

A woman with blonde hair is lying on her back on a dark red desk. She is wearing black lace lingerie and fishnet stockings. Her legs are raised and bent at the knees, with her feet resting on the desk. She is looking towards the camera with a slight smile. On the desk in front of her are several sheets of paper, a pen, and a pair of glasses. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

How To **REALLY** Self-Publish *Erotica*

The truth about kinks, covers, advertising and more.

Dalia Daudelin

How to Really Self-Publish Erotica
The Truth About Kinks, Covers, Advertising and More!
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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Why You Should Write Erotica

The thing most people want in life is to make a lot of money for fairly little work. That's not exactly what this is, but it's damned close. If you want a reason to write erotica, there's none better.

After the success of *Fifty Shades of Gray*, the market exploded. A lot of people got very famous very quickly, and made a lot of money. Delilah Fawkes, for instance, was making six figures within a year. That was the gold rush, when people realized there was money to be made, 'gold in them hills' as it were. And flock to it they did.

The gold rush, I'm sorry to say, is over. You won't be getting rich. You'll probably be making less than full time at minimum wage, honestly, for a long time. Months. I wouldn't quit your job and buy your dream house until you know you can sustain it.

But honestly, that's good financial advice. I have had a few troubles in my career, which began in June 2012 (a little over a year ago as of the writing) and I made as much as 2,000 a month during that time, in spite of bad reviews and the fact that most of the information in this book wasn't handed to me.

Of course, some was—I am not a pioneer. I walked a path that was fairly well-beaten, after the end of the gold rush. I had a wealth of information at my fingertips on the web, but at the same time so much information needed to come from practical experience and having done it ten, fifty, a hundred times.

If you've got a lucrative career, it might not seem like much. But frankly, I got out of high school with a 2.8 GPA, and no prospects for college. I worked for a year or two at a CVS, worked for three months at a Subway. In that time, I didn't make anywhere near what I have made in my time writing. And the job prospects just weren't coming either. I didn't have any friends in high places whispering in the right ears, I didn't know how to get people to just give me a chance, so it took me more than a year to get a job at all.

To me, after that, writing was a lifeline, and I appreciate it—even if I'm not going to be making \$10,000 a month any time soon.

And what's more, the hours are short. Most writers, especially traditional writers, only write 2,000 words a day. Of course, working writers can turn the juice on and kick out 10,000 words a day or more. They CAN, but they rarely do so, because quite frankly it's very, very taxing. I'll get to that later, to a degree.

However, what that means on the other hand is that you have 3 or 4 hours of work a day, or less. That leaves quite a few hours for going to the gym, spending time with the kids, browsing the web, catching up on your TV shows—you name it. Imagine if your commute time was zero, and you only worked a half-shift every single day. You can still take time off, of course.

Then of course you have the side benefits. You'll have experience writing. Everyone likes to say, 'I have an idea for a novel; maybe someday.' Frankly, they aren't going to write it. They don't know how to buckle down and get past the fact that their writing all seems to be coming out wrong. And when that happens, what are they going to do with their novel? Send it off to the Big Six and get turned down, or maybe offered a contract for half what it's worth?

You will know how to get a story out there without any publisher taking a chunk of your money. You'll know how to push through the jittery starts and the bad days. And hell: maybe at the end of the day, when you're done with your erotica and you decide you've got an idea for a novel and you write it, maybe HarperCollins sends you an email telling you that they're real interested in the novel you published by yourself, would you like a deal to get it onto a shelf in Barnes and Noble. And along with that comes a nice fat check. Then you can say 'yes,' if you like. That's the dream, anyways.

What You Should Know (or, Why You Shouldn't Write Erotica)

The first thing that most people do when they start a new project is brag about it. For most people, that's just not going to happen for you. In fact, you'll probably spend a lot of your time avoiding talking in specifics about what you do.

The conversation seems to go like this:

Them: What do you do?

You: Oh, I'm a writer.

Them: That's cool! **What do you write about?**

That's when you suddenly realize that you write about the nastiest sex you can find, and there's no way in hell you want people you know reading it. Get your own preferred answer ready and get used to giving it. Mine is "it's nothing worth reading, but people pay for it, so it works."

Second, get used to the idea that you're never working hard enough. There's no real direct correlation between how much you write in a given day and how much money you make, but there IS a correlation between how many stories you have and your sales numbers. That means that in an ideal world, you'd be working 10 hours a day, writing 3000 words an hour or more. But you probably can't do that, nobody can.

