

**SPECIAL
POINTS OF
INTEREST:**

- **Pete wonders if newspaper writers' competency levels are falling...**
- **Mary wants your link love**

**INSIDE
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Pie From the Sky

Happy New Year,

As of January 1st, 2008, LiteraryMary officially turns one year old. My goal for the first year was to build a forum which people felt actually belonged to them, and not just to staff. I also wanted to score about 200 members who were not spam bots.

Looking back, I think we've done pretty okay. Actually, I'm really happy with the way things have gone. Some things have worked, others haven't. Forums have been condensed, others have been added. Staff has shifted just a bit. Members have come and gone, some have stayed for good. We've all gotten to know each other a little better.

Personally, I'm really proud of the quality of writes we've got here. We seem to have succeeded in attracting people who are good not only at giving critique, but at receiving it too. We've built an excep-

tionally talented and knowledgeable staff, also.

You'll notice there is a survey being sent out to all the members. We're trying to get a sense of what members want and don't want, what is working and what isn't. For those of you who no longer post, maybe you can tell us what we could do to make it a place you would like to be. The unique thing about LiteraryMary is that we listen, and we care what you think. You say jump and we'll say how high and all that... Well Hodge won't, but did you really expect him to?

Regarding New Year's Resolutions, I don't make them. I try not to set myself up for failure in my life. I don't really even like New Year's, to tell you the truth. For some reason the holiday has always made me sort of depressed and kicked my anxiety into gear. I don't know why. I mean, I'm having a pretty decent life right now. As I sit and

write this, it's not yet Christmas though so who knows? Maybe I'll actually enjoy New Year's this year. I always think about how my brother used to say that celebrating New Year's was only something 'amateur partiers' do, though.

Also as I sit writing this, the Portland Trail Blazers are on a nine game winning streak. I have a bet going with Rooze that if we make it to the play offs I get to pick a poem of hers that she has to read at open mic wearing a Blazers jersey.

But if I lose, she gets to pick any poem of mine and man, I swear I am not going to read 'Sir' at any open mic. Anyway, that's all I got this month. Now gimme some lovin'.

GO BLAZERS!!!

ms. vodka





Does anybody out there still read the newspaper?

I have the local rag delivered and read it every day. In my town, it used to be called "The Standard Times" until they changed the name to the "Cape Cod Times" around 1975.

My Dad always called it the "Scrambled Times" because they had a tendency print the second half of an article somewhere in the paper and never tell the reader.

As little as ten years ago, newspapers were still the number two source of news to the populace in the U.S.. And now these paper giants, who in the past employed some of the greatest writers of our time, are quickly becoming the dinosaurs of pulp.

Ben Franklin, Charles Dickens, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Samuel Clemens, Gail Godwin and Ernest Hemingway started or supported themselves as journalists among many others.

Journalists are now a dying breed in my opinion. They have surrendered to the sensationalists and great writing has become prefab wire reporting. The headlining of "K-fed", "J-Lo" and bad science where actual facts take a back seat to the news.

Let's read my local paper together,

"Journalist Reportedly Kidnapped in Somalia"

The Death of the Newspaper? By Pete

Huh? Who reported this? The Journalist himself? So he might be kidnapped or missing or late for breakfast.

"Killington Stirs Ill Will"

Stirs? I'm pretty sure ill will is not cocoa, although it can be a martini.

"Democrats Bow to Bush's Demands"

That evil Bush! Making demands to those always bowing democrats. Those sheep can't resist his spell. It's not even really fair to subject them to that type of treatment from someone so powerful.

"U.S. Yields; Climate Accord Reached"

We finally surrendered and can cure global warming! Thank God, not a minute to late.

Which was followed by the next day,

"U.S. Weakens Global Warming Pact"

What? So only by being ignorant and arguing can we cure global warming.

BTW, believe me; every hack in the world went to this summit. The conference was in Bali to discuss global warming. Why didn't you assholes go to Montreal? Cause it ain't on an island in the South Pacific.

"Driver Sought in Two Car Crash"

There was no driver? No wonder they crashed. Shouldn't this actually be in the classifieds?

"It Could Have Been Worse"

(Re: the snow storm that fizzled out) Whoa. That was catchy; definitely front page material here. How about we really screwed up that forecast?

"States Refuse 'Abstinence' Funding"

Hmmm... Just say no for funding to say no.

