time, energy, and money. Take these into consideration as you're figuring out where you want to sell your books as you near publication.

Travel Costs

No matter where you live, there is likely an event where you can sell your books that is close to home or virtual so that you can minimize or eliminate travel costs. Forgetting to factor in things like driving or flying time (hours you could otherwise spend making money at your day job, providing services, selling products, promoting yourself on social media, writing your next book, etc.), food purchases, hotel room rentals, and tolls and parking fees means you don't get a true sense of the cost of attending that event. And if you don't know what your costs are, there's no way for you to accurately assess the financial return on the event.

Especially as you're just starting out, I suggest finding smaller events that are closer to home to help you practice selling in less overwhelming circumstances, while you also save money and increase your profits at each event. Check out local libraries, coffee shops, bookstores, and universities for events related to publishing, writing, books, or the arts in general.

Cost-Per-Attendee

What you're being charged for a space at the event as it relates to the number of people who usually attend that event is a major factor when it comes to evaluating its profitability. For example, if an event charges \$400 for a table, but normally only has 50 attendees show up, that's a cost-per-attendee (CPA) of a bank-account-crushing \$8 dollars per person. Compare this to an event like Tucker Day, where you're nearly guaranteed to get 2,000 people to attend, rain or shine, and pay \$175 for a space. That comes out to about 8 *cents* per person instead—making it much easier to at least break even on the event. Since my very first time vending there, Tucker Day has consistently been my most profitable day of the year, netting me upwards of \$10,000 in projects and book sales from that single, 7-hour day of vending.

The reason that the number of attendees is so important is because the fewer people who attend an event, the fewer chances you have to make sales. The more people attending, the greater your chances of making a sale. It's that simple. It's virtually impossible to vend somewhere and have literally every single person at the event purchase a book from you.

Vending Valuation (cont.)

Some shoppers won't ever see you because the event is so large. Some just aren't part of your target audience, so they may walk past without buying from you. Some would love to support you with a purchase, but spent nearly every dime they had just to get a ticket to the event, so they're tapped out upon arrival.

In general, my experience with events has been that I can nearly guarantee that about 10% of the attendees will make a purchase from me. While that number can certainly be higher (though, in the worst cases, it's been lower!), I use 10% to make decisions about who to vend with because that number pans out pretty consistently time after time. This means it's a realistic, reliable number to work with (you'll figure out your own as you gain more experience and sell at more places).

If Tucker Day usually has 2,000 people show up, I can reasonably expect about 100 people to make a purchase from me. Since I average about \$15 in revenue per person (it's a wide range from a dollar or two for smaller items like pins and bookmarks to thousands of dollars for editorial services), that means I can confidently expect to generate about \$1,500.

For me, being charged me up to about \$300 (a fifth of what I'm confident I can earn) would feel like a fair, low-risk amount to pay to get a booth at the event. Since Tucker Day charges \$175, they are well within my idea of "reasonably priced," which is why I do everything in my power to make sure I'm vending there every year!

Post-Event Revenue

If you have a system in place for it, you can wring more revenue out of a single event by leveraging opportunities to spend money with you *after* the event has concluded. One popular method is to use subscription sites like Patreon to have people pay you monthly for access to your back catalogue, early access to your upcoming work, and exclusive content that no one but them will receive (ever or for an extended period of time, such as a year).

For example, an Apprenticeship with WeCanPub.com costs \$10 per month. I could run a special at Tucker Day that allows people to get their first month at half price. They pay \$5, I add them to the membership, and they renew at \$10 per month for a year. If from May 2026 to May 2027 they remain a member, I will have generated that initial \$5 plus \$110 more dollars over the course of the following 11 months, for a total of \$115 from that single person in a year. So, even if only 10 aspiring authors took me up on this offer, that's \$1,150 earned in subscriptions alone at an event I only paid \$175 to vend at, resulting in a return on investment of well over 500% from that single product type (not counting book sales, merch sales, editorial services sales, etc.).

Another option is to get people to sign up for your author email list. This can result in future sales even if no money changes hands on the day of the event. You can tuck those folks away so that you can sell to them later (your current book, your earlier books, your upcoming books, etc.).

Vending Valuation (cont.)

Make Every Promo Dollar Count

Being more discerning about where you try to sell your work is a great way to make sure that you get the most out of every dollar you spend promoting yourself and your books. So many events can *sound* good on paper, but when the rubber meets the road, you see that the event is not set up to help you succeed, only to line the organizers' pockets. Don't be afraid to vet events by gathering information about them prior to spending your money on space there. This includes asking recent attendees what they thought and what the crowds were like, reviewing posts on social media or news sites reporting on things like attendance and logistical hiccups, and reviewing the current vendor pricing and deliverables (what you'll get for the amount they are asking you to pay). Just a few minutes of this kind of free research can save you thousands of dollars in wasted time, money, and effort!

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ASPC Packing Tips

The Comfort's in the Details



Tenesha L. Curtis

It's inevitable that I forget *something* when it's time to travel, whether I'm headed to my local dentist's office or traveling to the other end of the country. But here are some things that I've learned the hard way can be uncomfortable to be without for multiple hours. Hopefully this will help you remember everything you need to have a happy, healthy, and safe day of learning and networking at this year's ASPC!

