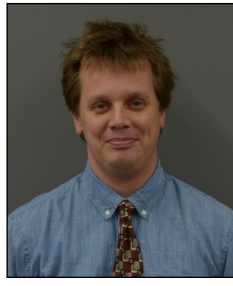




February Tornado Alley Meeting

Aaron Pence is a 20-plus-year veteran of public libraries in central Oklahoma. He is currently the STEAM Signature Services Coordinator for the Pioneer Library System. He has taught classes, starred in movies, led parades, and checked in-and-out innumerable books. He works extensively with all sorts of technology and people. He has a passion for helping and opening doors for others. He admits he's also ten years older than his photo.



Join us at **7 p.m. February 9th** when Aaron will talk about "How Libraries Help Writers." The Zoom link will be emailed close to that date.

Mystery Writer of the Month

Krysta Scott is the author of the novel, *Shadow Dancer*. Since publishing her first book through The Wild Rose Press, she has published two novellas in the Martini Club series and eight novellas in the *Friday the Thirteenth* series. *Something Wicked* is the latest story in the series.

Krysta has always been a daydreamer, imagining worlds far away with happy endings. When she was in fifth grade, she was so caught up in fantasy she earned the distinction of being named the girl who daydreamed the most. The award for this questionable honor was a colorful transparent plastic poster made to look like stained glass. She says it was very cool.

Given her flights of fancy, it came as no surprise to her family when she announced she was going to be an actress. Unfortunately, her pursuit into theater didn't last long because she was too shy to exhibit any talent for acting. Pursuing a more practical avocation, she majored in psychology and then went to law school. Eventually she returned to writing and was very excited when The Wild Rose Press contracted her first book.

When she's not writing, Krista enjoys Hallmark movies, true crime shows, or reading a good thriller. She is a retired attorney who lives in Oklahoma with her husband and dog. Find out more about her work on her website at <http://krystascottauthor.com>.

Krista is featured in the February 13th episode of the Tornado Alley Mystery Writers podcast. (See the podcast blurb below.)



WRITERS CONFERENCE

MARCH 21 9:00-4:00 **CST**

Where: ST. THOMAS MORE UNIVERSITY PARISH,
100 STINSON, NORMAN, OK 73072

BREAKFAST, LUNCH, AND HAPPY HOUR INCLUDED



Vanessa Lillie
Featured Speaker



Constance Squires
Special Guest Speaker



Merle Davenport
Author & Criminologist

?
more information
<http://tornadoalleysinc.org/>

COST: **Members & Zoom Attendees \$40**
Non-Members \$50

SCAN HERE



The Art of Density

by Marcia Preston

In my former life as a magazine editor, I felt that cover letters were a waste of time for short stories. But the cover letter that accompanied David Kear's story was only six lines long, and his last sentence impaled me where I sat.

"Hope this finds you well," he wrote. "The sun is shining in New York City, and if I stand up in my cube, I can almost see Ellis Island out the VP's office window."

Wow, I thought. If he can write like that, this story could be good.

Workshop leaders extol the virtues of writing dense sentences, but many writers seem to think density means packing on the vocabulary. Fancy words don't make sentences luminous and potent, just hard to read.

Dense writing makes use of both denotation (the specific objects or ideas represented by the words) and connotation (the implied and emotional content of the words). In the sentence from Kear's cover letter, we get the mythic history of New York City from the mention of Ellis Island. The image of standing up to look out the VP's office window conjures one of those skyscraping towers where thousands of people labor in four-by-four cubicles. The sunshine gives us a wink of another world outside those tunneled office buildings—Central Park, green grass, a day in spring. And the fact that it's the VP's window, not his, which he can *almost* see out of, creates a rumble of loneliness, a hint of futility. It's a wonderful world outside that window, yet we're caught there with him in the canned air.

Dense writing is greater than the sum of its words. It's the hallmark of a writer who respects his craft and his readers' intelligence. We achieve density by striving for

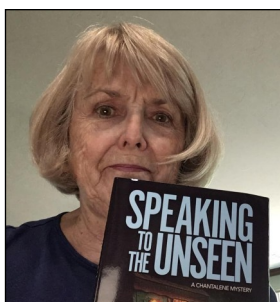
it, but not straining. Clarity is job one; density is the fine tuning, the elegance. It's the difference between wealth and real class.

Dennis Lehane, author of *Mystic River*, is a master in the art of density. In a throw-away line from that book, he illuminates a character's shadowy past with the mention of time spent in a prison "where the wind whipped and the walls dripped and the ceiling hung too low." The reader smells those damp walls, hears the wind wail, and feels that ceiling pressing down. In less than a sentence, Lehane created a place you don't want to be, a place that either hardens a man or breaks him.

I recently read a novel by Bruce Borgos, a new author for me. Here's a sentence from his novel *The Blue Horse*. "Her voice had that rural, red-state twang you can hear almost anywhere in the country when you're out of cell phone range." When I read it, I had to stop and admire. With his choice of words, he gives us not only a clear idea of who this woman is, but also a glimpse of the world she comes from and the setting of the story.

Once you learn the art of density, you can apply it to everything you write. David Kear's short story employed a completely different voice from his cover letter, but it was wonderful and I bought it.

Marcia's latest mystery is **Speaking to the Unseen**, available on Amazon.



Tornado Alley Mystery Writers Podcast Episode 53: Interview with Krysta Scott Releasing Friday the 13th of February, 2026

Krysta Scott grew up in Chicago and moved to Norman, Oklahoma, to attend OU law school. She graduated in 1992 and practiced family law until she recently retired. Her law school background aids her as a crime writer, but she sees herself as a dabbler in various genres, such as romance and horror. She combines romance and horror in her latest novella from The Wild Rose Press, *Something Wicked*, coming out in February 2026. Tune in to hear Krysta read from her new novel and discuss her inspiring profession helping people through the justice system before taking up a career as a fiction writer.

Find the interview on Buzzsprout, Spotify, and Apple Podcasts.

Member News & Activities

(Send your news to marcia@marcia-preston.com for inclusion)

Mark Jones (who serves as treasurer for TA SinC) has a new story in this month's *Friday the 13th* anthology. It's called "Transmission 13" and will be released with twelve other stories on Amazon on February 13th. His short fiction piece "Eve" will be included in the 2026 edition of *Absolute*, an annual publication from Oklahoma City Community College.

Ellen E. Withers' *Show Me Deceit*, the second book in her mystery series set in Mexico, Missouri, won the Reader's Choice Award for Best Mystery/Suspense in 2024 at a gala awards ceremony sponsored by

her publisher, Scrivenings Press. This was the fourth award for the mystery series. Last year the first book, *Show Me Betrayal*, won the Reader's Choice Awards for Best Debut Novel, Best Mystery/Suspense, and Book of the Year for 2023.

Dawn Allen is guest speaker on "The Hero's Journey as an Editing Tool" at the February 5th meeting for the Upstate South Carolina SinC chapter.

So what have you been up to with your writing? Send your news to marcia@marcia-preston.com so we can share with all the TA members.