"In Deadly Season, Safety Reigns"

Not very well by the sound of things. I think I'm staying inside next Deadly Season.

"UN Moves to End Death Penalty"

And if you violate it, they sentence you to death.

"Tribe's Land Deal Secret"

You really don't have this "Secret" thing down do you? You could say "Tribe's Secret Land Deal" or "Tribe Has Secret Land Deal", but for God's sake read what you write.

"McCain Surprises Opponents With New Signs of Life"

Holy Shit! McCain! He talked! I thought he was dead.



The Death of the Newspaper? By Pete

“Man held in Cape Boy’s Abduction”

Do you people read this stuff?

So are the great literary writers of the future lurking in the basement of your local newspaper? By the sound of things, perhaps Dan Brown has a corner desk there.

But before these Cellulose monoliths fade away in history, you might try writing for them yourself. They still offer an opportunity for Joe Public to write for them with an open invitation.

It’s called the editorial page.

It happens to be my favorite part of the paper. It’s the place where common man writes in to complain about trash pickup or the killing of a Pit bull that bit five schoolchildren. It’s the place where a man can appeal to the other locals to see the light of reason.

People’s opinions can be such a fiery thing.

Although your own opinion may be grounded in compassion and reason, be prepared for others whose opinions are grounded by fear, religion and some by damn blame

ignorance.

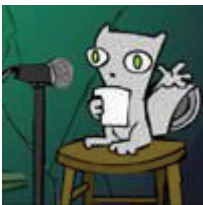
But it’s a great venue for publishing. A nicely written, cohesive, compelling point-of-view is exactly what the Pulp masters are looking for.

Believe me; you won’t be competing with Ernest Hemingway in this venue for publication and may be read by more people than most electronic publications.

So, pick something you feel strongly and start writing. The worst case scenario is you just irritate a bunch of people.

Cool...

Write for the LM Newsletter?



Do you have something to say about...anything?

Do you have articles, essays, humor pieces, or even your own comic that you would like to see put in the monthly LM newsletter?

Would you like to feel cool and special like Pete does every month?

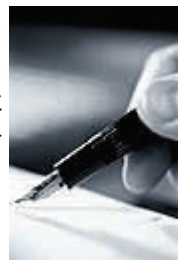
Literary Mary likes your gifts for her newsletter.

Even if you don't have any work on hand or don't know what to write about, but you would like to contribute, that's fine. The LM newsletter editor, Silver, is here to help you realize your newsletter writer dreams.

(Dreams you didn't even know you had...)

If you have an article or idea, feel free to PM Silver to discuss it. She can talk to you about ideas, what she’s looking for, your dealer, or your pet dog.

Her private messaging is open to everyone seven days a week and twenty-four hours a day so why not send her a message.





Hot Cakes

Yes, my fine friends—I have been Simpsonized. You can find out how to do this to one of your pictures in the Sausage Section of the forum.

Ah, 2008. I have never been one for the whole New Years thing. Perhaps it's because I was never allowed to go out of the house on New Year's Eve? Plus there are all those resolutions I've seen people make and then forget about once the alcohol wears off or the first double deal Tuesday at the local Burger Hut presents itself.

There is one New Year activity I am rather fond of now, though. Reminiscing.

Perhaps it's because I'm at a time in my life that a lot is changing or perhaps I simply like dwelling in how good I have it now, but reminiscing—even just to myself—about the good things of the past year tends to leave me feeling good.

2007 saw a lot of changes in my life. My formal engagement, my marriage to fellow former WF member Journyman, acquiring new blogs to write for, applying for my spousal visa, being granted the right to work, study, and stay in Australia for a long, long time... Yes, it has been quite a year.

Believe it or not, this year has also

seen me turn into a book reviewer. There is a possibility one of my reviews might end up on the back of book six of a new fantasy series called The Death Wizard Chronicles.

Look it up. The author's name is Jim Melvin and he is an all-around excellent guy even if he can be a bit shy and formal at times.

2007 also saw me go to my first writer's conference in Canberra. I took so many notes, I still have some sitting around waiting to be put to use.

I learned that even big name authors like Garth Nix, Graham Joyce, and Trudi Canavan are normal people with their own good points and bad points. (And that, yes, most writers are addicted to alcohol, cigarettes, or both.)

I find that now I've had so many good things happen in my life, I want to help others along the way.

