

# Monarch e-News



**Monterey Bay Chapter RWA**  
 P. O. Box 1002  
 Felton, CA 95018



<http://www.MontereyBayRWA.com>

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## ABOUT US

Monterey Bay Chapter is affiliated with Romance Writers of America, headquartered in Houston, Texas. RWA® is a non-profit professional and educational association of romance writers and other publishing industry professionals. [www.rwanational.org](http://www.rwanational.org)

## OFFICERS

President - Marianne van Gelder - [mvangelder@sbcglobal.net](mailto:mvangelder@sbcglobal.net)  
 Vice President/Program - Kathleen Dougherty - [katdougherty@yahoo.com](mailto:katdougherty@yahoo.com)  
 Vice President of Communications - Christie Maurer - [maure4cr@baymoon.com](mailto:maure4cr@baymoon.com)  
 Secretary - Carolyn Comings - [ccomings@redshift.com](mailto:ccomings@redshift.com)  
 Treasurer - Bette Nybakken - [bnybakken@redshift.com](mailto:bnybakken@redshift.com)  
 Webmistress - Carolyn Comings - [ccomings@redshift.com](mailto:ccomings@redshift.com)  
 Literary - Carolyn Woolston - [carolynw@cruzio.com](mailto:carolynw@cruzio.com)  
 Membership - Casey Dawes - [casey@wisewomanshining.com](mailto:casey@wisewomanshining.com)

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## President's Letter

by Marianne van Gelder

Here it is, March almost, and I still haven't finished my 50 page rewrite to send to Donald Maass. I'm oddly pleased about this.

In his workshop, Maass talked about giving your characters mythic qualities -- even your secondary characters. Then our beloved ogre-slaying VP pointed out that one of my secondary characters just came across as a nice military guy. [Insert gasp of horror here!] NICE GUY! OMG, what to do, what to do!

So, I used my NEW goals for February, and rewrote the scene where I introduced my colonel to my heroine -- and suddenly -- he is the epitome of all that is rigid and rule bound. He's suddenly COOL! He's also now a decent secondary character in that my heroine has to work to overcome her dislike of in order to achieve her goals. [Insert Machiavellian hand rubbing here.] On top of that, by giving him these new characteristics, I was able to chop 2000 words of back story and scene-slowng exposition out of my opening.

Woot.

I hope you are having as much fun with your writing goals this month as I am with mine. See you on March 6th.

## Editor's Note

by Christie Maurer

There's been discussion on Editor Link about what a newsletter should include. National sent a list of acceptable content: Mission statement for chapter and/or RWA, Calendar of events, Monthly meeting location, Speaker information for next program, If speaker is a published author, a listing of author's books and link to author's website, Conference information, Contest announcements/information, Chapter services and benefits, History of chapter and/or RWA, Information on how to join chapter and RWA, Book covers promoting new releases/published authors, First sales. It conspicuously omits articles or book reviews. Some Chapters seemed to consider it "prescriptive." Others, like me, think of it as "suggestive." The EdLin\* manager is pursuing the question. Apparently National plans to issue official guidelines around April. In the meantime, I am including articles and book reviews.

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 \*Abbreviation recalls my first computer and my struggles to learn DOS from a Microsoft manual in order to use the notorious Edlin text editor in order to install a newfangled device called a Mouse.

## Editor's Note

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A apropos of articles: This month's Editor Link articles include one on overcoming rejection, procrastination, professionalism for writers, and what makes a realistic hero.

**WIP Article:** Don't want to join the Chapter's Blog? Then write a WIP article. Did you finish a scene? A book? Write a (or lots of) paragraph(s)? Find a research source? If "life" has gotten in the way, or you're ready to quit--share that, too. **Deadline: March 20** - [maure4cr@baymoon.com](mailto:maure4cr@baymoon.com)

## March 6 Meeting - Write-in

Monterey Bay Chapter's next meeting is **March 6, 2010**, 9:30 a.m. at the **Watsonville Hospital Senior Circle Room**, 75 Nielson Street, Watsonville, CA 95076, (831) 724-4741.

