

**Road to Publication: 1**

I should receive the contract in about six weeks, which would be the week of April 17. That's six weeks from Monday.

I told Roberta I'm concerned about the option clause, which would apply to the second book of this two-book contract. The boilerplate contract language for the option clause is the "next full-length work of fiction." Granted, right now I'm concentrating on branding my romantic suspense identity, but I find that boilerplate language too broad. I need to protect my fantasy and mystery works. Therefore, we're going to ask that the boilerplate language be modified to "next full-length contemporary romantic suspense."

Roberta also said the boilerplate for Kensington is to have six weeks to accept or reject the option book after the first book has been accepted. Since the first book has been accepted, we're free and clear for the six-week waiting period for the second book.

**Road to Publication: 2**

There's quite a bit I would like to share with you this week. I won't delve into every painful detail. I'll just hit the highlights.

I should have Roberta's contract early next week. Prior to mailing it, she e-mailed a copy for my review. I asked my sister, a lawyer, to help interpret the legalese before approving it. There wasn't a lot of legalese. Nothing scary. I understood most of it.

Roberta should have Kensington's contract by mid-April. She'll take a look at it first then mail it to me.

Meanwhile, the announcements have started. Roberta added my name to her Web site. News of my book sale appeared in the March 9 online Publishers' Marketplace. <g> I drafted the text, which Roberta submitted.

And, I'm the subject of one of my FF&P group member's blogs. Here's the copy:

"Patricia's Wise Words

Filed under: Writing, Publishing @ 11:17 pm

Patricia Sargeant, a fellow FF&P chapter member, sold her first book to Kensington!

Title: Alternate Endings Release Date: November 2006 Publisher / Line: Kensington Dafina

Format: Mass Market Paperback

And she has graciously shared the lessons learned and allowed me to share them here:

Write something every week, if not every day. Even if it's just a few pages a week; a paragraph a day. Stay in the story. Build your writing discipline and your productivity. It's so important to have a couple of drafts ready to polish and send, if not polished manuscripts waiting to be sold. I've got to practice what I preach.

Never, never, never give up. An agent once told me she read that one in 75,000 aspiring authors — and that's in all genres — ever get offered a contract. Make the odds. Keep studying the market, keep practicing the craft, keep working. If this is your dream, never give up.

Make use of every single service and member benefit RWA offers — that you can afford. Become a PRO member if you aren't already and sign up for the AskAnAuthor loop, the RWA industry loop, the PRO bootcamps. The information you learn — and even subconsciously absorb — is priceless; imminently valuable to building your career.

Ask questions. Who's your agent? Who's your editor? How did you hook up with them? What should I do to learn the market? What should I do to promote my books, myself, my career?"

Isn't that cool? That's actually on the Internet,

<http://www.angelletrieste.com/blog>

In other exciting news, Alternate Endings will be published in mass market paperback, which means it will have a bigger print run.

I've started reviewing the draft for my second book. I'm also contacting publications, etc., for contact information for additional announcements.

Let me know if you have any questions or need clarification.

### **Road to Publication: 3**

I hope you're well.

I don't have much to report this week. On the publicity end, my Web site is progressing nicely. I've provided copy for the home, book shelves and articles pages as well as several reciprocal links. I'm mulling over copy for my bio page. Yuck.

Regarding the articles page, I've always been grateful for writing articles on authors' Web sites. That's one of the reasons I wanted to include articles on my Web site. At first I panicked thinking I would have to hurry and write those how-to articles I've been mulling over for years. Then I realized, I'd written several articles for COFW's newsletter; I could just use those.

Yes, that was a thinly veiled observation on another benefit to writing for the newsletter.

Lori Foster suggested I pitch my Getting The Call article to Romantic Times Bookclub magazine. Romantic Times knixed the idea, so I'm going to pitch it to Romance Writers Report. If they don't want it, I'll pitch it to Saralee and see if she'd post it to EditorLink.

The next tasks on my to-do list are to get a post office box; dust off the list of booksellers, reviewers and media contacts I've been compiling; and ask Roberta Brown about potential authors who could provide me with cover quotes.

Some of this booksellers, reviewers and media contact information I've received from workshops on various PRO loops. I really can't say enough good things about the PRO benefits.

