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Cover Art

Cover art concept:

Novel Scenes to Depict:

Examples of cover styles that would suit the novel:

Suggestions for cover artist: _____

Novel Title

1. Title or Working Title

2. Title Meaning/Source

3. Alternative Titles

Suggested Tasks for Title:

1. Check Library of Congress database for any novels with the same title.
2. If series novel, make list of complementary titles for subsequent books.
3. Work on tag lines for novel using the title or words from the title.

Novel Premise

1. Describe the story with a short paragraph:

2. Describe the story in twenty-five words or less:

3. Describe the story in fifteen words or less:

4. Describe the story with a tag line or in ten words or less:

Individual Character Worksheet

Name: _____

Role In Novel: _____

Physical Description, Distinguishing marks:

Birthdate: _____

Astrological Sign: _____

Place of birth: _____

Spouse/Partner/Significant Other: _____

Children: _____

Mother: _____

Father: _____

Siblings:

Maternal Grandparents: _____

Other Maternal Relations:

Individual Character Worksheet pg. 2

Paternal Grandparents: _____

Other Paternal Relations:

Occupation: _____

Residence: _____

Positive aspects of personality:

Negative aspects of personality:

Hobbies/Collects:

Individual Character Worksheet pg. 3

Personal History/Childhood:

Personal History/Adolescence:

Personal History/Adulthood:

Individual Character Worksheet pg. 4

Relationship to/with other characters:

Character: _____ Relationship: _____

Notes: _____

Character: _____ Relationship: _____

Notes: _____

Character: _____ Relationship: _____

Notes: _____

Character: _____ Relationship: _____

Notes: _____

Character: _____ Relationship: _____

Notes: _____

Setting

Main location(s) where the story takes place:

Government: _____

Population: _____

Climate/Season at time of story: _____

Landmarks: _____

Significant area groups: _____

Crime: _____

Setting pg. 2

Area development: _____

Average income of residents: _____

Ethnic influences: _____

Predominant or regional favorite cuisine: _____

Flora/fauna: _____

Other significant details about location(s):

Suggested Tasks:

1. Get or draw a map of story location(s).
2. Map out buildings and travel routes involved in story.
3. Collect or invent interesting anecdotes about location(s).
3. Visit setting if possible and photograph areas that are involved in the story.

Time Period

Identify story time period: _____

Historic facts about this time: _____

Important leaders: _____

Achievements: _____

Scandals: _____

Problems: _____

Time Period pg. 2

Environment: _____

Technology: _____

Medicine: _____

Health issues: _____

War(s) and conflict(s): _____

Time Period pg. 3

Communication: _____

Transportation: _____

Entertainment: _____

Diet: _____

Clothing: _____

Weapons: _____

Fads: _____

Time Period pg. 4

Discoveries: _____

Disasters: _____

Failures: _____

Triumphs: _____

Other significant details about time period:

Novel Plotting Template

Block One -- Establish Your Story Line

1. Describe your protagonist (occupational, emotional, and situational.)

2. What is the main conflict your protagonist faces?

3. Identify the conflict catalyst -- what makes it affect your protagonist?
What does your protagonist decide to do now?

Block Two -- Supporting Story Elements, Crisis #1

1. Briefly describe your supporting characters.

2. What is/are the subplots of your story?

3. Identify crisis #1 (escalation of the main conflict, or how does it get worse?)

Block Three -- Conflict Response/Subplot Weaving #1

1. How does your protagonist react to crisis #1?

2. Which of your supporting characters reacts to crisis #1, and how?

3. Which of your subplots comes into play now, and how?

Block Four -- Conflict Escalation #2/Conflict Response

1. Identify crisis #2 (second escalation of main conflict, or how does it change/get worse?)

2. How does your protagonist react to crisis #2?

3. Which of your supporting characters react to crisis #2, and how?

Block Five -- Present the subplot(s) catalyst(s)/obstacle(s)

1. Describe how the subplot(s) escalate.

2. How does the subplot(s) escalation affect your protagonist in relation to the supporting characters?

3. What is the main obstacle to the protagonist solving the main conflict?

Block Six -- Develop supporting Characters/subplot(s); Conflict escalation #3

1. How do the supporting characters deal with the protagonist's response to subplot escalation?

2. How do the subplots affect the main conflict?

3. Identify crisis #3 (third escalation of the main conflict, or how does it change/get worse?)

Block Seven -- Protagonist/Supporting character response to crisis #2; subplot weaving #2

1. How does the protagonist react to crisis #3?

2. How do the supporting characters react to crisis #3, and protagonist's response?

3. Which of your subplots comes into play now, and how?

Block Eight -- Final conflict escalation, subplot culmination

1. What is the final crisis (describe the final escalation of the main conflict.)

2. How does the final crisis affect the protagonist and the supporting characters?

3. What is the culmination of the subplot(s)?

Block Nine -- Response to Final Conflict/Resolution of subplot(s)

1. What is the protagonist's response to the final crisis?

2. What are the supporting characters' responses to the final crisis?

3. What is/are the resolution(s) of the subplot(s)?

Block Ten -- Resolution and Conclusion

1. What is the resolution of the main conflict?

2. How does the resolution affect the protagonist and the supporting characters?

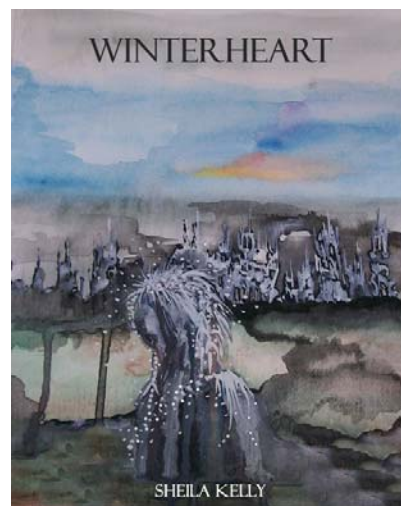
3. What is the conclusion of the story?