### Directions:

Exit Highway 1 at Airport Boulevard, go left onto Airport Boulevard. Nielson is the second street to the right. Link to map: [http://www.montereybayrwa.com/special\\_location\\_maps.htm](http://www.montereybayrwa.com/special_location_maps.htm)

We will have directions posted in the lobby. For caffeine addicts--there's a coffee kiosk on the way.

### Program:

**9:30 a.m. critiques:** First-come/First serve: Bring up to 3 double-spaced pages--copies for everyone--for feedback.

**Write-in!** Bring your laptops, AlphaSmarts, or yellow-lined pads and lots of ideas. We'll spend the time working on our WIPs. Those who want to can share.

## Sister Chapter Meetings

Check out the websites for what's happening at nearby Chapters. They have some terrific programs:

♦ **San Francisco** - <http://www.sfarwa.com/>

♦ **Silicon Valley** - <http://www.svrwa.com/>

## Website and Blog

Take a look at our Chapter website: <http://www.MontereyBayRWA.com> Our webmistress, Carolyn Comings, has also created a Chapter Blog. Read the posts on <http://montereybayrwa.blogspot.com/> If you haven't yet joined, e-mail her for an invitation - [ccomings@redshift.com](mailto:ccomings@redshift.com)

## 2010 Meeting Schedule

**To be announced . . .** Highlights will include:

♦ **Aug. 7 - Potluck - Report on National**

♦ **Dec. - Seasonal Party - Potluck and gift exchange.**

## Membership Chair

Our new Membership Chair, Casey Dawes, is hard at work finalizing a membership list. We've had new people interested in joining and some former members thinking of coming back.

## Clipped Wings - Coping with Rejection's Sting

by Jan O'Hara

(This article first appeared in the November issue of The Writer's Saddle, the newsletter of CaRWA (Calgary), Donna Alward, Editor.)

A few days ago, on a writing thread I frequent, a young writer jumped the gun and started querying too early in her manuscript's life to find much chance of success. Her choice prompted a fascinating discussion, and became a showcase about the many ways to handle the prospect of failure.

Some people leaped in with clear desire to protect her from unnecessary pain and choices that might limit her career. Others were annoyed that she'd waste an agent's valuable time, thereby making their own climb to publication more lengthy. Still others yet took the philosophy, "Eh, let the kid try. Maybe she'll learn some valuable life lessons."

Then today, on a personal level, my own gentle-souled man-child began a new year of junior high. Let me just say the world is not always a kind place for insightful boys. Nor is it easy on their mothers, who must watch.

So all that got me to thinking about failure, and how each person's perceptions and beliefs about rejection or set-back, determine the effectiveness of their response.

We're all told, in the writing biz, that one must grow a thick skin and develop the ability to bounce back. What's seldom said afterward is exactly how. So I'd love to have a conversation about what helps you keep going, even on days where your in-box radiates hostility and your writing is greeted by shattering reader silence.

How do you do it? Where did you learn your resilience? I'd love to know, so that I can increase my own repertoire. And while I'm waiting for your response, I'll list a few things that help me:

The understanding that it's not necessarily what happens to us, but the story we tell ourselves about its meaning, that determines our reaction:

For example, I can't imagine anything more devastating than losing a child. I think I'd probably curl up in the foetal position for a long time, then go on to carve out a limp half-existence. But some people don't go that way. Some people, after a decent mourning period, even thrive. Others, still, transmute their suffering into purpose and start agencies that serve the greater world. (I'm thinking of MADD, and America's Most Wanted.) I so admire this, because I

can slip into victimhood all too easily.

But I'm learning to question my underlying beliefs, and whenever rejection feels deeply personal, to ensure I'm not committing obvious errors in thinking, e.g. thinking that because one person found one character unsympathetic, all people will; and that I suck as a writer, and always will.) To that end, this post lists some resources I've found helpful:

<<http://calgaryrwa.us1.list-manage.com/track/click?u=6c53a6e43d0c388dd0a85b328&id=e677d47248&e=31bd7c233f>> <http://cherrytart.wordpress.com/2009/08/03/health-resources>.

