

Point of View – One Author’s Perspective

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✚ **The Myth: Only one POV is allowed in a novel.**

- Corollary to the Myth: Only one POV is allowed in a chapter, scene, paragraph.

✚ **The Origin of the Myth: It is easier to write in only one POV, regardless of which POV you choose. This is generally true.**

- Corollary to the Myth: “Beginners” should stick to one POV. This has been proven wrong by many accomplished first time authors.
- Corollary to the Corollary: If employed poorly or indiscriminately by *any* author, POV shifts can confuse and annoy the reader. Never a good thing.

✚ **Debunking the Myth: Multiple POV is an effective tool for enhancing characterization by providing insight into the inner thoughts and emotions of all the main characters.**

- Corollary and Caution: If you chose to switch POV, have a reason to do it, and pay careful attention to how the passage reads. If a reader has to back up and reread a paragraph to determine who is speaking or thinking, you have a problem.

✚ **What’s Right for You.**

- First person: Intimate, immediate. Easy to explore one character in depth but hard to give insight into the other character(s) (not my choice for a novel, particularly a romance). **Very common for erotica.** Also effective in mysteries where the reader experiences the plot unfolding along with the narrator.

Excerpt: Just a Simple Story ©Radclyffe

It was a silly assignment, really. Write a love story for someone special. Now how can I do that when there isn't anyone, has never been anyone, and in all likelihood, will

never *be* anyone that would inspire me to write such a thing? If you don't believe in something, you can't create it--not even in your imagination. I knew damn well the story was going to suck, and now I had to sit and watch someone I really admired read it. And she was going to know it sucked, too. Of all the people in the world whom I didn't want to appear foolish in front of, she was the one.

- Second person: Intimate. Arty, bordering on gimmicky. **Hard to write, hard to read.**

Excerpt: Alone in the Mist ©Radclyffe

Steam coats the inside of the glass door, blurring the objects on the other side and leaving you entombed in hot mist. You lean against the wall, just the tips of your shoulders resting on the slick tile wall while the needle-sharp spray rains down on your breasts, teasing the nipples into hard waiting points of pleasure. Eyes closed, you follow the rivulets of water as they wend down your abdomen and into the gently curling strands between your thighs, your fingers searching for the promise hidden there.

You moan softly, fondling the hot, hard center of your excitement, fast, then slow, denying yourself just the right pace, just the right pressure, to push you to the edge.

- **Third Person:** Most common voice for the novel. The story is told by the main character(s). May be one voice or many. [see EXCERPT below *Honor Reclaimed* ©Radclyffe]

🚦 Why I Do What I Do

- It comes naturally.
- Erotica: I write primarily in first person, but not exclusively. First person allows me to “set the scene” rapidly, in terms of person, place, and context.
- Novels: Multiple Third Person. It allows me to develop both main characters equally. POV changes noted in color.

Cam hiked herself up onto an elbow and studied Blair through narrowed eyes. “Did you by any chance just screw my brains out so you could extract information from me while I’m in a weakened condition?”

“But of course,” Blair said, sliding her lips over Cam’s nipple. “It’s a tried and true interrogation technique. Of course, we reserve it for the hard-core cases.”

“Very effective.” Cam caught Blair’s chin in her palm and eased that talented mouth away from her breast before the pleasure eclipsed what remained of her control. She kissed Blair swiftly on the lips and then guided her lover’s head down to her shoulder, curving an arm around Blair’s waist to keep her close. “There are things I need to do up there that I should have done yesterday.”

“Yesterday morning we didn’t know if there was any place in the world we were really safe,” Blair reminded her.

“I know. And the only thing that mattered was getting you back here. But once Marine One picked you up, I probably should’ve gone back to Manhattan right away.”

Blair struggled to contain her protests. This was about what Cam needed, not her. “Did you stay here because I needed you to?”

