

CONFESSIONS OF SERIES KILLERS:

Weathering Line Closings and Other Career Changes

Presented by **Holly Jacobs** and **Tanya Michna/Tanya Michaels**

Between the two of them, award-winners Holly Jacobs, a Waldenbooks bestselling author, and Tanya Michaels, a three time RITA finalist, have killed nearly ten publishing lines and imprints. Hear from these angels of publishing death how you too can survive and rebound from nearly any career tragedy.

RIP: The Obituaries

Bantam Loveswept. NeXt. Harlequin Duets. Kensington Bouquet. Dorchester Smooch. Harlequin Temptation. Silhouette Romance. The fact is, many beloved lines eventually hit their expiration date (often long before their readers or authors are ready to see them go). So what do you do when the line you're targeting or have already sold to goes over to the Great Beyond?

Of course, line closings aren't the only challenges a writer may face during his/her career!

Saying Goodbye is Hard to Do

When is it time to pull the plug on a critique group or agent relationship, and how can you exit gracefully? How do you handle being "orphaned" by an editor or agent who has left her house/agency?

Overheard at the Wake

How do writers cope with negative reviews, contest feedback, or “toxic” negativity from colleagues or family?

The Undead

Today’s “dead” trends may rise again tomorrow, but what do you do in the meantime? And should you base your writing decisions on whether or not you think a trend is on life support?

Future Lives:

Reinventing yourself, Finding a New Publishing Home, Creating a new You

Never Burn a Body...er, we meant *Bridge*

Half of networking is simply conducting yourself professionally and realizing how small the romance-writing world is.

Don't Put All Your Caskets in One Burial Plot

Perhaps more than ever before, many authors are successfully writing for more than one line or house. Some even write in more than one genre or under more than one name.

Finding Your Way to the Pearly Gates

Most clichés exist because they're true. You can almost always find or create a silver lining in your crisis!

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The truth is, everyone's writing journey is different. Everyone faces unique roadblocks and it's up to individual writers to find her (his) path around them, over them, under them...or just blow the d@#\*ed thing up! Some of today's successful authors share their experiences and advice with us:

"Having gone through three editor changes in six years, I think the key is to stay focused on the writing. I have a 'career plan' written out that includes what I want to submit and when. Whenever I've gotten a new editor, I've immediately scheduled a conversation so I can discuss my plan and her expectations of me. I try to keep the emotion out of it and remember that this is a business, a brutal one at times, and the only thing I stand a chance of controlling is what I write." ~ **Delores Fossen** (*Questioning the Heiress*, 07/08)

"Remind yourself that yes, you are a writer, but you're also \*more\* than a writer. Acknowledge the other blessings and joys in your life. Otherwise, it's easy to blow things out of proportion -- and maintaining perspective is crucial." ~ **Natale Stenzel** (*The Druid Made Me Do It*, 08/08)

"I wrote [lighthearted regency-era romances] as Katherine Greyle for five books. Sales were climbing slowly. So slowly, in fact, that {the publisher} said, we love your writing, but you're not hitting. So...with this new proposal that was already a little different (okay, a lot darker, a lot sexier) please take a new name and start over. This was a difficult, difficult decision. I would completely be remaking myself--which can be fun. But I would be completely starting over... I made the shift to Jade Lee, started writing tantric Chinese historicals, and have never looked back... It's hard, it's scary and it's extremely difficult on the pocketbook. But it turns out that it was the best thing I could have done." ~ *USA Today* Bestselling Author **Jade Lee** (*The Dragon Earl*, 9/08)

"I weathered a seven-year dry spell after my second published book by doggedly refusing to give up and switching from straight contemporary to romantic comedy. I've now sold 26 books. And guess what? I'm writing straight contemporary again." ~ **Darlene Gardner** (*Anything for Her Children*, 05/08)

"After receiving a request at an editor pitch appointment, I sent in my manuscript and got back a letter saying the editor would be willing to look at it again if I revised. So I revised. In the meantime, I heard she was no longer acquiring for that line. When I got ready to send it, I called her and asked what I should do. She told me to send it to the new editor for that line, which I did. Then a few months later, I got a form rejection from an editorial assistant. It was very frustrating to feel like I had gotten that close, only to have an assistant send the rejection. (Actually, he sent it twice! LOL) But it ended up being a blessing. I went on to sell my first book to Steeple Hill Love Inspired and can now write the inspirational books I love. ~ **Missy Tippens** (*Her Unlikely Family*, 02/08)

"The hurdle is when I start obsessing about things I can't control. I try to look at publishing as nothing more than a big game." ~ **Lori Wilde** (*Addicted to Love*, 10/08)

"Don't mourn the editor who has moved on -- get to know the new one and have a frank conversation about expectations, both yours and hers. Hiding isn't going to help! This will assure her that she's inherited a solid author from her predecessor, someone who is committed to your career and the success of your books with her house. Depending on the circumstances,

she may be a little overwhelmed at first, so unless you're approaching a deadline, an email introducing yourself and asking when you can talk would be better than a phone call." ~ **Berta Platas**, one half of writing duo **Gillian Summers** (*Into the Wildewood*, 06/08)

"Being able to write for a living is the icing on the cake. And yes, the icing IS the best part. But when you're prepared to eat the cake without it, well, then you know you're really a writer. It's nice to call yourself a writer as a profession, but the single most important thing I learned on this wild journey through rejections, near-misses and downright failure is that writing is not just what I do, it's who I am. Icing is good. It's always good. But learn to appreciate the cake first." ~ *New York Times* Bestselling Author **Sarah Addison Allen** (*Sugar Queen*, 05/08)

"The best way to overcome hurdles is to have a BFF you can bitch to about every random and unfair and infuriating aspect of this business. And then sit back down and keep at it." **Isabel Sharpe** (*As Good As It Got*, 07/08)

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**Tanya** is a split personality (professionally, not mentally). Under her real name of Tanya Michna she writes women's fiction for NAL, including *Necessary Arrangements*--a 2008 finalist for the Award of Excellence--and the upcoming *Baggage Claim* (04/09) Writing for Harlequin as Tanya Michaels, she's won numerous awards and killed off numerous lines. Her books have been translated into approximately a dozen languages for distribution throughout the world. Later this year she will be launching her "Four Seasons in Mistletoe" miniseries for Harlequin American Romance. Both Tanyas live in Georgia with husband, two children, a few million books and way too much TV-on-DVD. When she's not writing, reading or trying to figure out what the heck is happening on LOST, Tanya enjoys speaking at conferences and workshops around the country.

**Holly Jacobs** wrote for Precious Gems...until it died. Then she happily went to write for Harlequin Duets and Silhouette Romance. Duets died, but she wrote for their new comedy line, Harlequin Flipside...until it died. But, hey, she still had Silhouette Romance. Uh, it died. She tried writing for Harlequin Signature...it died. Finally, she tried something different from her comedic, light humor romance roots—she wrote for Harlequin Everlasting Love. The book won RT's Reviewers' Choice Award for Best Everlasting. Life was good. Great even. Then Everlasting died. Thankfully, Holly is now writing for Harlequin American Romance, Harlequin's SuperRomance and Avalon Books. She's sold more than forty books and more than a million of her books have sold worldwide. Despite her obvious occasional career hurdles, Holly still loves what she does and smiles every morning when she sits down with her muses (uh, dogs) to work! You can visit her at [www.HollyJacobs.com](http://www.HollyJacobs.com)