Your limit isn't going to be the hours in the day any more, like it is in so many other jobs. It's going to primarily be your ability to focus on the task at hand. In an office job, there's a lot of making calls and talking to people, gathering information, etc. Once you get a knack for it, you can do it almost without thinking. Writers don't have any step on the line that isn't essentially thinking.

You have to constantly be thinking about your word choice. You have to constantly

be deciding where you want your story to go if it's not outlined in advance. As much as everyone likes to talk a big game on outlines, when you're in the trenches things don't always go your way, so that'll be more often than you like.

And what's more, what makes it ugly, is that when you're tired and you can't focus and you know in your head that your writing is suffering and you need to stop for the day—you'll have a little voice in your head (or a little external voice, sometimes!) pointing out that you're kicking off early. You could be working harder.

And then, at the end of the day, you're on the phone trying to explain to your sister in the least-specific words possible that you write nondescript fiction under a pen-name you don't care to mention, as if you're dealing drugs or something.

Lastly, be prepared for summer. In the publishing industry as a whole, including traditional big publishers like Random House as well as indie writers like myself and eventually you, regardless of genre, summer is a bad sales period. Your first summer, especially, is going to be demoralizing. The months I mentioned where I've made \$2000? I made \$1,000 last month. It's a damn lucky thing that I'm not reliant on publishing money to pay the rent at this point, I'll say that.

But it's not just the incredible drops in money that you should expect. The thing that summer really does is demoralize you. You think, maybe it was a fluke, the readers don't like me anymore. A lot of writers quit because of bad sales, or panic. They need to be told: People don't buy books, or eBooks, in the summer. It's not you. It's the business.

But again—don't misunderstand me here. The money's fairly good, and the limits of your ability to be “on” and ready to work means you're probably going to be working less than 3 hours a day. All that comes at a cost, though, and I don't want to sound like it doesn't.

Principals in This Book

The first consideration, before you can discuss what to “do” is trying to figure out what your idea of success is, and trying to picture that in as specific a way as possible. The ultimate goal is to make enough money to keep your landlord happy, put food on the table, and have some left over at the end of the month to do something with. If you work hard, and you see sales, you'll see people who like the work you did.

So now we need to figure out how to get sales. “Isn't that what this book is about?” I hear you saying. It is, of course. But if I just claim something as true, you don't know how I figured it out, and you don't know how to figure it out for yourself if, for example, you think I'm wrong. Instead, I'm going to tell you where I get my ideas on the following subjects from:

Best sellers.

For the most part, I don't go looking for them, of course. I have been reading since I was in 3rd grade—I have a long history of seeing bestsellers on shelves, and for the most part I have to go looking for demonstrations of a point I know to be true from experience, rather than looking to figure out what my point is.

You're an independent publisher if you're selling eBooks through Amazon,

through Kobo, and so on. You're not submitting to a publishing house, and that means you don't have all their experts. But we do know that they hire people and pay them to get results. In fact, their idea of results are the same results we want, namely sales.

When you see something that's consistent, a trend in publishing, you can assume it's probably not because the publisher really wants you (the reader) to benefit. It's because they want you to give them your money, and it is in their best interest to do whatever it takes to win you over. Even if, as it happens, the way to win you over is by helping you. Or hurting you.

So, where possible, I'll try to back up my discussion points with examples from multi-time bestselling authors' printed work. Because that's where publishers are spending their money.

This Book Is Wrong

Of course, I could be wrong. There are a lot of things I can easily see, off the top of my head, that are obviously flawed (or potentially flawed) about my premise here.

First, I'm fairly negative about the idea that writers are first-and-foremost "artists" with "artistic vision." Are writers artists? Oh, certainly. But they do it with a specific monetary impetus. At least in my case, I don't feel that it empowers me to make decisions that I like, but are objectively bad. At least, not when there's money at stake.

But you know what? That's just me. If you think it's not about the money or, even better, you think that an artistic perspective will bring you more money? I absolutely encourage you to tell me I'm wrong about my motivation. Please, do read the rest of the book, you might learn a few things even though you disagree with my motives, but you don't have to think I'm right about everything.

You might think that being emotionally distanced from my work hurts my ability to tell a compelling story. I'd certainly agree there are cases where I think that's happened. But let me discuss for a moment my fiancé.

