

Editors want “*Fresh*.” Readers clamor for stories that go beyond the “*same-old, same-old*.”

Whether you’re a seasoned author with dozens of books to your credit or a green writer embarking on your career, *Fresh* is fundamental. It’s fun! *Fresh* is a surprise! A twist! A unique voice! *Fresh* is unafraid to be different.

What is it, and how do we get it?

If it hasn’t been seen before it’s *Fresh*. Astonish your readers. Most people enjoy reading a mystery with unpredictable twists and turns. Romance readers like surprises, too. A love story can have just as many *Fresh* twists and unexpected turns as a mystery.

Ask yourself, **what does my reader expect to happen at this juncture in the story?**

Don’t do it. Amaze her! Do something different--*Fresh*. For example: when Buffy the Vampire Slayer walks through a graveyard, we expect a vampire to jump out. But what else could happen? Robert McKee, author of *Story*, suggests listing ten possibilities. Linda Lael Miller suggests doing twenty. Generally, it’s a good idea to scratch off the first three. Those come to mind easily, because we’ve seen them before. Making a list of ten ideas challenges the imagination, but it’s well worth the effort.

Just in case you’re not patient enough to do twenty, or even ten, here’s a little trick that will make it easier:

## **Kathleen’s Magical Marvelous Idea Jump-Starter Tool:**

1. State the most obvious idea. For example: a vampire attacks Buffy.
2. What is blatantly opposite? A happy clown pops out of a headstone.
3. Good! Now list more *opposite* ideas but less obvious?
  - An old lady sits in a rocker, knitting in the graveyard.
  - Buffy’s dead mother floats up singing off-key, a ghostly warning.
  - Maybe Buffy finds a baby sleeping behind a tombstone.
  - How about a little vampire toddler? --crying, lost, alone, hungry... (What’s a vampire slayer to do?)

Keep going. As the list progresses, it gets more interesting, more fun, less predictable. Ideas fuel more ideas and spin off intriguing complications. Pushing past the first few ideas, you arrive at more fertile concepts. *Fresh!*

There are many more aspects to writing *Fresh*, but Webster’s sums it all up by defining *Fresh* as *impudent*. So, be bold. Leave the expected behind in the dust. Soar!

*Fresh* is unafraid!

--Kathleen Baldwin

[www.KathleenBaldwin.com](http://www.KathleenBaldwin.com)

MISTAKEN KISS, Regency Romantic Comedy, 2006 HOLT Medallion Finalist

CUT FROM THE SAME CLOTH, Regency Romantic Comedy, March/05

WALTZ WITH A ROGUE, Regency Romantic Comedy, March/05