Novel Timeline

Chronological list of the story events:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____
13. _____
14. _____
15. _____
16. _____
17. _____
18. _____
19. _____
20. _____

Examples of photo-shopped and original art from my novel notebooks:



Examples of ads I've made up for different novels:

Sometimes it's the little things
that get you.



DEIMOS
The new StarDoc novella
Coming in June 2003

S. L. VIEHL
GENERAL LIAISON OFFICER OF STARDOC




When she asks
you to dance,
refuse.

Blade Dancer

The new novel of
science fiction
adventure set in the
StarDoc universe

August 2003

How badly do
you want to
be burned?



JESSICA HALL
Author of The Burning Stone

**INTO
THE FIRE**

The new novel
of romantic
suspense by
Jessica Hall

March 2004

Sometimes not everything is black and white

Duncan Reever
A man with no loyalty, no emotions,
and no idea of how to be human
has just met the woman
who will teach him all three.

Illumination
The first StarDoc Novella
Coming in December 2002

Coming in September 2004

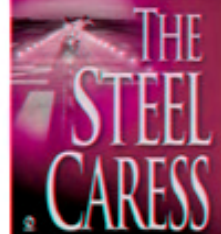
BioRescue



A novel by S.L. Viehl

Fasten Your Seatbelts.

Whatever doesn't
kill you makes you
stronger – unless
it comes back for
another shot.



JESSICA HALL
Author of The Burning Stone

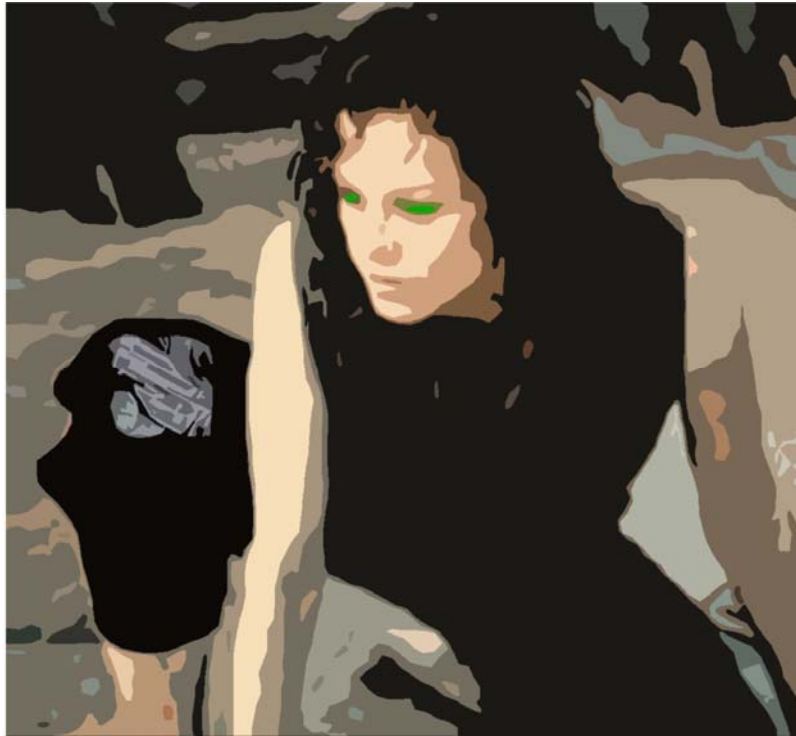
**THE
STEEL
CARESS**

The second book
in the Jessica Hall
romantic
suspense trilogy
May 2003

Example of Completed Character Worksheet

(Note: this contains spoilers for my novel *Blade Dancer*.)

Jory Rask/Blade Dancer



Sajora Raska (Jory Rask), human/Jorenian crossbreed female, 24 years old, 6'9" tall, 240 lbs.

Birthdate: November 14th

Astrological Sign: Scorpio

Place of birth: In space, en route from Joren to Earth

Mother: Xenobiologist **Kalea Raska**/Jorenian

[Margin Note: mother was repudiated by HouseClan and exiled from Joren for refusing to accept Choice]

Father: Raider/Slaver **Kieran**/human

[Margin Note: was trained as Blade Dancer]

Maternal Grandparents: Skalea and Tnefa Raska/Jorenian, ClanLeaders of HouseClan Raska

Maternal Aunt: Enale Raska/Jorenian

Paternal Relatives: Unknown

Siblings: Unknown

ClanSiblings: Jakol Varena, Nalek Zamlon, Galena Nerea, Osrea Levka, Danae Koralko, Renor Xado.