It's funny. One of my co-workers is a voracious reader. I think she goes through two books a week. Single titles. Voracious. She exchanges books with a couple of other women at the bureau, and she's mentioned my upcoming release to them. She said I'm probably going to have a line outside of my office of women wanting me to autograph their copies. Too funny.

On the productivity front, well, I guess we'll see. I've outlined a bit more than half of the manuscript I'm hoping Kensington will want as the option book. The tentative title is Collateral Damage, although Kensington may have another idea. I just hope I have enough time to draft a second proposal in case Kensington rejects Collateral Damage.

Thanks as always for allowing me to share. But I'm also very interested in what's going on with you. Looking forward to your updates. <g>

### **Road to Publication: 4**

I hope this message finds you all in good health and great spirits.

Ladies, we have a new title! ALTERNATE ENDINGS is now YOU BELONG TO ME. And I've posted the back cover copy below.

The Search For A New Title was a bit hairy, but in retrospect, I kind of enjoyed the rush. Sort of like a distance run. While you're on the course, you're praying for deliverance. But, once it's over,

you're really jazzed that you survived the experience. Perhaps that analogy can be applied to the entire writing journey. <g>

Tuesday, I checked my personal e-mails at 5 p.m. There was a very nice message from my editor, Karen Thomas, explaining the title ALTERNATE ENDINGS isn't sexy enough. She asked me to come up with a new title by Wednesday morning.

Long story short, I e-mailed her nine suggestions at 8:30 a.m. Wednesday. But none of those worked.

In the half hour before my next meeting, I e-mailed five more titles to her. (Juggling a day job with publishing issues, which also occur during the day, can get a tad hairy.) When I didn't hear back from her, I e-mailed Roberta, who suggested I wait until the morning to follow up with Karen.

The next morning, Karen explained the new titles didn't grab her either. I e-mailed her 13 additional suggestions, then called her Friday morning. Salvation came in the form of Kate Duffy, who came up with the great title, YOU BELONG TO ME. I think this title works really well with the villain and the hero's goals.

Here's the back cover copy:

SOMETIMES YOUR BIGGEST FAN...

Science-fiction writer Nicole Collins is delighted when she learns her first book will be made into a movie by Celestial Productions - until she finds out who owns the company: Malcolm Bryant, her ex-husband.

Nicole still loves him, but she knows Malcolm is still the same man who crumbles in the face of adversity.

And then there are those threatening letters . . .

CAN BE YOUR WORST NIGHTMARE...

Somewhere out there is a deranged fan, one who has adopted Nicole's characters as his own family ... and he's not about to see his loved ones distorted by the camera lens. Once Malcolm's business partner is mysteriously killed, Nicole realizes this is no movie script - her life is now in danger. With a demented killer fan closing in, the only person who may be able to save Nicole is Malcolm - the man she so desperately hopes will finally make a stand...

Here's what I took from this experience: Kensington prefers titles with more emotional connection for the reader. I see that in the back cover copy as well, and I'm keeping that in mind for the option book. This has been a learning experience. I'm getting to understand what Kensington wants and I'm keeping it in mind for the future.

I also realized it's really important to keep Roberta in the loop. I contacted her each time I heard from Karen. The benefit is that, when I felt a little adrift because I hadn't heard back from Karen, I didn't have to bring Roberta up to speed; she already knew what was going on and why. I learned the importance of good communication with team members during my day jobs.

Another thing, I don't know how many of you are members of the rwaindustry loop. It's a good loop. If you aren't on it, you might want to consider subscribing.

Last week, we had a great discussion regarding agents. Someone said she wasn't comfortable with agents who don't tell you who their clients are. Another agent had mentioned to her that she considers her clients her best marketing tool. I agree.

Consider this, some agents don't announce their deals in Publishers Marketplace because, for whatever reason, they don't want to publicize their client list. However, additional deals are sparked from those announcements. Roberta told me a publisher in France is interested in the French publishing rights for YOU BELONG TO ME. Now, we don't know if anything will come of

that, but I wouldn't have had this interest if Roberta hadn't posted the announcement in Publishers Marketplace. Why have an agent if she/he's not going to promote you?