Basically, I'm offering whatever help I can to all of you, the Literary Mary forum members. If you want a good word put in for you at 451Press (a blog network I write for) when they're hiring again, you have it. If you want me to point out other blog networks, you have it. If you have a writer-ly blog and would like to interview authors and/or

review books, I'll connect you to the people who can arrange it.

No matter what anyone may think of me, I do believe you can get back what you put out there. (I say 'can' because I know too many well off people who are bastards and too many very nice people who can hardly ever get a break.) I have been having a very good time of it after a lot of hard work, and I want to be able to use what I have experience for your benefit.

I didn't mean this article to turn into some sort of 'this is what I do—how can I help you?' kind of post, but that's the way it has apparently led.

Bottom line: I hope you achieve everything you want to achieve this year. I also hope you take the time to realize where you are and where you have been in life so you can use that to think about where you want to go.

Happy 2008 to all of you and thank you for an excellent year.

May the Kahlua for your cocktails never run out and all your hangovers be mild.

Silver Talks About...Anything She Can Think Of



Hello Sandi and welcome. Tell the readers a little about yourself.

Hi, Jaime! I'm delighted to be here on your wonderful site. Honestly, I don't go a day without reading all the tidbits of information you've gathered from all over the web. And congratulations on your wedding, by the way!

Let's see...about me...well, I've always wanted to be a fiction writer from the time I was a little girl and would make up stories. In fact, I "sold" my first book when I was six years old and my mother wouldn't give me money for the ice cream man, so I went in the house, wrote a story about a king who slept three hours and forty-five seconds, and sold it to the neighbors for the price of a banana popsicle. My mother was mortified and had to go and buy the story back!

Since then, I've written lots and lots of stories—though not always with such immediate, tangible and delicious results. I married young and had two kids and always planned that if and when all the laundry was done, I'd write a novel. But life doesn't always go the way you plan, and when my marriage ended when my kids were ages four and one, I instead got a job as a reporter and then editor of a local newspaper. Nothing like learning a skill like journalism on the job!

To keep myself amused between covering Planning and Zoning meetings, I started writing a column about my daily life as a single working mom. I didn't know at first that this was a humor column, but people seemed to feel it was funny,

Interview with an Author

Sandi Kahn Shelton

and then Working Mother magazine started running it...and then a publisher discovered it and offered me a book deal. Which led to a larger publisher offering me two larger book deals to write humor books about babies and toddlers.

In the meantime, I had remarried, had a third child, and had started writing for magazines in addition to my day job, which was then as a feature reporter. I had started a novel, which I took out and worked on whenever I had even one spare moment...and seventeen years later, much to my surprise and delight, it (*What Comes After Crazy*) was bought by Shaye Areheart books (a division of Random House.) I then wrote a second novel, *A Piece of Normal*, and am now at work on a third, which will come out in the summer of 2008.

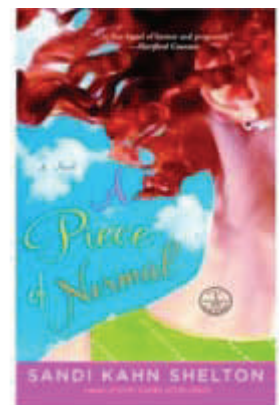
You've recently published your women's fiction novel *A Piece of Normal*. Tell us a little about your book.

A Piece of Normal is the funny, poignant story of two estranged sisters—one a very together, hip advice columnist and the other a runaway punk rocker—who have to figure out what it means to forgive their quirky pasts and embrace the craziness and chaos that can lead them to both to love and grace and healing.

Lily Brown is an advice columnist who has life so together, she's the envy (and caretaker) of all her friends: she's a divorced 34-year-old woman whose ex-husband still depends on her to find dates for him. She lives in her childhood home, a beach cottage in a little

colony on the Connecticut coast, with her 4-year-old son and the lovely neighbors who were friends of her parents. Lily's a wee bit stuck; in fact, she hasn't so much as moved the furniture around in that house; it's exactly the way her gifted, artistic mother had left it.

But even though she seems to have it all together, there is a tragedy at the core of Lily's life: 12 years



ago her eccentric, flamboyant mother and lawyer dad were killed suddenly in an auto accident, and Lily came home from college to raise her 16-year old sister, Dana. Lily imagined a life of closeness and compassion between the two grief-stricken sisters—but, instead, Dana acted out, took drugs, slept with every guy she could find, and ended up running away to be a tambourine girl in a punk rock band.