Spouse: None. Former best friend/lover: half-Imbajic shockball player **Rijor**, murdered by human mob after game injury revealed he was part alien

Occupation: Professional shockball player, first string runback, **NuYork StarDrivers**

Residence*: Future Agers commune, Arizona desert

*[*Margin Note: at beginning of novel]*--**Resides with:** mother (in hiding from Terran authorities, no residency permit)

Human characteristics: Black curly hair (worn short) Caucasian* skin and features *[*Margin note: has pink nipples/small breasts, show in glidebus scene with Kol]*

Jorenian characteristics: Six-fingered hands, retractable claws, 40 versus 32 teeth

Hybrid characteristics: reddish-purple blood, solid colored eyes (green)

Distinguishing marks: Ligature mark around base of neck, assorted shockball injury scars, diagonal scar* on left cheek *[*Margin note: does not acquire this until after fight with Kol re: challenging Feyen]*

Implant: Artificial right knee joint, constructed of salvaged drone tech, installed by (unspecified) alien underground physician *[Margin notes: supposedly incompatible with human tissue; Jory develops tolerance over time, still has periodic infections, self-treats with infusions of antibiotics. Repeated injuries from shockball, wear and refittings have degraded the implant. At open of novel, Jory has already been warned that no more bone trims can be performed, and one more serious injury will result in amputation of her right leg from the lower thigh down.]*

Positive personality: Brave, loyal (devoted to mother), capable of deep affection, sexually well-adjusted/mature, developed sense of fairness, protective* toward the young/weak *[*Margin note: forms immediate protective/older sister feelings toward Galena. Demonstrates affection when trust is established with the others.]*

Negative personality: Hot-tempered, driven, aggressive (confrontational), impatient, anti-social or defensive around strangers, often emotionally reserved, moderately claustrophobic (especially caves and underground passages), somewhat phobic* about having children *[*Margin note: refusal to have children = main romantic conflict between Jory and Kol]*

Hobbies/Collects: None (interested in bladed weapons)

Personal History/Childhood:

Born in space

Brought to Earth by Mother

Raised in alien underground (age 0 to 16)
Meets crossbreed Rijor, age 6
Caught and nearly hung by human children, age 7
Learns how to knife fight, age 8
Learns how to use surplus ordinance to blow tunnels, age 10

Jory has never had any contact with the Jorenian people prior to the opening of the novel. When Kalea arrived on Earth, she took refuge in the alien underground to prevent deportation, and Jory spent her entire childhood in the tunnels under New Angeles. *[Margin note: age 7 caught topside by human children and lynched with component wire, which Jory's weight snapped, resulted in permanent ligature mark around throat.]* Rijor becomes her best/only friend.

Personal History/Adolescence:

Becomes lovers with Rijor, age 15
Rijor and Jory recruited by NuYork StarDivers, age 16
Plays first string runback in debut game, scores three goals
Right knee shattered, replaced by implant, age 16 *[Margin note: result of 22 separate game injuries in eight months]*
Meets Rico/owner of the Gliders, refuses offer to join Gliders, age 17.
[Margin note: possibly future novella idea]
Plays runback in first AllStar game, age 18

Jory's early years with the junta are a succession of glory and injury, always overshadowed by the fact that she must hide her alien characteristics by wearing shades and specially designed gloves. Her relationship with Rijor progresses from friendship to sex, but the affection on both sides is more friendly than romantic. Now that she can no longer live with Kalea in the underground, Rijor is the only person Jory can be herself with. She deals with the hard reality of playing professional sports by saving up what she earns and planning to move her mother away from the city and out into the desert, where she can live more freely.

Personal History/Adulthood:

Voted World Game Most Valuable Player, age 19
First tibial bone shave, age 19
Signs lucrative contract to endorse designer footgear, age 20
Second tibial bone shave, age 21
Rijor murdered, age 22
Moves Kalea from underground to Future Agers commune, age 22
Elected to Shockball Junta Hall of Fame, age 23

Jory's fame increases, but so do the dangers surrounding her. Repeated injuries are creating havoc with her artificial knee tech. Her constant exposure in the

press threatens to expose her as a crossbreed. After Rijor is senselessly murdered by an angry mob, she immediately moves her mother out to the Arizona desert, hoping that will protect Kalea from the same. Rijor's death devastates Jory, but she goes into basic denial over it. She grows tired of playing injured but pushes herself to keep earning so that she can collect enough money to keep her and Kalea safe forever.

Novel Trigger Events:

Rijor's murder: Despite being in total denial about it, Rijor's death forever changes Jory's perceptions of herself, humans, and the prospect of continuing to live on Earth.

Kalea Raska contracts chicken pox virus from Future Ager commune children, dies alone: Kalea's death destroys the last reason Jory has to continue playing Shockball and hiding her crossbreed characteristics. As Kalea's Speaker, Jory has sworn to return to Joren and Speak to the ClanChildren of Honor. *[Margin note: insinuate that Kalea may have deliberately infected herself as a form of suicide.]*

Relationship to/with other characters:

Kalea: Deeply devoted but often exasperated with mother. Impatient or indifferent to learning Kalea's Jorenian ways, but does so to please mother. Envy's Kalea's gentle nature and unwavering faith.