I received the publishing contract yesterday – more than 30 days before I was expecting it. I'm going to review it very carefully. Kensington is anxious to include YOU BELONG TO ME in the November releases. However, I don't want to be rushed along on this wave. They seem to be focused on the November releases, but I have to stay focused on my future.

As much as I'm enjoying the Kensington experience, anything can happen in this industry. Karen Thomas could be replaced by someone who hates my writing. The Dafina line could die and my option book's release date would be pushed back a year. Or worse.

OK, on that chatty note, I'll say good-bye for now. As always, thank you so much for allowing me to share. I'd very much love to know any news you'd like to share as well.

### **Road to Publication: 5**

I hope everyone is enjoying the weekend.

Before I lure you into my world, I want to thank everyone who's shared their news with me. A lot of great/creative projects in the works, milestones being met, exciting opportunities opening up. Thanks so much for sharing. Very exciting.

Also, I want to point out I've switched our Road to Publication to my [booksbypatricia@yahoo.com](mailto:booksbypatricia@yahoo.com) address. This will allow me to better manage the broadcast e-mails. If you'd rather I remove you from this distribution, please let me know. No hurt feelings. I promise. ([booksbypatricia@yahoo.com](mailto:booksbypatricia@yahoo.com) has emoticons. Isn't that cool?)

Also, if there's anyone you'd like me to add to this distribution, it will be my pleasure. Just ask them to send an e-mail to [booksbypatricia@yahoo.com](mailto:booksbypatricia@yahoo.com), and ask them to write "road to publication" in the subject heading.

Thanks for allowing that maintenance commercial. Now, back to the Road.

Our last stop on the Road to Publication brought us to Kensington's contract. You may remember I mentioned I'd received it 30 days before I was expecting it. I've had a chance to review it. And now, ladies, I stand before you a shadow of my former self.

**WARNING:** The rest of this e-mail is not for the faint of heart. Turn back now, my travel companions, if you don't want to see a grown woman weep.

I hope my messages have clearly expressed that I view my fiction writing as a business. I'm ecstatic to have been offered a contract. I'm very grateful for this opportunity. But I'm doing my very best to keep focused on my ultimate goal: supporting myself comfortably writing fiction full time. (Translation: I don't want to be eating tuna and Ramen for the rest of my life; once in a while is fine.)

First tip: Decide how you view your writing. Are you working for the "now", or is this the first step of a long-term plan? Whatever it is you want, decide \*before\* you sit down to read the contract because that mindset (now vs. long-term) will be the filter through which you read the contract.

As a matter-of-fact, decide right now. Take your hands off the keyboard and think about it: immediate gratification or perpetual stress?

Although I'm a first-time author without the muscle of a strong sales track record, there are still some things in that contract that made me uncomfortable enough to ask about. There are other things in the contract that made me uncomfortable, but I didn't ask about it.

Second tip: Know when to push and know when to fume. You'll need at least two things to achieve this awareness: A second set of eyes (preferably belonging to someone with a sensible mind) and an understanding of the stage of your career. Luckily, I had both.

My sister is a lawyer with extensive contract experience, including publishing contracts. She's licensed to practice in the state of New York, Kensington's headquarters. I'd faxed the contract to her in advance for her review. The next night we spent more than two hours on the phone reviewing the 18-page contract pretty much clause by clause.

Keeping in mind legalese is tricky, open to interpretation and a simple phrase can cost you money, here are a couple of the things for which I requested clarification:

- Book title: There is a paragraph that states the title of the work may be legally used by the Publisher. I didn't come up with the title (YOU BELONG TO ME); they did. Therefore, it seems reasonable to expect Kensington and their legal representatives to determine whether they can legally use the title they selected.

And, by the way, YOU BELONG TO ME also is the title of a Carly Simon song, written by Michael McDonnell.

Now, I realize a lot of books use song titles, but I don't know how that works. I suppose I can look into it - after my nail polish dries. But I'd prefer not to be held solely responsible if Carly and/or Michael have objections to using their title on my book.

I asked Roberta if she could ask Kensington to insert "... except to the extent the publisher provided the title."