He's a reader. Takes the bus to class, and reads on the bus. Last semester, he started reading this novel, *Under the Eagle* by Simon Scarrow. I've read the reviews, and it's frankly very clear that Mr. Scarrow is "doing it for the money." The beau knows this; when I mentioned it, he said something along the lines of 'yeah, of course he's only doing it for the money.' Does that mean that when he finished *Under the Eagle*, he didn't pick up *The Eagle's Conquest*? That is not what it meant.

I don't think that the fact that there's a clear motive beyond artistic merit hurts a story's ability to be strong. In fact, it's absolutely imperative for profit to occur, that you convince a sufficiently large group of people that your story is worth paying for, and you convince them on the back of strong artistic work.

How to Be Right

There are a number of people who don't follow the crowd and are successful. And, for that matter, there are a number of people who make good decisions and aren't as successful as they would like. There's a good deal of luck involved, but nobody is successful as a result of their bad decisions (though some are a success because of good decisions, in spite of other blatant bad decisions).

I've tried to use examples that are not only successful, but representative of very standard middle-of-the-road success. People who made solid decisions that I would recommend anyone make. On the other hand, there are a lot of people who are successful and made different decisions.

I'd encourage anyone who disagrees, to try to do whatever they think is right. Use examples you think are better examples as a source of inspiration and guidance. But first and foremost, make sure you're looking at someone who was actually successful, who had results you want to have. If they can do it, you can do it. But if they couldn't do it, then it may not be a matter of effort or talent. It may be that they made bad decisions that hurt their career and will hurt your career if you let them.

So if and when you decide you want to get your own selection of exemplary work, look at whatever you think is best, but at the same time, make sure you look at people who went where you want to go.

CHAPTER TWO

The Process of Writing

Word Processing Programs

There are three classes of word processors that I see commonly being used by authors with whom I've had conversations about that sort of thing.

The most common by far are people who use "WYSIWYG" word processors, almost always as part of a suite of programs. In this market there are a few major competitors, although almost all of them are widely comparable.

Microsoft Word, part of their *Office* suite of programs, this is the best-known Word Processor that you have to pay for. The price can lead to a bit of sticker shock, though; Office is now only available as a periodical service for \$10 a month or \$100 a year. This is perhaps the most useful of the programs, though, because their native format is .doc (.docx now, but with legacy support for .doc) which is the only format accepted at all major eBook retailers.

More accessible are free suites, OpenOffice.Org being the best-known of them. It's developed and maintained by Sun Microsystems, the same guys who developed Java.

After a disagreement about software copyright, some of the developers left and created LibreOffice, using some code from OpenOffice. There's a lot of similarity, and the primary distinction is in the politics of the situation. If you don't care about that, OpenOffice is more popular.

There are many people who choose to use "distraction-free" processors, which are designed to allow the user to work in an environment devoid of colorful icons, and often are used in full-screen to remove the temptation of Twitter or Facebook, which are the bane of so many writers.

There are literally dozens of examples of this type of software, and none of them are objectively better or worse than others.

The most popular and, according to many, the best is WriteRoom. In general, WriteRoom is the first 'distraction-free' editor most people learn about, though it is only available for Macintosh computers.

The relative simplicity of the software, though, has led to many different developers making comparable software. I have personally used Write or Die Desktop Edition, FocusWriter, Q10, ZenEdit, ZenWriter, and DarkRoom in no particular order. My personal preference is for Write or Die, though my fiancé enjoyed ZenWriter during his time with it last semester. The differences are few, and the ones that can't be

adjusted to meet a preference are fewer. The choice for Windows users generally comes down purely to preference.

Thirdly are, what I would call, “organizers.” The most popular and the best is Scrivener. In fact, I am currently writing this in Scrivener. I try to be fairly stingy when so many wonderful free options exist, but Scrivener and Write or Die are two pieces of software I find that I cannot do without. Scrivener is an indispensable tool for larger projects, including research papers and longer works.

For shorter works, less than 10,000 words, I often find that there aren’t enough ideas at work in the story to require external structure.

There are, of course, alternatives. There’s Liquid Story Binder, which I absolutely cannot recommend: it’s very unattractive for modern software, and doesn’t work as intuitively as Scrivener.

There’s also the software by the creator of the Snowflake method, Snowflake Pro, which I have not used. The method is effective, but the software may or may not be; I have no way of knowing.

While other opinions are available, I prefer to write in Write or Die, since the time limit function (one of the few things that differentiates it from the others—I almost didn’t mention it in that list) works so effectively to focus my thoughts. For longer works I will often work in Scrivener, even though it lacks that functionality, because the organizational tools are too for me to pass up.