ThGill: Jory doesn't trust 'Gill at first, but quickly develops a comfortable friendship with him, mostly because he consistently demonstrates a harmless, affable nature.

Enale: Jory finds her aunt's cool welcome both annoying and amusing. Admires/envy's her appearance. Wonders (at first) if they will get along as family.

Skalea: When they meet for the first time, Jory shows respect to her grandfather as Kalea taught her, but is immediately estranged by the old man's harsh reception and his indifference to/acceptance of Kalea's death. His behavior destroys her fledgling hope of a new life on Joren.

Jakol: Jory is intrigued by Kol from the first time they spar in the quad, but it takes a little while for her to catch on to the physical attraction behind it. Since Kol is half-Terran, half-Jorenian like her she unconsciously gravitates toward him. Through the book they have an ongoing, often subtle struggle for dominance over the group, resolved after the final challenge with Feyen. Jory is annoyed by the fact that Kol is more cautious and thoughtful than she is, and in many ways a better leader. Play up the physical attraction first, then emotional reliance/investment as they endure the Tana. Kol's determination to have a

traditional Jorenian bond is the main roadblock to their relationship, as Jory does not want children. *[Margin note: Kol smells like rain and pine.]*

Fayen: Jory readily identifies Fayen as an enemy and direct competition for Kol. Jory uses derision to combat Fayen at first, but quickly learns the Skogaq is a clever, lethal opponent. Jory's Jorenian instincts are enraged by Fayen's play for Kol, but when the Skogaq pretends to kill Galena, it pushes Jory over the edge into homicidal hatred. *[Margin note: Fayen is hermaphroditic]*

Danea: Jory and Danea basically hate each other at first sight, mostly on Danea's part *[Margin note: Danea refuses to believe they were all sired by slavers]*, and bicker through the entire novel. Jory doesn't realize Danea reminds her of Rijor. Their mutual antagonism slowly evolves into one of the closer relationships within the clan. Whenever the seven are threatened, Danea is always the first at Jory's side to defend them. *[Margin note: expose Danea as an aquatic after they move through the rift.]*

Nalek: The big brother Jory never had. Besides Galena, Nalek is probably Jory's strongest supporter within the clan. Fond of him, often exasperated by his mild nature, Jory unconsciously depends on Nalek as her anchor. *[Margin note: Nalek is the only person immune to Danea's corporeal field.]*

Galena: Jory is Galena's polar opposite in almost everything, and yet Jory is immediately drawn to and protective of her. Galena serves as a nudge to Jory's conscience, which often angers Jory. Galena's vulnerability and inherent gentleness subconsciously remind Jory of her mother, and makes Galena the heart of the clan. *[Margin note: Galena has transmitter implanted by HouseClan, do not reveal until end of novel.]*

Osrea: Serves as Jory's annoying little brother, although she understands him better than the rest of the clan, especially when he becomes aggressive and confrontational. Jory recognizes his surreptitious affection for Galena early on and is more forgiving of him because of it. *[Margin note: Os's exocartilage plates thicken as he loses weight during the Tana training.]*

Renor: Jory is wary of Ren because of his silence and his more inhuman characteristics (considers him a possible danger to the group in the beginning) but develops an abiding respect for him after he demonstrates the same loyalty to clan that she feels. Learning how he was treated by the Xado cements their quiet friendship, although she continues to be irritated by his inherent secrecy throughout the book. *[Margin note: Renor does not sleep.]*

Bek: Jory and Bek develop mutual respect and friendship as they recognize each other's ethics. Jory does not completely trust the Blade trainer, but she comes to rely on his sense of fair play. *[Margin note: Bek has severe facial scarring from a transport crash]*

Uel: Jory is at first confused then annoyed by the attention she receives from the Blade Master. Uel presents more questions than answers, and his persistence in watching her bothers her on more than one level. *[Margin note: Uel is a reconstruct]*

Example Novel Synopsis

(This is the original synopsis I submitted for my novel *Heat of the Moment*. It contains spoilers, but was also later revised for the final edition.)

Heat of the Moment By Jessica Hall

Novel Synopsis

Summer in New Orleans is heating up as a serial arsonist now pegged by the media as “The Torcher” continues to burn down businesses around the city. When fifteen people, including the son and daughter-in-law of mafia crime boss Frank Belafini, are trapped and burned to death in a French Quarter bar, City Fire Marshal Cortland Gamble and his special arson task force must focus all their efforts on tracking down and stopping the madman. The pressure builds when Belafini demands Cort find the Torcher and turn him over to him, or watch the mafia tear the city apart block by block looking for him.

New Orleans homicide detective Terri Vincent isn't happy when her partner J.D Gamble takes a leave of absence and she's temporarily assigned to the Fire Department as police liaison on the Torcher case. Her partner's brother, Cort Gamble, makes it clear that he doesn't want her working with him. He's also been avoiding her ever since he showed up drunk on her doorstep and spent a wild night in her bed. She understands why Cort doesn't like her – they're from completely different worlds. He's strict, meticulous, and comes from a wealthy traditional Creole background; she's fun-loving, laid-back, and grew up on the bayou with her extended, multiracial Cajun clan. When she's off-duty Terri lives

in faded jeans, but Cort probably doesn't even own a pair. She's pretty sure that Cort also considers their one-night stand as a huge mistake. That Terri has been secretly in love with him for years doesn't help, but she still has her friend, New Orleans medical examiner Grayson Huitt, to go out with when she's in the mood.