### **Finding or Building, if Necessary, a Community of Hope around Writing:**

In the past two years, I've logged a lot of computer time on this endeavour. Let's be clear: by a community of hope, I don't mean finding a group of sycophants who'll blow smoke up my ass on bad days, in the understanding that I'll return the favour. (I think we've all seen enough bad auditions on American Idol to make the point that self-esteem, in the absence of competency, is meaningless, and possibly even harmful.)

No, I mean those who'll tell me, to my face, kindly, both what I do well as a writer, and how I can improve.

I didn't realize how crucial this community had become to me until just this last week, when a new critique partner challenged everything I thought I understood about one of my manuscripts. It was hard to hear her words; harder yet to acknowledge she might be right - that I haven't done a character I absolutely love justice.

Had this occurred two years ago, when I was without a community of writing friends, I might have committed suicide by office stapler. But not this week!

No, this week I had others to fall back on. They calmed me, helped me understand what a golden opportunity I'd just been given to learn, and best of all, they conveyed a quiet certainty I can do what's required. Wow! Unbelievable. I'm still kind of dazed with gratitude.

So if you haven't got one yet, please find your community. I've found mine at Absolute Write, in the Cherry Forums and the Cherry Tarts, and now, with some local writers.

Lastly, the Victor Frankl quote: "Those who have a 'why' to live, can bear with almost any 'how.'"

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## Clipped Wings . . . Rejection

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I figure that any philosophy that can help a man endure a Nazi concentration camp, without evidence of tremendous bitterness, is likely to help me with my concerns. To that end, I'm showing you a partial list of "why's" that I keep in my computer. As you'll see, many of the entries have less to do with writing itself, and have more to do with the kind of person I'd like to be in the world.

### Reasons to Write with the Impostor Syndrome Raging:

1. Because the cure for writing problems is to write.
2. If you don't write these stories, then no one else ever will.
3. You invested the damn money on the damn laptop and courses. It behooves you to ensure that wasn't a complete waste.
4. Malcolm Gladwell says it'll take 10,000 hours of practice to achieve mastery of any kind of skill-set. Writing excrement is not only your right, but necessary.
5. You're modeling strength and self-actualization for your children.
6. When you conquer fear of rejection and perfectionism in one arena of your life, you'll be bolder in the other areas. The ones that matter. (Yeah, my subconscious doesn't quite buy that writing doesn't matter either, but it's the principle, right?)
7. Intellectual challenge wards off Alzheimer's, which is an incredibly nasty disease. If you continue to write, a diaper will never touch your nether regions.
8. Because it makes you a more appreciative reader.
9. When it works, the feeling is like no other, except possibly an expansive bout of [edited for sensitive eyes] with P.
10. When you follow your bliss, it gives others implicit permission to do the same. And you know how to support them. For instance, when P comes home, with his new model airplane looking like this - [image included of a damaged plane] - you know to just shrug and push him out the door to the hobby shop, instead of cringing and wondering how much this is gonna cost.

So, that's my list. What would make yours? What keeps you going on the bad days?

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The above newsletter contribution first appeared on Jan O'Hara's blog, Tartitude. She's still collecting wisdom at <<http://calgaryrwa.us1.list-manage.com/track/click?>

u=6c53a6e43d0c388dd0a85b3

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cherrytart.wordpress.com/2009/09/02/clipped-wings-coping-with-rejections-sting/

## Procrastination: Or a Writer's Best Enemy

by Carole St. Laurent

(This article ran in the February 2010 issue of The Final Draft, the newsletter of Carolina Romance Writers in Charlotte, NC. Kristy Mabe, Editor..)

My best enemy is procrastination. It's a dragon, comfortably living in my house, who breathes fire each time I approach my desk.

Procrastination affects everyone, in every aspects of life. How many times have I left a bill lying on my desk until I received another saying I was late paying? Not that I didn't have the money. I just procrastinated.