- Delivery of second manuscript: Before I relive the angst of this clause, I want to share the stupid mistake I made. Book two of this two-book contract is \*not\* the option book. I've been using that term incorrectly during these broadcast messages. Book two is considered part of the Work, according to the contract. The option book is the book for which Kensington wants the first right of refusal. It's a third book. The option clause I asked Roberta to request to have narrowed for me is the reference to a third book. Am I being clear/coherent? If not, please let me know. This is important.

OK delivery of manuscript - \*\*\*this is also very important\*\*\* - refers to the second book included under the umbrella heading "Work" for a two-book contract. There is a paragraph that states basically the publisher has to find the work satisfactory before accepting it for publication.

On consideration, that statement is too broad. How is Kensington defining satisfactory? Is it the writing? Is it whether the story is appropriate for the Dafina line? Or is their satisfaction level being influenced by the first book's sales figures?

I requested Roberta ask for clarification. Something along the lines, "the satisfactory nature of the manuscript will be made in good faith and not based on factors other than the quality of the work."

Remember, legalese is open to interpretation. Two lawyers can read the same clause and derive different meanings. (You hear a lot about that on C-SPAN.) That's why it's important to clarify clauses to the best of your ability.

- Pseudonyms: Not that long ago, Harlequin had that nightmare situation in which they allowed new authors to use pseudonyms of established authors. (I think the situation was more expansive than that, though.)

There's a clause regarding pseudonyms in Kensington's contract. I asked Roberta to ask Kensington to put parameters around the use of my pseudonym, Patricia Sargeant.

That's it regarding contracts. I'm going to include the link to my sister's law practice's Web site, [www.sargeantlaw.com](http://www.sargeantlaw.com), on my Web site in case other authors want to consult with her.

Please let me know if you need clarification regarding what I wrote about my contract experience. I'm in the clarifying mood.

In happier news, word of mouth is spreading thanks to friends and family. I hadn't realized how many of the people I know - or friends and family know - belong to reading clubs. They're going to recommend my book to their clubs. Too cool.

A published author guest speaker on one of the PRO loops once wrote a first-time author can expect to sell about 5,000 books.

Moving along I'm going to be the October featured author on the Shades of Romance Web site [www.sormag.com](http://www.sormag.com). Romance In Color ([www.romanceincolor.com](http://www.romanceincolor.com)) is going to add a link to my Web site.

Gotta hit at least 5,000 sales.

My Web site is almost complete. My Web designer, Karen McCullough, is doing a splendid job. She's an author as well as a Web designer, so she's given me good input from that perspective. Her author site is [www.kmccullough.com](http://www.kmccullough.com); her Web designer site is [www.karenswebworks.com](http://www.karenswebworks.com).

That's it for this week, ladies. As always thank you for allowing me to share.

I hope everyone has a great week.

### **Road to Publication: 6**

Good afternoon, ladies.

I'm sure you'll all be relieved to know there isn't much to report this week. I focused on productivity and promotion, mainly productivity.

I've heard many successful authors state, you can't sell a book that doesn't exist. Or some variation of that theme. The bottom line is we're willing to endure this pain because of the stories we're driven to share. That's why I firmly believe the greatest proportion of my time and energy should be spent writing those "very good books," to quote Jennifer Crusie.

I did spend some time researching avenues to introduce myself to readers and book stores. The lesson I'd like to share with you is that it's quite easy to spend more money than you originally intend on promotion. I had a set figure in mind to spend promoting my career this year, and to spend promoting this title, YOU BELONG TO ME. Two separate budgets. I'm already pushing the boundaries on both of those budgets pretty hard.

I'd created a list of promotional activities, but I hadn't realized how much each activity would cost. Everything always costs more than you think it will.

Well, that's it for this trip. Thanks for keeping me company. I look forward to receiving your updates - what are you working on? Where are you submitting? How's your family?

Remember, if you want me to remove you from this distribution, please let me know. And if there's anyone you'd like me to add to the group, please ask them to send an e-mail to [booksbypatricia@yahoo.com](mailto:booksbypatricia@yahoo.com), and ask them to write "road to publication" in the subject heading.

Have a great week!

Patricia  
Patricia Sargeant  
YOU BELONG TO ME, Kensington Dafina Books, November 2006