Stephen Belafini's death in the bar fire brings FBI Special Agent Josephine Edgeway from Atlanta to New Orleans, to investigate whether the Torcher has ties to organized crime. At least, that's the official version. In reality, Jo is investigating Cort to see if he's the one with ties to the mob. A large, anonymous deposit to Cort's bank account the day after the bar fire convinces Jo that the Fire Marshal is on the take. She also suspects Terri Vincent, whose father was a corrupt cop, could be involved.

Gray Huitt knows Terri is using him as a buffer against Cort, but doesn't mind – he likes women, even the tough cop variety, and they've always liked him. He has a soft spot for Terri, too, as he knows her constant joking hides a sensitive heart. When Jo Edgeway arrives at his office to question him about forensic aspects of the Torcher case, however, he is completely enchanted by the lovely but remote agent. His easy-going charm fails to impress her, though, to the point that Gray wonders if he's losing his touch.

Billy Tibbedeau, who had been hired by Laure LeClare to kill J.D. Gamble's wife Sable, is now a fugitive forced to hide out in the bayou. As he drinks and broods about revenge against his former boss/best friend Caine Gantry, a well-dressed man arrives and offers to help clear him of any involvement in the plot to murder Sable. All Billy has to do is kill another woman,

Moriah Navarre, and make it look like the Torcher did it. Billy accepts the job. In the back room of the shack, Billy's abused wife Cecilia, who is being held hostage along with her wounded friend Lilah, overhears the conversation. Both she and Lilah are in no shape to travel, but Lilah insists that they try to escape and warn the woman Billy plans to kill.

The Torcher strikes again, but this time targets a wealthy socialite. Cort and Terri arrive at the scene in the Garden District, where horrified witnesses tell them how victim Ashleigh Bouchard was unable to escape her Mercedes and burned to death in front of their eyes. At first Cort doesn't believe it is the work of the Torcher, until his chief investigator confirms the same type of incendiary device used in the bar fire killed Ashleigh. Back at Cort's office, Terri sees some connections between the two fires: Stephen Belafini's wife Luciana and Ashleigh were both prominent Creole society figures, and both were Cort's ex-girlfriends. Cort dismisses her theory as a possible motive for the arson/murders. Jo Edgeway interrupts their subsequent shouting match to tell them forensics on the scene have recovered a tape planted in a fire-proof pouch in Ashleigh's car, along with two unidentifiable lumps of melted gold.

Cort, Terri and Jo meet with Chief of Homicide Captain George Pellerin and listen to the recovered tape. In a horrible, rasping voice, the Torcher promises to kill everyone Cort has ever loved by burning them alive. On Jo's suggestion, Pellerin orders Terri to go undercover and pose as Cort's girlfriend. Cort and Terri both argue against the idea. Cort feels the danger to Terri is too great, while Terri knows she'll never pass for the kind of woman Cort usually

dates. Pellerin is adamant; using a cop as bait for the Torcher is the safest course of action. Jo suggests they act like new lovers and make their relationship very public at the various social functions Cort attends.

Cort's mother Elizabet, who has always had an adversarial relationship with Terri, suggests Cort gets some professional advice on how to turn the decidedly unfeminine cop into a society girl. A grimly resigned Cort takes Terri to meet Alexandre Moreau, one of Elizabet's oldest friends and the colorful local figurehead of Creole society. Elegant but genteelly impoverished, Andre makes his living teaching the finer social graces to wealthy young women. After examining Terri like a horse, he reluctantly agrees to try to transform her into a passable socialite.

While Andre is torturing Terri with her initial makeover, Cort reviews the cases of all the arsonists who have recently been released from prison. Douglas Simon, a former insurance agent Cort had prosecuted for defrauding his own company, seems the most likely suspect. He was released from prison a few days before the bar fire, and like the Torcher, he was involved in burning down business establishments. Simon also swore to get even with Cort for sending him to prison. When interviewed, the belligerent Simon taunts Cort about the Torcher's success, but has iron-clad alibis for both fires. Mob boss Frank Belafini calls Cort again and makes additional threats against his family if he doesn't find the Torcher soon and turn him over to the mob.

After questioning Simon, Cort encounters a gorgeous woman at police headquarters and is staggered to discover that she's Terri. The illusion of beauty

and sophistication falls away, however, when Terri apprehends an arrested drug dealer trying to escape from the station. Although he admires her quick thinking, Cort realizes they have a long way to go in polishing Terri's act, and takes her back to Andre for the next phase of her training – deportment and dance lessons. Terri doesn't want to learn how to dance, until Andre makes Cort her partner. Being that close to the man she loves is both torment and heaven, even if she does trip over his feet on every other step. Cort has his hands full trying to keep his hands in the proper places, instead of where he wants to touch Terri.