“No.” Cam hugged her. “I stayed because *I* needed to. Since the day I walked into that loft and saw you in that blue silk robe, I’ve been doing what I’ve needed to do instead of what I should have done.”

“Sorry?” Blair made aimless patterns on Cam’s stomach with her nails, listening hard for what lay beneath the surface of her lover’s quiet musings. With Cameron, she had learned that the truth of what really lay in her heart was in all the things she did not say.

“Never,” Cam said immediately. “But now you’re safe, and there are things I need to do.”

“You said that.” Blair raked her nails harder across Cam’s lower abdomen, eliciting a quiet groan. “Now explain.”

“*That* distraction procedure is working, too,” Cam gasped.

“I know. I’m waiting.”

Cam grabbed Blair’s wrist and pressed her hand firmly against her stomach to stop the torture. “Your apartment building is a crime scene. I need to get a look at it first hand before there’s nothing left of the evidence.”

“God, Cam,” Blair said in surprise. “The FBI must have been all over that place already. There’s not going to be anything left that they haven’t already analyzed.”

“I don’t let other agents do my investigating for me. Besides, they’re FBI.”

Blair laughed. “Don’t let Renée Savard hear you say that.”

“She’s the exception.”

“What else are you planning?”

“To talk to whichever of our people are still around.” Cam’s voice held an edge. “I’d like to hear their reports before the special inquiry begins.”

“You think they’ll be under a gag order not to discuss anything about what happened?”

“Ordinarily, not from me, but now that my status is in question, I don’t want to put them at risk for disciplinary action if anyone finds out they briefed me.”

“I doubt they would pass that information along to the Justice people.”

“A week ago I would have been certain of that.”

“You still trust them, don’t you?”

“I trusted Foster, too.” The bitter acid of self recrimination burned her throat as she said his name.

Blair heard the frustration and regret in Cam's voice. "Hey. You're not the bad guy here." She circled her fingers soothingly in the hollow between Cam's breasts. "Remember, you saved my life."

That was my job, my duty, and I almost blew it. God. Cam brushed her lips over Blair's hair. "I know. You're right."

"Once those interviews are done, you'll be finished up there?"

"I also want to talk to Diane."

Blair sat up quickly, the sheet falling away and leaving her breasts bare. "Diane? Why?"

Cam ran her fingers up and down Blair's arm, aware of the steel bands of tension beneath the velvet skin. "Because she's your best friend. Because there isn't a better source of information about you on the planet. Because someone may have approached her without her even realizing it, and if they did, I want to know."

"She would never hurt me."

"I know that. But sometimes we say things innocently, without realizing the implications."

Blair shook her head vehemently. "No, not Diane. She's known me my whole life, and she's always understood the security issues. Christ, she used to fine-tune my alibi in boarding school when I escaped from my security details to meet my girlfriends. She would never let anything slip."

"I'm sure you're right, but I have to check."

"Of course you do. And of course you have to do it all yourself." Blair tried to keep her voice light, because she didn't want Cam to know how very much she didn't want to be apart from her right then. She knew she was safe in the White House and probably anywhere else she might go with the heightened security she was sure to have, although she never really felt as safe with any of the other agents as she did with Cam. But that wasn't why she didn't want Cam to be gone long. The attack on the Aerie—no, the attack on *her*—was more frightening than she wanted to admit. She had always known the danger was there, lurking in the background like an ominous shadow, but this had brought her true vulnerability home with undeniable clarity. She had almost been assassinated. Her lover had almost died trying to prevent it. Mere blocks away, thousands of unsuspecting, innocent people had died for a reason no rational person could fathom. Life felt so very tenuous, and being with Cam was the only thing that made it right. "How long are you going to be gone?"

"I had thought a couple of days. But if you're coming up with your father tomorrow, I want to be there. I may come back with you, it depends."

"Cam, I'll have a full security detail. Why don't you just—"

"No." A public appearance this soon after the attack was ill advised, but Cam didn't want to say that, knowing that Blair was not about to change her mind. Frightening her would accomplish nothing. "It will be a new detail with a new chief. I want to be by your side. I'll get the schedule when you're en route and meet your vehicle when you arrive downtown."