Issues of Style

There are things that are important to consider outside of the fetishistic content in your story. However, many of them are simply guidelines, and no reference is needed in the long run. So while there will almost certainly be more diversity here, it’s likely to be a relatively short section.

First, on length. Longer stories tend to sell better for the same price. Of course, on the other hand, you take longer to recoup the invested time that you have spent, and considering that you have to spend real dollars on stock and possibly advertising, there are possible risks to that approach (which is why you don’t see people releasing full-length novels in the area of 50,000 words for \$2.99).

With that in mind, the bare minimum in this market is 3,000 words. Many authors I know strive to write around 15,000. I tend to write between 3 and 5,000. I don’t know that it hurts my sales, per se. My single longer story is not a better seller than my short stories.

Sex scene length is important. There is, in theory, such a thing as a sex scene that’s too long: Like video pornography, it’s defined by the point when people pack up and go home because they’re finished. I have only read one story where the scene was so long that I was actually annoyed by it, and it went on for almost 10,000 words. I am not exaggerating: From the time the girls walked into the room and started taking their clothes off in the same paragraph, until they were falling asleep and talking about how good it was, TEN THOUSAND words. Every time I thought the sex was over, it moved on to another phase. Lesbians, what can I say?

That said, you're not likely to write a ten thousand word block of pure lesbian sex. And I read it all. I was finished halfway through. I read it because it was in the middle of a 21,000 word pseudo-romance, which ended with TWO EPILOGUES (another 1200 and 1500 words, respectively) that tied it up into a legitimate romance with a nice happy ending. It was a good story, sits at the top of Literotica's Lesbian-category Hall of Fame as of this writing, and it was much too long for my liking when I was trying to get off but I really appreciated it afterward.

Until you can write 10,000 words of sex scene, assume that longer is always going to be better. Then write it long because balancing that behemoth scene out with story is going to put you in the 20,000 word range and you're going to see absurdly good sales from a long story like that (which you should price according to the amount of work you put in—I'd recommend \$4.99 or more).

Tone is a tricky subject, because a lot of it is tied up in the voice of the narrator. With that said, there are a lot of things that are going to distance the reader from the story, going to essentially hurt the mood you're trying to create.

First, I mentioned it in the section on BDSM, but don't portray sadists. Even if you understand sadism, and you could portray it, the entire thing is a losing battle, since it's so cerebral. There's nothing sexual to an outsider about sadism—it's not sweet or romantic. It's distant and controlled and people can't *really* get off on that.

On the other end of the spectrum, there is a range where tone is too relaxed and too playful. I've seen many stories by people who were not professional writers, where they say things like "I was harder than Chinese algebra" and it's a cute, if overused, metaphor... but it's a joke.

Erotica, like sex, is all about tension, sexual tension, that builds until the sex scene; then the character's desire to orgasm provides the tension, and gives the reader something to substitute their own desires in for. Making jokes is a way to release tension, and that's not something you want to be doing, certainly not lightly. Try to maintain a relatively professional, level-headed tone. Obviously this isn't a medical description of sexuality (unless it is) but you don't want someone wisecracking all over your story—use discretion.

At the same time, especially in the modern audience, the old flowery language is frowned on. One film, making a joke at the expense erotica writers, used the phrase 'Undulating with desire, Adrian removes her crimson cape, at the site of Reginald's stiff and tumescent...' The script leaves it hanging at that point, but it's clear what is to come. There is certainly, even today, a certain stigma attached to the genre because of the purple prose of days past.

Now you can afford to use words like 'hard cock' fairly easily, and if you're saying *penis* so often that you run out of relatively standard terms and descriptions, you may be overdoing it. Remember that as in all writing, it's always smarter to describe in fewer words if it gets the same meaning across—instead of an intellectual understanding of what you mean they tend to get more of a general idea, which tends to be easier to internalize, and therefore, to feel in their gendered bits.

As a final note, it's a bit of a tricky subject, but a trap many beginning writers fall into is that of trying to control what the reader sees in their head too much.

You are not a continuity manager on a film set, trying to make sure every detail is

correct. You don't need to explain how actions are performed in explicit detail. He can 'take her breast in his hand' without having to 'take her left breast in his right hand.' It may seem silly to some, but this is a much more common problem than it should be. It very quickly takes a genre that's easy to slip into the rut of inserting tab A into slot B, and drives it to the mechanical description as if that was the main selling point.