Lily, left alone, had something of a nervous breakdown, with only the colony neighbors there to help her regain her balance. She ended up meeting a nice, neurotic New Age therapist named Teddy, and they married and had little Simon—and when the marriage ended in divorce, Teddy remained in the area because he and Lily were better friends than spouses. She still feels responsi-

Sandi Kahn Shelton Interview

ble for the hapless Teddy, and tries to fix him up on dates with her friends, so that she can at last feel less guilty about leaving him and can find love herself.

But when Dana suddenly returns to town after ten years on the road, she brings with her all the life and hell-raising spontaneity that Lily's settled-down, buttoned-up life has been missing. Yet she also brings back the memories of the grief they suffered so many years ago, as well as an explosive secret about their mother's double life. But even more importantly, Dana develops a crush on Teddy and leads him on into a passionate relationship that threatens to crush hers and Lily's newfound bond of trust.

It's only when Lily goes through a series of losses—her “second” dad, her job at the paper, as well as her role as emotional caretaker for her ex-husband—that she comes to face the fact that control is really all an illusion anyway, and that the best lives are lived with risk and spontaneity and learning to embrace the past rather than shut it away.

Between not dating until she finds a girlfriend for her ex-husband and the sudden appearance of her ten-years-gone sister Dana, Lily Brown's life is certainly an interesting one! How much of her life and personality comes from your life and the lives of those around you?

Hmm. Well, as all you fiction writers know, characters may come from a little kernel of an idea that you get from people you know or see out in public, or are possibly related to...but then they take on personalities of their own and become completely different from anyone you already know. I think I

wanted to write about sisters because there always seems to be one sister who “has it all together” while the other sister is seen as more spontaneous and flaky. I wanted to know what would happen when those two sisters have to find out that each of them has something the other one needs and wants...and how they can figure out how to forgive each other when one has betrayed the other.



Finally, you are not only a successful novelist but a single mother. You also had an interesting line written in your writing contract – another book due within ten months. We all want to know: How did you do it?

LOL. Well, I'm not a single mother anymore, thank goodness! And luckily I wasn't when I had only ten months to write the second book, or I don't know how I ever would have done it. But seriously, it was something of a shock. I said to my agent when I saw the contract: “Did I ever say or do ANYTHING that indicated that I could write a book in ten months?!” She just laughed and said she was sure I could do it...and

you know something? I did.

When you have something that you HAVE to do, it makes all your priorities somehow much clearer in a very excellent way. I decided early on, with a piece of advice from a friend of mine who has written one book a year for the past 11 years, that I would do three pages a day, no excuses. They didn't have to be good, they didn't have to be finished-draft stuff; there just had to be three of them. That gave me a lot of freedom. Even when I wasn't “inspired,” I could do the three pages. And the most amazing thing about that to me was that at the end of the book, I honestly couldn't tell the difference between the pages I had done when I had to drag my lazy self over to the computer, and those I had done when I was just zinging with enthusiasm. NO DIFFERENCE. And the best part was: the pages piled up, the book got done, and after a while, I was wanting to write 10 or 12 pages a day, just because I was so into the book.

To tell you the truth, when you're writing a novel and no one is waiting for it, it seems to be the thing that always has to be put on hold, always put away—whenever anything else is going on. Laundry? Time for vacation? In-laws coming to visit? The novel has to disappear for a while. But when somebody has said, “HAND THIS IN BY MARCH FIRST,” it gives you the excuse you've always been waiting for. It was almost a dream come true!

Thank you so much for your time.

Oh, Jaime—thank YOU so much! It was a pleasure.

Forum Cereal - The Tasty Way to Start Your Day

ONE: MUSES

"Piss off." Silver growled and rolled onto her side, pulling one of her pillows over her face. After a few moments of silence, she lifted the pillow and saw they were still there. In her bedroom before she'd answered emails, before she'd taken a shower and even before the alarm had gone off. "I said piss off."

"That's not very nice," one pouted.

"She needs to be taught some discipline," another said, shifting and causing the chain and collar she held to clink a little.

"If you think a little collar and chain action is going to make me write, then..." Silver finished her sentence with one finger in the air before putting the pillow back over her face.

The half-dozen group of being began chattering away about rudeness, discipline, and dealing with oversensitive writers. Silver didn't make it easy for them, groaning and cursing as she shifted from side to side, wishing they would go away and let her sleep.