There are odes written to procrastination. Why do something now when it can be done tomorrow? Hakuna Matata! While that sounds laid back and fun, issues pile up and stress builds up.

Oh, yes, didn't you know? One of the side effects of procrastination is stress. Ignored matters leave a part of themselves in your brain when they are not addressed in a timely manner. Those parts grow every day, putting pressure in your cerebrum until a headache brings you to your knees.

Then, a whirlwind of negativity sucks you in. I'll never finish that book... I'm no good... I can't put a foot in front of the other one... Why did I even think I could do this?... I should just forget about it...

Does that sound familiar?

## When The Dragon Almost Won

In 2008, procrastination almost did me in.

At the end of 2008, I became real discouraged, especially after a writing conference I went to with my blog partner. Every writer I met had at least one completed manuscript. Why couldn't I finish mine?

Sharon convinced me not to abandon writing. Glowing under her praise, I decided to give it another try. In January 2009, I took an online class offered by Margie Lawson, titled "How to Defeat Self-Defeating Behaviors". It saved my writing career. No kidding. Okay, maybe I should say, it saved my future writing career.

It's January 2010, so why do I still not have a finished manuscript? Well, I had a lot of dragons to slay last year. And I made a lot of progress. My writing has improved, my plots are more logical, and this year, I feel ready to finally write "the end".

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## Procrastination . . .

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I still had a few dragons to take care of, so I took Margie's class again this month. Some dragons need more than one blow to die. Some will twitch for a long time. Some will never die.

## Killing Procrastination

Getting rid of a bad habit is hard work. It's inconvenient. It's painful. The first step is to accept those facts. Because if you don't, nothing will change.

Procrastination's best weapons are excuses. Many excuses. A ton of them! My best ones: I don't have enough time. I can't start writing now, I have to do X in thirty minutes. I have a big house and I need to keep it clean. I need to start dinner.

Any excuses will feed procrastination and keep the beast content. As long as you don't sit down at that desk and don't write, procrastination is laughing.

Weapons can have a double edge. That's what I learned in my class. I have only thirty minutes before I hit the road? What can be done in that window? I can write a short scene, or create a character, revise my last five pages, read an article on writing, list the next subjects I want for my blog..

E-x-c-u-s-e me? That's right, no more excuses to not write during that thirty minutes before I leave!

Big house? Roomba is a woman's best friend. It will vacuum while I sit at my desk.

Dinner? When I cook this afternoon, I can prep ingredients for tomorrow's dinner.

Every excuse can be waved away. And what's left? My strong resolution to finish my book. Take that, procrastination! Each time you hit me with an excuse, I'll hit you right back with a solution!

## Remembering

The last resort I have to counterattack the monster is to remember how I feel when I procrastinate versus when I just do it. When I write, when those characters whisper to me, when eye opener moments appear on the next page, it feels... Well, it feels great. Magical. It's elating, euphoric, better than drugs!

And when I don't write, when I let the monster win, I feel depressed, negative, I have no energy and everything seems too difficult.

Next time procrastination raises its sword at me, I'll try to remember how good it feels to defeat it. I'll parry and hit back with a solution.

My self-defeating behaviors live just beneath my

skin, the monsters are never far away. But there are solutions and as long as I have the will, I have the weapons to kill them.

It's time to write!

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Carole St-Laurent is a Canadian living in South Carolina. She's hard at work to complete her first full length historical novel.

## What Is A Real Writer?

by Gina Ardito

(This article was first published in the February 2010 issue of Footnotes, the newsletter of the Eastern Long Island RWA Chapter 215, Dunes & Dreams Romance Writers, Debora Dennis, Editor.)

I hate to break it to you, but writers come into this world the same way as everyone else. And when we take up the pen or set our fingers on the keyboard, we have the same 24 hours in a day, the same family obligations, the same career issues, and other distractions as everyone else in the world. The difference is we make writing a priority.

Note I didn't say, *the* priority. Because that's an ideal most of us can't or won't commit to. But for those of you struggling to become a "real writer," here are a few basic ideas about what that term really means.