Titling

There's a certain art to titling stories, and there is no level where there's sufficient talent. I try to encourage a level of working proficiency, where you are trying to make money even though you will probably know full well that you're not giving a product that is ideal. The work will make you better over time; there's no reason to waste time on "practice" unless you're doing it for your own enjoyment.

Titling is where the rubber meets the road on this. In writing, often I go without heavy editing (it's led to problems in the past, actually) but in titling the first idea I have is almost never very good. This is one of the few places where my fiancé and I tend to collaborate because titling is not easy.

You want to capture the tone of the story first and foremost. But you also want to make it very clear from the title that this is erotic fiction. There are some times when this is less true, especially when blurring the lines between genres, but for the most part your early work should be porn in the truest sense, and your titles should reflect that.

"Lesbian Psycho Dramas 3" is probably a bit too direct, but at the same time "the Land of the Free" might be a bit too indirect. Words like 'Pleasure' and 'Love' are easy targets that don't go too far, and then for more specific situations it can also become clearer. For example, my story "Bratty Babysitters get Spankings." It's very clear what's happening, without being excessively vulgar. That balance is important to maintain even when it seems like it's a little silly.

One major exception, listed above, is in cases where the focus isn't on the erotica. In these places, you can afford a more abstract title, like my title "Monarch Mind," where the focus is on MK-ULTRA brainwashing rather than penises. The other is where there is no focus on any sort of story at all, and it's all pornographic. For example, my story "Kinky Public Gang Bang." There's a story, and I could tell it to you, but it'd be short without the sex. It essentially boils down to this: Instead of "I met a guy once, and we had sex," the story was "I'm going to tell you about sex I had once."

Once again, the title directly reflected the experience that the reader should have expected. That's why I was fairly explicit: the story was equally vulgar.

Bundles

Of special note are bundles. Bundles are absolutely, one-hundred percent, where your money is made. There may be other stories that have better sales numbers, but bundles sell on much higher margin, and have nearly infinitely less work involved.

Realistically, your time is not free. You can pretend it is, and many authors and self-employed people do, but it's unfair to you and it's unfair to your customers. If you

price at a fairly reasonable 10 cents a word, then your writing, for a three-thousand word piece, is worth \$30.

Add minimum wage for the hour you'll spend on designing a cover, formatting the story, and uploading to all your storefronts, and you're talking about \$38 for a story. Now add \$2 for cover stock, and we round off to an easy \$40 that you spent on producing one short story, which can be done in a day or two.

The market price for such a story is \$2.99. This is the minimum price to get the seventy percent royalty, and the standard for erotic short fiction. I did not choose this price; you did not choose this price. This is the most we can afford to charge, and this is a luxury market, so lower prices don't mean better sales; they often mean a customer will think the goods are inferior.

At seventy percent royalty, on every single sale you make \$2.10. To make up the cost of writing, producing, and publishing your story, you need to sell 19 units to make back the money you've already "spent."

There is, however, a bigger cost of writing, which should be paid careful attention when you're still in the early stages. You need to consider your library and what is selling well, because every time you write any story, that can be your best-seller if you target it right.

Most of the time it won't be, of course. But your time isn't just being spent in terms of writing, it's also being spent in terms of not-writing. Don't think that you can't work on personal projects, but don't do something half-assed when the money's what you really want.

You could have spent another twenty minutes on conceptualizing and made more money over the next six months. Decide if you've spent enough time considering if the sales will be strong with your current idea before you go off and running with it.

However, bundles are work that has already been done. There is no opportunity cost associated with the content of a bundle, like there is with individual short stories. Your choice was only to bundle or not, rather than to write a different bundle that might sell better. Therefore, what you have is only that \$8 from the hour of designing a cover, producing a book, and publishing it, and the \$2 of stock—if you don't know what I mean, I promise we will get to it. In short, I'm referring to images to use on your cover.

In addition, because there is realistically more content in a bundle, it's priced accordingly. The standard price price is \$7 for a bundle of three or four stories; therefor at seventy percent the royalty is \$4.90. With the sale of only two bundles, you've already made up the cost of production, less twenty cents.

There is absolutely no reason not to bundle. The only question is: "how should bundles be made in order to sell the best they can?"