Cecilia and Lilah wait until Billy leaves them to go into the city, and then escape from the shack. Lilah's injuries only allow them to get as far as Gantry Charters. Lilah tells Caine Gantry about Billy's plans to murder socialite Moriah Navarre, then collapses. Caine takes both women to the hospital, then goes into the Garden District to see Moriah Navarre. The socialite, whom Caine once terrified and tied up while he was trying to uncover Sable Duchesne's attacker, doesn't believe Caine's story about Billy Tibbideau. Caine prevents Moriah from finishing opening a suspicious-looking package, which then explodes. Caine carries the unconscious Moriah out to his truck and takes off.

Andre and Terri clash over everything – her hair, her makeup, her clothes – and the old Southern gentleman declares her a hopeless cause. Tired of trying to be someone she's not, Terri threatens to quit. As Cort tries to negotiate a cease-fire between them, a call comes in from Jo indicating that the Torcher has struck a third time. The intended victim, Cort's former girlfriend Moriah Navarre, barely escapes being killed by a mail bomb and was last seen being driven away

from the scene by Caine Gantry. Terri, who is Caine's cousin, insists Moriah will be safe, and suggest they let the Torcher believe he's succeeded. Cort, who has never liked Caine, agrees, but puts out an A.P.B. on Caine without telling Terri.

Jo Edgeway visits Gray Huitt to get copies of the autopsies on the Torcher's victims, and surprises the medical examiner with an invitation to dinner. Intrigued and gratified by the FBI agent's apparent change of heart, Gray takes Jo out on the town and does his best to seduce her. Over the course of the evening, however, it becomes obvious that Jo is only using him to get information on Cort and Terri. Gray takes Jo back to the morgue to give her the reports, then clashes with her over Terri. He deliberately goads Jo into losing her temper, which ends with the two of them having sex on top of Gray's desk. When the body of a suicide victim is delivered, Jo becomes remote again and leaves. Gray is distracted when he realizes the suicide is one of his technicians.

Enraged by Caine's interference in the murder attempt, Billy returns to the shack to find Cecilia and Lilah gone. He goes to Gantry Charters to kill Caine and Moriah and get the two women back, but only finds Caine's foreman John alone on the docks. Billy tortures John into telling him where Caine took Cecilia and Lilah, kills him, and then stuffs his body in the back of his truck and heads to the hospital.

Gray pays a visit to Cort, and informs him that he's under investigation by the FBI. Gray doesn't care about Cort, but he doesn't want Terri to be dragged down with him. Cort, who is jealous of Gray's interest in Terri, suggests the ME stick to autopsies. Gray reveals that Belafini was responsible for corrupting

Terri's father, and Cort's involvement with the mob boss will only backlash on Terri. Neither man is aware that Jo Edgeway, who now has Cort's office bugged, is listening in.

Cort and Terri are scheduled to attend a charity dinner and auction together, and Cort arrives early at Terri's home to find her struggling with the tiny buttons on the back of her fancy dress. Cort's jealousy over Gray makes him decide to test Terri's response to him, which results in an erotic embrace. Elizabeth, who is hosting the dinner at Cort's father's restaurant, Krewe of Louis, interrupts with a phone call wanting to know where they are. After the call, Terri suggests that they get the inconvenient mutual lust out of their systems by having sex after the auction. Her brisk attitude disturbs Cort, who realizes he wants more than just sex. However, his casual suggestion that they attempt a relationship only makes Terri laugh, and he retreats behind his bruised pride.

Moriah wakes up in a small bed, with Caine sleeping next to her. At first she blames the room rocking on her disoriented senses, but climbs upstairs to find she's on a boat. When Caine wakes and comes up to check on her, she pushes him off the boat, then dives from the other side and starts to swim for the lights on shore, but quickly tires. Caine comes up behind her, takes her in a life-saving hold and swims back with her to the boat. He explains what happened and that he's trying to protect her, but through chattering teeth Moriah accuses him of kidnapping her. Caine strips and dries her, then dresses her in his old shirts and takes her back to bed to warm up. As Moriah drifts off to sleep in his arms, he wonders who hired Billy to kill her, and why.

Terri, Cort and Cort's parents wade through a gauntlet of reporters at the restaurant, where everyone subsequently treats Cort like a leper. Andre informs them that the Torcher's tape was leaked to the press, and combined with Douglas Simon's claims that Cort is taking kickbacks from the mob, has served as justification for society to hold Cort responsible for the murders. While Elizabet tries to deal with the circulating whispers, Cort gets a note and disappears into the restaurant's kitchen. Terri follows him, overhears him on the phone telling Frank Belafini to go to hell, and then confronts him. Cort finally tells her about Belafini's threats, Jo Edgeway's investigation, and the A.P.B. he put out on Caine. He suggests she quit the case before he destroys her career along with his. Furious, Terri tells Cort that no matter what he does, she believes in him and she'll never quit until his name is cleared. Her utter faith in him arouses Cort on several levels, and he hauls her into the pantry, where they make love.

Cecilia leaves Lilah in her room and goes to a vending machine for coffee, then sits in a waiting room and tries to decide what to do. She knows her husband's rage is centered on her for betraying him, and as long as she stays with Lilah, her friend will be in danger. Her long-repressed feelings also make her determined to protect Lilah, whom she loves. Cecilia decides to go to Caine Gantry to ask for his help, and unaware of the well-dressed man following her, leaves the hospital.