## Real writers show up at the keyboard every day.

Well, okay, maybe not every day is spent in front of a computer. But we do find unique opportunities to jot down notes, play with plot points, and keep our writing a priority when other priorities demand our attention. We get out of bed an hour early, skip our favorite television show in favor of some writing time, or sneak in a chapter once the kids are asleep. We try to write or work on our writing in some way at least five days a week (like a real job...'cuz, hey! That's what it is!) We might bring a pad and paper to jury duty or the doctor's office or a school function. We read on the beach and in the bathtub and before we go to sleep, whether it's books on the craft or books by our favorite authors, we're constantly studying the market, the trends, and the business. We attend workshops, whether in person or online. We (okay..."I") run dialogue while stuck in traffic. The point is, we spend a great deal of time focused on writing.

## Real writers don't blow deadlines.

My dear friend and idol, Bertrice Small, will back me up that this is a Cardinal Rule in writing. Blowing  
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**Real Writers . . .**

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deadlines is unprofessional, inconsiderate, and just plain self-destructive. Good girl that I am (honest!) I'm big on following the rules. So even when I don't have a true deadline, I set myself on one. Whether it's to finish a WIP, complete edits, start sending queries or followups, or to send something back to my editor, I choose a reasonable date as my goal and stick to it. The important thing to remember is to make the date reasonable and then stay focused as if your career depended upon you making that deadline. Because, in the long haul, it does!

**Real writers have discipline, not excuses.**

Through the years I've met lots of people who want to write and have even begun the process. Some may have finished a manuscript or two. A few have not only completed a manuscript but have received a request from an agent or editor to review the manuscript for possible publication! But...somewhere on the journey, the glorious momentum stops. The writer becomes distracted or fearful of the next step or procrastinates on the follow-up and wham! Years go by and they still haven't moved forward. Or they've begun a new project without ever completing the final steps on the old project. And they get caught in this vicious circle: start something, stop; start something new, stop; start something new, stop. The list of excuses is endless: "I'm waiting until I have more time," "My day job is crazy busy," "The agent or editor has probably forgotten all about me by now," "I decided to write something totally new and different..." Sorry, kids. You want to be a real writer? Stick your butt in the chair and write! And when you've completed your story, submit it! And while you're waiting to hear from those submissions, write something else!

**Real writers take risks.**

It takes a lot of courage to decide you have something worthwhile to say to the world at large. It takes even more courage to start the process of writing. And you're dipping into that courage well again to finish the story, to share it with outsiders, to submit it to publishing houses and agents even when you get rejection after rejection. And the need for courage doesn't stop when you sign the contract either. There are reviews and booksignings and speaking engagements and promotion, and a host of other terrifying "monsters" to face. Again and again and again. The trick is to keep going, always moving forward, always conquering those monsters.

So...how about you? Are you a real writer?

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This article first appeared as a blog post on Gina Ardito's Flights of Fancy (<http://ginaardito.blogspot.com>) in March 2009. Gina is the current president of Dunes & Dreams RWA. Feel free to visit her blog for additional lashes with the guilt whip.

**The Everyman Hero: Merging Romance with Reality**

by Alexa Day

(This article was first published in the February 2010 issue of Novel Ideas, the newsletter of Virginia Romance Writers, Leah Price, Editor.)

I used to be a closet romance writer, worried about what people would say or think if they knew what I was writing. Now that I've gotten a little older (but no more mature), I've discovered the nerve to tell people that I write romance. I still get negative responses every so often, but I've learned something from almost all of them. One of the most educational responses I've gotten was from a man who had read several romance novels. He told me that "all the men look the same."

I had never heard that one before. Of course, I mounted an energetic defense of our genre's heroes and the wonderful increase in ethnic and cultural diversity that's sweeping through modern romance novels. And then I went home, a little paranoid, and I looked over my stories and works in progress to verify that my heroes did not, in fact, look the same.

And they don't look exactly alike. But several of them could be brothers.