The first option you have is to write a series. Three serial short stories are ideal for bundling, and encourage readers to buy on the basis that they'll get a complete story, plenty of sexual enjoyment out of your bundle. Over time, even if the story may be lacking, readers might be able to develop interest in these characters.

When a series is not ideal, or when you've got a story that's self-contained, then

the next best thing to a series is a bundle built around a single subject that ties stories together. Kinks are perhaps the best way to tie a set of stories together, though certain elements of milieu (historical, especially) can be used to create a tie between all the stories.

However, once you've got all your series stories bundled, and you've got all of your related materials bundled into groups of three, there's still a very real likelihood that there will be multiple stories left over.

For these, I like to recommend the "grab bag" bundle, which promises a sample of different stories. Readers can buy it and instead of getting a concentrated shot of three incest stories, they get a taste test of incest, DubCon, and billionaires to see what ultimately tickles their fancy.

Ultimately, the general idea is to keep in mind that you need to sell these stories to a consumer, so when you have any bundle you want to understand the idea that you're going to sell to the customer.

The Editing Process

There's a thousand quotes out there about editing. A lot of them are really neat little things. Let me boil them all down, and take the fun out of them for you:

Mostly, delete words.

There are a few very specific examples where you're going to be adding words to a 2nd draft, but not most of them. Most of the time, you're wasting your words and if you had an editor he'd be removing words, sentences, paragraphs that add nothing to your story.

My process is fairly simple, and I think most people could adopt it. It's not the only one out there, but it's one of the least complicated. A day or two after you finish your draft, sit down with it. Every time you have a thought other than 'this is good,' it needs to be deleted or changed. If the entire paragraph structure falls apart without that sentence or phrase, change it to make more sense. If removing it changes little or nothing, then remove it.

Often when I finish a first draft and print it out for editing, there is not a single paragraph that doesn't have major revisions.

The importance of an edit and a 2nd draft cannot be overstated, though for many of my titles I find that my priorities don't necessitate an edit. The importance of a 3rd draft is debatable, and an author whose money is made in bulk may want to skip it. After all, editing is something that can be done essentially forever; nothing is perfect, and you'll always find changes you want to make, so editing can be very time consuming, and this becomes more true the longer the work. A 4th draft should only be necessary if there were major structural changes in the 2nd or 3rd drafts.

CHAPTER THREE

The Process of Selling

Blurb

As a reader, there are only five things you know about a story when you see it on Amazon: The title, the author's name, the description, the cover, and *maybe* you have heard someone else discuss it, so you would have their opinion. The saying goes "don't judge a book by its cover," but in all fairness there is precious little else that a person can judge by.

Without knowing anything in advance about the author, and without knowing anything in advance about the book, the reader has to figure out from the copy, the title, and the cover whether or not this book is going to interest them, and how it compares to other books that compete not only for their dollars but for their limited time. Right now, there are 97,000 erotic books and stories on the Kindle store. If you read 5 of them a day you would still take more than 50 years to read them all, and in that time their number would have more than doubled. Your titling ability and your cover design are going to open the door, but your blurbs are going to have to seal the deal.

As an author just starting out, you cannot rely on a reputation, you cannot rely on reviews, you cannot rely on recommendations and endorsements. All of those things are very important, and in time you will develop them. However, with all of the endorsements in the world, people will not buy a title that doesn't have anything going for it.

Titling and covers will be discussed elsewhere. The blurb, however, is one of the things that I routinely see done improperly, and one of the easiest places to improve for almost any writer. It's an important tool that the publishing industry has proliferated to do exactly what you want it to do: Tell the reader why they want to read your story.

There's a lot of space in stories of all genres that is used on important, but non-essential material. Certainly, Jon Snow's strained relationship with Catelyn Stark is important to his character, it informs his entire worldview. But if we were to tell the story of Jon Snow so that it was as short as possible but complete, we wouldn't even mention his step-mother.

The blurb is a way to get to the essential core of what your story is about, and tell your readers what that is.

Most erotica writers have a blurb in two parts: The copy, and then the

advertisement.

Take this sample from my book, *A Rape Fantasy*:

A crash defiles a silent night. A man defiles a beautiful wife.

A serene night turns into a series of terrible events when an intruder breaks into a married woman's home. With her husband away, she's left alone and unprotected, vulnerable to the man's strength and violent lust. When she comes face to face with one of her deepest, darkest fantasies, she has no choice but to give in.

Will her body betray her? Will she come to enjoy this kinky fantasy she's kept to herself all these years?

