



A Mere Paws . . .

the Official Newsletter of Doggerel Unlimited.



Winter 2007

Literary Punks That Bring us Together

By John Gutekunst

This issue of *A Mere Paws* has a literary theme, which will be reflected in all the articles. With this in mind, I felt it would be a good idea to do something that would bring people together, but in a literary manner. I decided therefore to concentrate on the one thing that everyone can agree on: we all hate semicolons.

Semicolons are the punks of punctuation. After all, what's to like? They're kind of weaselly — not full-fledged colons, yet not quite commas. You never really know where you stand with a semicolon. They just don't seem trustworthy.

Even though there are clear rules on semicolon use, no one seems to know what these rules are or even cares to know them. We all just seem to enjoy disliking semicolons.

So even though my first thought was to go over the simple rules for semicolon use, I decided that it would only cause more contention. Anything that brings people together in today's fractious and contentious world can't be all bad, even if it's punctuation bigotry.

My thought is that we could lose semicolons completely, and no one would miss them, and anybody who disagrees, I have a list of places where we can meet to discuss this matter: Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Lansing, Michigan; Cleveland, Ohio or Kingston, Ontario.

Now make no mistake, this is nothing personal — I like you; I don't like semicolons. 🐾

A Closer Look

Brandywine Valley Writer's Group

It was a dark night in West Chester, a mean town full of tough guys and hard dames with long gams and short memories. I was working the cliché beat out of bunko on the seamy side of town, casing a joint where we'd had a tip: there was a big meeting going down. Suddenly I saw this shmo heading toward the ingress of the premises, so I accosted him: "What's your racket, Bub?!"

"Racket?" he replied, "What do you think this is, badminton?" "I was just on my way in to The West Chester Friends School here for a meeting of the Brandywine Valley Writer's Group."



"Friends Meeting, huh," I said, "With friends like these, who needs

enemies?" He looked at me with pity and said: "I can see your writing needs some help. Come with me."

So he took me by the ear and we went inside. He then explained to me that the BVWG was not some criminal enterprise, it is a group of people who gathered to help each other with the process of writing.

Everyone is welcome. It is a diverse group, with



members who are interested in fiction, non-fiction, poetry and other genres. The range of members runs from published writers to neophytes and everything in between. All topics related to writing are covered: technique, publishing, agents etc. For more information, go to www.bvbwg.org.

I could see I had grabbed the wrong end of the stick, and said so. Everyone was too polite to point out my excessive use of hackneyed expressions, but they were more than willing to help me improve my writing skills. Maybe the next story I land in will have more literary merit. Like the BVWG, it could be a best seller! 🐾

Doggerel Unlimited

324 W. Kings Highway
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A Mere Paws —
is FREE
of perfume, dye and wit.

Baying at the Moon

By John Gutekunst



Novel Writing IOI

Always wanted to write the Great American Novel?
No problem — just follow these nine simple steps.

1. The first sentence must “hook” the reader:
Cyril first laid eyes on Rita was when he was exiting the Long Island Rail Road commuter train at the Flatbush Avenue Station.
2. Set the plot: *Cyril had a lackadaisical attitude towards his chosen profession of taxidermist, but Rita saw the potential of his stuffed menagerie.*
3. Introduce a sub-plot: *Roger and Francine sat down for dinner. They both enjoyed cheese.*
4. Romantic interest: *Their love was more than just physical, most people thought they were mental.*
5. Build the tension: *Cyril felt torn between his love for Rita and his french-fried onion rings.*
6. Tragedy: *Rita developed a persistent case of toenail fungus.*
7. Add a plot twist: *Rita was abducted by aliens, and replaced by a robot-double made of tempered stainless steel and space-age ceramics with a diamond lattice framework. Cyril faced some hard choices.*
8. Add some fluff to bulk your novella into a major tome: *Rita spent Tuesday afternoon playing bingo. They called N24, B6, G12, B17, O33, I19, B4 . . .*
9. Redemptive, inspirational ending: *Rita died due to her toenail fungus infection, but she went to heaven. Cyril was OK with that.*

Want to know more? Buy my book! 🐾

Recipe of the Week

Home-Made Alphabet Soup

What would be more appropriate for this literary-themed edition of *A Mere Paws* than alphabet Soup? Here’s what you’ll need:

- 1 stewing chicken
 - A few carrots
 - About 3 ribs of celery
 - 1 onion
 - Some fresh parsley, thyme, or other herbs you like
 - Wide egg noodles
- Wash the chicken and remove that bag of giblets they put inside. Simmer the chicken in a pot of salted water until cooked through. Remove meat from bones, and reserve stock. Chop vegetables, herbs and chicken, and return to pot. Cook gently in stock until just tender. Meanwhile, par-boil wide noodles in salted water until done. Remove and cool, and (here comes the alphabet part) using scissors, cut noodles into letters. Use whatever font you like, a heavy **SWISS** is fairly easy. Serif fonts like **TIMES** require a bit more work. For cursive style fonts (*RIBBON*) we recommend curved nail scissors. For this recipe you will need to cut out about 400 letters. You better start now.

Next Week: Cooking tips for people with carpal-tunnel syndrome. 🐾



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