The problem was twofold. The men who weren't supposed to look alike sounded like they did because I wasn't describing them very well. And they all had just about the same incredible, professional-athlete build, making them look like they came off the world's most magnificent assembly line. I really didn't want them to be perfect, cookie-cutter supermen; I had been aiming for heroes who were good-looking, but in an accessible, authentic way. I decided to handle both problems with good, old-fashioned field research. I went out into the real world to observe real men -- people-watching at its finest.

The real world offers us amazing diversity, a huge palette of shades and colors that don't really come through in the airbrushed, manufactured world of movies and magazines. I worked hard to pinpoint the exact hair colors I was looking at, to distinguish ash blond and wheat blond from each other and from their more golden counterparts. I contemplated

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## Everyman Hero . . .

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whether sea green and slate green were actually the same color, and then I tried to decide which color I wanted for my heroes' eyes. I explored the skin tones between café au lait, caramel, chocolate and mahogany, and then I carefully filled in the spaces with new descriptors.

Reality also offers us something more important: imperfection. Those little things that models and movie stars try to cover up and get rid of are the things that make heroes distinctive and whole. Real. Consider the wrinkle, and the multi-billion-dollar campaign to eliminate it. On the right man, crows' feet might tell a heroine that he has a good sense of humor, that he doesn't take himself too seriously, or just that he has a nice, genuine smile that lights up his whole face. Those parenthesis wrinkles can act more like a frame, designed to draw your heroine's eye to the fine work of art that is the hero's mouth. If he's gone gray gracefully, maybe your hero carries a certain measure of confidence and authority, a gravitas that only comes from experience. Your heroine might face the challenge of making gravitas laugh -- or making it blush.

There's also a certain appeal to a hero who's been roughed up a little bit. A scar from a burn or a cut or even surgery marks your hero as a survivor. A black eye might say he doesn't shy away from a fight. Your story will benefit from finding the origin of that mark --the exciting way he earned that broken nose, or the insecurity that grew from a single scar into a shell that only the heroine can melt.

A wise person somewhere once told me that there's something attractive about every man in the world, and that there are rewards for a woman patient enough to look for that special something. That sounded like a platitude to me until I started looking at real guys, out here in the real world, to see what I could bring over into my fictional universe. There really is something attractive about every man, and there really are rewards for the writer patient enough to look.

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 Alexa Day has worked as a newspaper reporter, a copy editor, a legal writer, an English teacher and a belly dance instructor. She now divides her time between plotting her escape from the legal industry and writing interracial erotic romances. She's a proud member of Virginia Romance Writers and author of the blog, Romance Writer by Night <<http://romancewriterbynight.wordpress.com/>> .

## Book Reviews

by Joan Powell

### ***Lions, Kisses and Petrodollars*, by Gabriel Timar, Eternal Press, Canada**

Multi-published author, Gabriel Timar has produced another above average suspense full of international intrigue, with the kind of humor that will make you fall in love with his main character, Geoff M. Bones, Safari owner and professional hunter. He and his partner, Marcus Ngani, a full-blooded Kikuyu, delight in giving their clients more than they bargain for.

Scalawag, Geoff M. Bones, and his dark complexioned partner, Marcus Ngani, play at the game of 'bwana and servant' for their 'professional hunter and his local attendant' appearances. They are doing well at driving their clients, Mr. Parmentier and his younger lady friend, Michelle Leclerc over dusty, bumpy back roads to shoot wild game--until Tanzania bans hunting lions and elephants. Then their plans must be altered--like flying to a different country. Meanwhile, Geoff, a resourceful bachelor, has his eye set on the young woman and proceeds to separate her from her senior husband...for bit more than a few stolen kisses.

But that's not all. They soon discover that their clients aren't who they pretended to be. Then all hell breaks loose, and they find themselves fleeing for their lives over international boundaries, trying to outwit not only the Arab gunmen determined to do away with sixty year old Mr. Parmentier, but the local tribal police as well.

This is a very fast paced action yarn that will keep you riveted in your seat. I loved it so much I read it twice—back-to-back. I was captivated by the convoluted espionage, the international financing, and Gabriel Timar's way of outwitting the crooked African politicians. This book is definitely a keeper.