This 3000 word erotic short includes graphic scenes of forced sex and light BDSM.

The first 3 sections—I hesitate to call them paragraphs—are all setting the stage for the story. That's what the advertising industry calls 'copy writing.'

On the other hand, the last section-paragraph is an element that is somewhat unique to eBook pornography: We're just telling the reader what they're getting, without any story-based pitch at all. Between the two, we're assuming that people want to read something arousing to them, and therefore they want to know what sort of sex will be occurring, but that it's subject to the story.

There's a very fine balance to maintain when writing your description. There are different levels of description required by different retailers: Smashwords requires less than 400 characters for their "short" description, which is the primary one shown to your readers. That means that you need to get your description very short: after you include your tagging at the end, you will only have one or two sentences to describe your story. It's not quite a tweet, but it's close.

However, frankly, the majority of your money will not be coming from Smashwords. I make, consistently, over \$1000 a month in the slowest months. A year ago at this time I was making \$200 a month. Yet, from Smashwords I make barely \$500 per quarter. Realize of course that I receive royalty checks from multiple sources, and even my biggest distributors really don't account for all of my monthly income.

So for the most part, I prefer to try to keep in mind that most of my money's not made on my 400 character short description, it's made from my Amazon descriptions or my Barnes and Noble descriptions.

If you go into a store and pick up a fat hardcover, you might find something like the dust jacket description of *Twilight*, which clocks in at 170 words. It's not the longest blurb I've read, not even the longest for a best-seller.

Pay special attention here to three things: Introduction to the heroine, setting the mood, and setting the scene for the story.

I'd never given much thought to how I would die -- though I'd had reason enough in the last few months -- but even if I had I would not have imagined it like this ... surely it was a good way to die, in the place of someone else, someone I loved. Noble, even. That ought to count for something.

When Isabella Swan moves to the gloomy town of Forks, and meets mysterious, alluring Edward Cullen, her life takes a thrilling and terrifying turn. With his porcelain skin, golden eyes, mesmerizing voice, and supernatural gifts, Edward is both irresistible and impenetrable. Up until now, he's managed to keep his true identity hidden, but Bella is determined to uncover his dark secret.

What Bella doesn't realize is the closer she gets to him, the more she is putting herself and those around her at risk. And, it might be too late to turn back ...

Deeply seductive and extraordinarily suspenseful, *Twilight* will have readers riveted right until the very last page is turned.

There's a lot of stuff here. It can be fairly split after the first paragraph—in fact, there is a divider on the jacket. Then the last paragraph is just trying to sell the thing without adding almost anything. This is essentially the same thing that you're going to be doing with your tagging sentence(s).

Compare that blurb, now, to something much terser from the back of a paperback copy of Louis L'Amour's *Heller With A Gun*. The Western genre is a niche market, so it's not a best-seller, but on the other hand it's a consistent market, perhaps even more so than Fantasy/Sci-Fi. It's actually a very good analogue for erotica, outside of outliers like *Fifty Shades*. That blurb is only 83 words, but even still manages to evoke an understanding in the reader of what they're going to receive in their story.

It was a hard land that bred hard men to hard ways. King Mabry survived by his guns. He wasn't proud of his deadly skill, nor was he ashamed. He just lived with it every hard day on the frontier. When a traveling theatrical troupe hired a ruthless killer to guide them through the Wyoming wilderness, King Mabry -- his guns at the ready -- set out to follow their trail, and not blizzards, not Indians, nor the wily guide would stop them.

Now look there, and we again have an early tone establisher. The entire thing drips pulpy Western. We meet the hero, we find out what his goals are. I think, personally, that the blurb here reflects somewhat the fact that it's a better-conceived story than *Twilight*. I'm not the first to point out: it's essentially a story about a girl who has no real direction or goals in her life.

This is a story about a man whose goals are self-determined. Even though in the same way it seems to imply a (probably romantic) response to meeting someone new, it suggests agency where *Twilight*'s blurb implies that Bella is basically driftwood on the torrential river of Edward.

Now compare those two, written by professional copy editors, to a Western description—to keep things comparable—from FictionPress, where the descriptions are limited to 384 characters. Mind that this is the most favorited story in the category, *Untamable* by R.M. Whitaker:

Both fear and curiosity fill Mercedes McBride when her father requests that she return to live with him in Texas at the end of the Civil War. What she never dreamed was that she might find love on the wildest adventure of her entire life in the old West..