Water Bottle: Something sturdy and reusable will allow you to hydrate throughout the day without having to (wait in line to) purchase multiple beverages.

Medication: Bring any meds you would normally take during the conference hours or even think you may need over the course of the day. These may include over-the-counter drugs (acetaminophen, eye drops, ibuprofen, etc.), short-term or PRN prescriptions (amoxicillin, cetirizine, etc.), or prescriptions for long-term or chronic conditions (metformin, eyeglasses, methylphenidate, amlodipine, etc.).

Sensory Regulators: Anything that helps you avoid or alleviate overstimulation in crowded or busy situations (headphones, ear plugs, sunglasses, scented hand sanitizer, weighted lap pad, etc.).

Business Cards: Now is the time to set up your digital business cards to be able to seamlessly share contact info with vendors and fellow attendees (Blinq, Popl, etc.). If you have some paper business cards, feel free to bring those, too!

Hygiene Products: Stay fresh and clean throughout the day by packing things like hand sanitizer, wipes (spilling food on myself is a special talent of mine, in case you didn't know!), tissues, and hand cream.

Note-Taking Tools: There is going to be a lot of information made available throughout the day, so be sure to capture it all by packing things like pens and pencils, a paper notebook, an electronic notebook, or your laptop so you can reliably take down and store contact details, website URLs, book titles, and the like.

Extra Bags: Fold up into your backpack, handbag, or main tote another bag or two you can use to stow and carry your drawing winnings, books you purchase, or merch you buy,

Temperature Controls: I'm usually freezing inside places like hotels up until I start peopling! It can be helpful to dress as if you're going to be warm (sleeveless tops, lighter fabrics, etc.), but then bring an extra layer in the form of a cardigan, duster, or jacket so that you can warm yourself up if you get too cool.

Charging Banks: For both convenience and safety, it's helpful to make sure that you start off the day with a fully charged phone, so be sure to charge it fully the night before the conference. In addition, having portable power banks you can bring with you means you can snap photos and follow presenters on social media and check in on your pets for the long-term since you can use your power bank to charge your phone while sitting at your table and listening to the speakers.

ASPC Packing Tips (cont.)

Manuscript Info: I can't tell you how many times a writer has asked me how much a service costs, but when I ask them how many words long their manuscript is, they can't give me a confident answer! :D Be ready to talk to professionals about your manuscript by understanding things like your current word count, your genre, and even your Five Ps of Premise Prep. Knowing this sort of information only helps professionals be able to give you accurate answers about what they can offer you (whether or not they work on projects like yours, time to complete a project, total project cost, etc.).

Prep a "Go Bag": This isn't an item in itself, per se, but an action that can support you making sure you bring everything you need to the conference like you want to. First, **select the bag** you'll be bringing with you to the conference. This could be a large handbag, jumbo tote bag, suitcase, backpack, and so on. Then **place that bag near the door** you normally use to leave your home each day. For some people this will be their front door. For others it will be the back door, or the door to their garage. You could hang the bag on a door handle, let it dangle from a nearby coat hook, or place it on a side table or shelf. In the days before the conference, you'll walk past it multiple times per day and can put things in the bag as you think of them. I've found this method has been highly effective at reducing how much time I spend scrambling to collect items at the last minute on the morning of the conference (or whatever other event I was planning on attending). Last-minute rushing can be hectic and frustrating, creating a situation in which you arrive at the conference flustered and distracted as you wonder what you forgot to grab on your way out the door.



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ASPC Packing Tips (cont.)

Make a List: Another behavior that can be beneficial is to make a list like this one for yourself. Write out the specific items you want to pack. So, instead of "Bag, meds, cup" write "Black Samsonite backpack, Adderall and metformin, clear Tervis cup with lid and straw." You can check things off on the list as you place them in your car or go bag, then double-check it before you leave to make sure you have everything.

Confirm Your Coverage: If you have handed off any tasks or overall responsibilities to someone else, check in with them in the days ahead of the conference in order to confirm that they understand when they are supposed to be where and what they are meant to do while you're hanging out with us. When you think the extra support is needed, consider leaving a list of notes, resources, or task steps that the person covering for you can easily follow to avoid problems while you're gone. Trusting someone to hear verbal instructions and hold onto them can be risky. Following up with an email, text, or other static form of communication that they can refer back to as needed adds an extra layer of reassurance that things will get done the way you want them to.

Payment Options: From securing editorial services to buying a new romance novel to getting lunch, funds are going to come in handy throughout the day. Make sure that you bring the debit and credit cards you normally use. Before Saturday would also be a great time to get set up on any apps that you want to use to make purchases such as PayPal, CashApp, Zelle, Venmo, or Chime. Since the conference takes place on the weekend, if you need to transfer some spending money into your primary bank account, try to do that on Wednesday or Thursday so that the money will likely become available to you by the time Saturday rolls around. If you prefer to spend cash, make an effort to stop by an ATM or your bank on Thursday or Friday so you won't have that additional task to do on the morning of the conference.

Everyone attending #ASPC26 is going to have different needs and preferences when it comes to what makes them most comfortable in a conference environment. But by taking the time out ahead of the event to figure out what you need and gather it, you greatly increase your chances of having a stellar day that boosts your mood, grows your literary network, and fills your brain with new knowledge and skills to help your independent authorship be as fruitful as possible!



Session Surveys

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