Terri and Cort are barely finished making love when they hear shouts of "Fire" come from the dining room. They emerge to find a small accidental fire

burning and everyone in hysterics. Cort and Terri evacuate the building, but the uproar causes Cort's father Louis to have a heart attack. Paramedics arrive, and Terri and Cort take Elizabet to the hospital, where Louis's condition is stabilized. Cort sees Billy Tibbideau in the hallway, but the arsonist gets away before he can apprehend him. Terri checks on Lilah, who is safe but frightened because Cecilia has disappeared, and puts a police guard on Lilah's room. Cort gets a call that the Gamble's home is on fire.

Terri and Cort race to the scene, where the arsonist planted multiple incendiary devices, and watch as the Gamble's old 19th century mansion burns to the ground. Evidence indicates that the devices were timed to go off after Elizabet and Louie came home from the party – Louie's heart attack actually saved their lives. Cort finds Mae Wallace, the Gamble's housekeeper, tied up in the utility shed behind the house. She is alive but drugged, and the killer left a taunting message on her body – he won't stop until every single person Cort loves is dead. A reporter filming the scene threatens Terri, and Cort's temper explodes. Andre intervenes and distracts the reporter while Terri hauls Cort away.

Knowing Cort is at the breaking point, Terri convinces him to go with her to her family's cabin on the lake, using the excuse that they need to get away from the press and go over the details of the case. Once there she gets a call from Caine, who confirms that he's babysitting Moriah and that Billy Tibbideau may be the Torcher. Cort reluctantly agrees to cancel the A.P.B. on Caine, then calls in to the station to learn he's been fired by the mayor, and that he's to report in the

morning for questioning by the police and the FBI. Since he has nothing left to lose, Cort decides to spend the night making love to Terri.

Worried about Cort, Terri can't sleep and gets up later to call Gray Huitt. The ME talks through the details of the case with her, then mentions something about one of the victims – if she hadn't been caught in the fire, Stephen Belafini's wife Luciana would have probably died in a few weeks anyway, as she had terminal cancer. Gray discovered this from her medical records, however, because the first fire had been so hot that it reduced her body to ash and bone fragments – even her gold earrings had melted. Terri, who remembers all of Cort's former girlfriends, recalls Luciana always wore gold hoop earrings, and makes a tentative connection – the lumps of gold in Ashleigh's car could have been earrings, and the killer put gold hoop earrings on the Gamble's housekeeper after drugging her. She asks Gray to meet her at the morgue and leaves the cabin.

As she waits for Cort to show up at police headquarters, Jo Edgeway interviews Douglas Simon, who claims Cort framed him and offers proof that the ex-Fire Marshal is working for the mob. The inconsistency of Simon's claims with the evidence actually makes Jo question Cort's guilt for the first time. When the satisfied ex-con leaves, Gray Huitt comes in and demands to know why she won't return his calls, and why she's crucifying Cort. Jo refuses to discuss the case with him, but before they can argue a patrolman calls her downstairs. Douglas Simon is sprawled dead just outside the front entrance, the victim of an apparent drive-by shooting.

At his shack in the bayou, the well-dressed man delivers Cecilia to Billy Tibbideau, who beats her unconscious. The man tells Billy about Caine keeping Moriah on his boat in the gulf, and Billy promises to kill both of them. The man refuses to let him kill Cecilia, however, and insists he take care of Caine and Moriah first. He assures Billy he can have Cecilia as part of his reward for the murders.

Cort wakes up to find Terri gone and a grim message on her answering machine – the Torcher claims to have her, and will be setting her on fire along with a famous old building in the French Quarter in less than an hour. Cort calls Jo Edgeway and coordinates backup, then rushes from the cabin into the city.

Jo and the police block off Jackson Square, and surround the building where Terri is being held. Because the buildings are so old, nearly every fire fighter in the city is on the scene. When people begin screaming inside the building, and black smoke billows from the windows on the top floor, Jo gives the fire fighters the green light to enter the building, and they rushes in to put out the blaze. However, when they reach the top, they find only a smudge pot, a closed-circuit camera, and a tape recorder with a loudspeaker. The entire floor is wired with explosives at every possible exit, all of which have remotes activated by their entry.

After getting a radio call that Billy Tibbideau has been apprehended, Caine heads back to Gantry Charters. As he prepares to enter one of the rivers, he sees John's boat approaching the gulf and goes out on deck to greet his foreman. He realizes something is wrong when John's boat begins to pick up

speed. Caine runs down into the cabin to get Moriah. A minute later John's boat collides with Caine's, and both explode into a huge ball of fire.

Cort arrives in the Quarter at the same time Terri and Gray do, and realizes he's been tricked. The Torcher calls him on his cell to inform him that all twenty fire fighters are now trapped, and that if they try to leave, the bombs will explode. The bombs are on a timer, which will go off in one hour. The killer also has a remote trigger which will blow the building any time he wants, and a camera watching the men inside. If he wants to save the men, Cort has to bring Terri back to the cabin on the lake. They have to come alone, or the killer will blow the building.