We've got a lot less room, and this is not professional copy. It's much shorter than either, thanks to the limitations of FictionPress, only 50 words (though they have 134 spare characters). There's not much impression of tone here, so that's a strike against it. However, we've met the heroine, we know her situation, and we know something about the story. There's room for improvement, certainly. There's no clue what sort of adventure is occurring—is this *Once Upon a Time in the West* adventure, or *Two Mules for Sister Sara* adventure? Is she going to be an action-girl? We don't know. We could be told, but there's also a strong implication that the entire adventure is a surprise, so it would make some sense to be as much a surprise to the reader as to the heroine.

Now to finish up, let's look at page 11 on the “most favorited” list, for *Origins* by Drucilla:

The origins of the horrors in the desert

What? There's nothing here at all. We are told in 8 words only the most limited possible information about the story.

Based on this information we know: There is a horror in the desert. We are going to be told its origins. What is a “horror?” Perhaps they mean a Lovecraftian horror. So is this a crossover, or should I expect something more akin to *The Colour Out Of Space*? Is it more *Deadlands* or *Cowboys vs Aliens*? It's unknown, and unknowable.

Uploading

AMAZON

Amazon (<https://kdp.amazon.com>) is the biggest storefront for digital books in most English-speaking countries. If you have to skip a website when you're uploading your stories, make sure it's not Amazon. You will probably get most of your money every month from Amazon.

However, Amazon is perhaps the most finicky of the websites, so there's a few things to keep in mind. At the top of the uploading page, there's an option to enroll your title in KDP Select. There are a few considerations here, and we'll get into those later: they're fairly complex, and right now we're just dealing with the basics. If you're not sure you know what you're doing, err on the side of caution and don't enroll your book in Select.

Secondly, there's a box there for “Search keywords.” These are **very** important.

These 7 keywords are how your book will be found through outside search engines like Google or Bing. You want to make sure you choose keywords that will maximize your sales. A helpful tool to get you on the right track is the Google Keyword Tool (<http://www.googlekeywordtool.com/>).

Additionally, these keywords are used to get into certain categories. For example, there is a category, Romance > Lesbian Romance (that is to say, ‘Lesbian Romance’ in ‘Romance’) that you cannot select on your own. Instead, you can add “Lesbian” as a keyword, and then choose any other Romance sub-category, and your work will automatically show up in Lesbian Romance as well.

A word of caution about categories; if you choose the Erotica category, then any other category you choose will be ignored. So there is an advantage in not putting your story in the Erotica category.

Amazon pays monthly, 60 days after the end of the month. So, what you make in June will usually be paid by the end of September, but possibly as late as the beginning of October. Keep in mind that you have to make \$10, £10, and €10 minimum. If you don’t meet the minimum for a given currency, it won’t pay out until the month when you do. So, if you make \$9 in June, and \$2 in July, you’d have \$11 paid out at the end of October.

BARNES AND NOBLE

Barnes and Noble (<https://www.nookpress.com>) is the other big name in self-publishing. I make almost as much here as I do on Amazon, but it took me longer to start making good money here at all. Sales are a bit less consistent, but you have a lot more room to write more taboo content, which generally will produce more sales if you’re willing to not distribute to Amazon or elsewhere. They accept literal incest, instead of pseudo-incest, as well as bestiality.

On this website, you get 5 categories to put your book in. Use them all! Be aware, however, that they do require a smaller image than Amazon; I recommend 1300x1900. Just resize the larger cover image you would upload to any other distributor and you should be fine.

Barnes and Noble pays monthly, 60 days after each month, similar to Amazon. However, unlike Amazon, they don’t have a minimum payment amount.

KOBO

Kobo (<https://writinglife.kobobooks.com>) is a smaller website, but they’re growing fast. I make probably a third of what I make on Amazon through Kobo sales, so don’t rely on them for your bread and butter, but they absolutely do bring in money.

Kobo is popular outside the US, so expect most of your sales to be from Canada, the UK, and Australia. If you’re uploading a book for \$2.99—which I absolutely recommend you do—then be sure to manually set the British Pound price to £1.99, or else you won’t be making your full 70% commission.

Keep in mind, however, Kobo requires a smaller cover image like Barnes and Noble, rather than the larger Amazon cover.

Kobo pays 45 days following the month where you earn \$100. If you make \$150 in January, then you’re going to be paid \$150 on March 15. However, if in February you only make \$60, and then in March you only make \$60 again, then you won’t be