While waking up early wasn't anything new to her—she woke up much earlier; she just usually got to go back to sleep—having

her sleep interrupted by so many demanding beings in her small bedroom was a bit much.

Since when did other people's muses wander away to bother other people?

Suddenly, the all quieted.

"Get up."

Hearing that voice, Silver sat up, nearly forgetting to cover herself with the bed sheet.

"You sleep in the nude? How inspiring." One pulled out her notepad and began writing.

Silver glared at her, not at all in the mood for any kind of humour before the alarm clock when off. She then looked at the latest addition to the group.

"Welcome to my humble home. I'd offer you coffee, but we're in the bedroom and I'm naked."

Where other people would have dismissed the snarky comment with a wave of their hand or rolling their eyes, Wyndstar dismissed it without the politeness of such an acknowledgment it even existed.

"It's time you started writing again," she said. "You've left it too long."

"I've been busy," she said and then sighed.

"You have a story to write."

Silver frowned. She didn't have any damn story to write. Anybody could write whatever it was whoever wanted. Silver wasn't silly enough to think the request was coming from Wyndstar and only Wyndstar. The presence of the others attested to that.

"I'm done," she said finally, looking away for a moment. "I'm not a writer anymore. Not that kind of writer."

Wolf, Wyndstar's brother, crossed his arms over his chest. "And you think you have some choice in the matter?"

She shook her head. *Of course not.* "What is it I'm supposed to write in such a rush?"

The siblings granted her nothing but stares.

"At least let me get dressed." She saw some of them start to look excited. *Alone.*

Grumbling, the muses left, followed by

"We'll be waiting," Wyndstar said.



This is Not a Test!

From post made by Hawke

Yep, Literary Mary has its own VIRB (<http://www.virb.com/literarymary>).

It is a place to showcase you—LM's members—as well as a place to say, “These are the people we have here at Literary Mary. These are the people you want to be with. They are the people you’ve been searching for—the ones who will knock your socks off with their works and help you with your own. They are the good folk.”

But to do that, I need your help.

The VIRB is, and will remain, set to feature you and things from you, if you will allow it. Things you wouldn't mind putting out there. Things you have no plans to submit. Even your thoughts on writing in general, fiction, sci-fi, poetry, lyrics, erotica, this site (please be nice), yourselves, summer, BBQ's, pie, your new puppy, a comfy shirt, etc., etc. There is no word count—no maximum or minimum whatsoever.

I am also asking (begging, groveling, pleading) for your picture, a reasonable facsimile of your picture, or even

your avatar pic would be fantastic! Please.

Thank you all in advance.

To date (and in order of appearance), the following authors have graciously donated their works and have been featured on the VIRB:

- * ms vodka.....Confessions of a Modern Day Poetess (poem)
- * Gallivanting.....The Life I Save May Be My Own (poem)
- * Pete Carter (eggo)...Even God Makes Mistakes (short story)
- * G.K. Fralin.....Old Timer's Disease (poem)
- * Chris Miller.....The Writer (entry)
- * J.R. MacLean.....Hunchback (poem)
- * Silver.....1589.81 Miles (poem)
- * Hawke.....Excuse me, but... (entry)
- * Gary Wagner.....Danglers (short story)
- * Pinchus.....Men of Bees (poem)

- * Hoochmonkey.....Protector (poem)
- * Strangedaze.....Street Barbie (short story)
- * Dannyboy.....Wendy Leaves (short story)
- * TsuTseq.....Cowichan Sweater (poem)
- * Sy.....Maggie (poem)
- * Rooze.....The Price To Be Paid (poem)
- * Ariel.....My Brother's Hunt (poem)
- * Genevieve.....Separation Anxiety (poem)
- * Olaf.....Commander Poetry (poem)
- * ms. vodka.....Blue Bedsheets, Beige Room (poem)
- * MSW.....Broken Glass
- * Hawke.....Living Room Writing
- * Chris Miller.....Not Right for Asimov's
- * G.K. Fralin.....Mystery House
- * MSW.....Mirror, Mirror

Thank you all so much!
Hawke

Helping Literary Mary

You know Mary. You love Mary. You might even want to have Mary's babies.

Want to know how you can help Mary out?

Show your love for Mary by linking to her on your blogs and websites.

The best kind of advertising is word of mouth and Mary loves all your mouths.

Spread the word and the love to help this site grow.

kkthnx,
Mary



DICK & TOM



MERRY

~~CHRISTMAS~~
NEW YEAR