Jo agrees to stay on site with Gray and try to defuse the timers on the bombs while Cort and Terri return to the cabin. On the way back, Terri tells Cort why she left and what she discovered at the morgue – that one of Gray's technicians had been working for the Belafini family, and had been falsifying a number of autopsy tests to cover up mob murders. She doesn't understand when Cort calls Frank Belafini and tells him that the killer is at the cabin, but he assures her the mob boss won't kill the Torcher. They enter the cabin to find a man sitting with a remote trigger device in his bandaged hand and watching the fireman on a remote monitor hooked up in Terri's livingroom. The entire cabin is wired with explosives, just as the building in the Quarter is.

The killer's hair is gone and his face has second degree burns, but Cort recognizes him as Stephen Belafini, the son of the mob boss and Luciana's husband. In his rasping voice, Stephen tells them how his father ordered the bar

fire to be set in imitation of the Torcher to conceal the mob's involvement. On his own, Stephen decided to plant evidence at the bar that would frame Cort for creating the Torcher as a method of extortion. However, Stephen's beloved wife Luciana followed him to the bar. He didn't realize she was inside until the fire was already raging, and was burned trying to save her. He escaped, arranged the perfect alibi by paying Gray Huitt's technician to identify one of the victims as himself, then launched his campaign to destroy Cort's life.

When Terri asks why Stephen would go to such lengths, he tells her how much he loved his wife. Luciana, however, had never stopped loving Cort. Even when she was diagnosed with cancer, she went to Cort before she told Stephen. That was the reason he wanted to ruin Cort's career. But when Stephen watched the only person he had ever loved burn to death, he decided it was only justice that Cort have to do the same. Terri begins to sob and goes down on her knees in front of Stephen, babbling about her love for Cort and begging for him to spare his life. Her hysteria amuses him, until Terri smoothly snatches the remote from his hand and tosses it to Cort, who deactivates it. However, Stephen pulls a gun and points it under Terri's chin. Cort lunges as a shot is fired, but it is Stephen who is shot in the back by Frank Belafini. The mob boss is shattered when he sees he has shot his own son, and doesn't stop Cort when he grabs Terri and races out of the cabin. Terri and Cort are both thrown to the ground as the cabin explodes.

Back in the Quarter, Jo successfully defuses the bombs with Gray's help, and the two are able to save the trapped men. As the relieved fire fighters

congratulate each other, Gray takes Jo into his arms and tells her he's falling in love with her. Before he can kiss her, Jo gently extricates herself and tells Gray that she's happily married, and there is no way they have any future together. She leaves Gray staring after her in complete shock.

Cort and Terri return to the police department to receive the grim news that Caine was involved in a suspicious boating accident but is believed to have escaped, along with the blond woman he was seen leading into the bayou. While Terri gives Pellerin a briefing, Cort meets with Jo Edgeway and relates Stephen Belafini's confession. Jo admits it was Stephen who contacted the FBI in Atlanta and claimed Cort was staging the Torcher arsons to extort money from the mob. She promises to clear his name with the mayor and leaves for Atlanta.

Cort's mother, his brothers and their wives arrive at the station along with a wave of reporters, and Terri watches the subsequent press conference with mixed feelings. She's relieved the danger is over, but she doesn't think she'll ever fit in Cort's life. On impulse she slips out of the station and goes to see her nemesis, Andre. The old gentleman bullies her into a confession, and Terri finds herself pouring her heart out to him. She loves Cort, but she's afraid he only wants her because they have great sex. Besides, she's a cop, what does she know about being a wife and mother, much less a socialite? Andre advises her that it's time she made some compromises in her life, and comes up with a plan.

Cort tries to find Terri at the station, and then checks her empty apartment. He feels sure that what she told Stephen Belafini was the truth, but why is she dodging him now? He returns to the house his parents have

temporarily rented, and Elizabeth suggest that if he wants to talk to Terri that he should pick her up for the concert that they had planned to attend.

That night Terri dresses carefully for the concert. With Andre's help, she has the perfect dress, hair, and makeup, and is prepared to conduct herself like any other socialite – whatever it takes to show Cort that she can fit into his world. There's a knock on the door, and she opens it to find Cort standing in a t-shirt, faded jeans, and baseball cap, with tickets to see a Zydeco band. They both stare at each other's transformation before they begin to laugh and embrace.

As Cort's baseball cap and Terri's satin shoes fall to the floor, Andre calls and leaves a message on Terri's answering machine, warning Cort to either propose to Terri, or get out of his way so he can. Cort picks up the phone, tells Andre that Terri she isn't marrying anyone else but him, and then hangs up and sweeps Terri into his arms. As he carries her into the bedroom, Terri decides the best of both worlds can be had, as long as there's love to build a bridge between them.

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About the Author



Since 2000, Lynn Viehl has published thirty-seven novels in five genres. On the internet, she hosts [Paperback Writer](#), a popular publishing industry weblog which she updates daily. Lynn's StarDoc science fiction series has been a genre bestseller for seven consecutive years. Lynn's first three novels of the Darkyn, *If Angels Burn*, *Private Demon* and *Dark Need* all made the USA Today bestseller list, and her fourth Darkyn novel, *Night Lost*, debuted in May 2007 at #21 on the New York Times extended bestseller list.

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