"Stark can handle it."

"I have no doubt. But she's going to have a new team. And I won't know them."

"If being with me tomorrow means you going back to the city again in a few days, then I'd rather you just do what you need to do and get it done. I'll be fine."

“It’s not going to get done quickly, baby,” Cam said gently. “That assault team was too well organized and too professional not to have known the risks of discovery if they failed. We’re going to have to dig, and dig hard, to find out who they were. And even that may not tell us who sent them.”

“How long, do you think?” Blair shivered, but the cold was deep inside. Despite her best efforts, not knowing who had wanted her dead gnawed at the edges of her awareness, threatening her comfort and peace of mind. But if the question were to go unanswered for weeks and months, leaving the threat of another attack hanging over her, her life would never be her own again. Nor might her lover. Blair feared that Cam might become so immersed in the hunt that she would lose her to it. “How long?”

“Weeks, probably months. You’re shivering.” Cam tucked the sheet around Blair’s shoulders. “Or, we could get a break and have an answer in days.” When Blair shivered again, Cam pulled her back down beside her. “Hopefully, closer to the latter than the former. You okay?”

Wordlessly, Blair nodded. The course of their days, it appeared, had already been charted. As had so often been the case throughout her life, she had no choice but to commit to the journey. And this time, with her lover by her side, she hoped that she would not lose herself along the way. “When are you leaving?”

“As soon as I shower.”

A half-hour later, Blair walked Cam to the private entryway that the first family used to come and go without the scrutiny of the ever-present press.

“You’ll call me?”

“Of course.” Cam looked past Blair back into the White House. A guard stood ten feet away, staring in their direction but appearing to register nothing about their actions or conversation. She glanced over her shoulder to the expansive gardens, noting the distant sound of traffic. Her shoulders tightened.

“What’s wrong?” Blair asked.

Cam shrugged and grinned ruefully. “We haven’t been apart for a long time. It makes me uneasy.”

Blair smiled. “Sometimes, Commander, you say the most wonderful things.”

“I love you.” Cam leaned forward in full view of the uniformed officer and kissed Blair softly. “See you soon.”

Blair put both arms around Cam’s neck and pressed against her. “Be careful.”

Cam kissed her again. “You too.”

✚ How I Do What I Do

- I write a scene from the “inside out” – I am in each character’s head as I write, so the extension of that is to express what I see, hear, and feel there (IF it’s important to the emotional tenor of the scene and not already clearly reflected in the dialogue).

- Choosing the primary POV – who starts a scene? Which character has the greatest role in the scene – the most emotional investment, the most dramatic action, the most serious confession etc . Give them primacy.
- “Cue” the reader – Change POV using the character’s name [at or very near the beginning of the sequence that shifts, immediately following a dialogue tag, or in conjunction with dialogue that very clearly belongs to the character]
- In lesbian fiction, you cannot shift with the pronoun she, because the reader will not pick up on the shift.
- When it doubt, play it safe and limit your POV shifts

WHO'S SEEING WHAT?—POINT OF VIEW POINTS

Shelley Thrasher, PhD ©2005

Within a Character's Point of View (POV)

- Never use an observed visual characterization (blonde, tall, green eyes) to refer to a character while in her own POV. This immediately imposes a different POV.
- Betty was excited about being in New Orleans. The tall, green-eyed blonde ran down Bourbon Street and flashed her tits.
 - **This should read, “She ran down Bourbon Street and flashed her tits.”**
- Never have a character say of herself that she turned pale, blushed, or used a certain tone of voice. A POV character normally can't observe herself doing such actions.
- She blushed when she realized what she had just done.
 - **She felt her face grow hot when she realized what she had just done.**
- With voluntary physical actions, do not use the possessive. Don't say, “Betty's eyes rolled. Her head lowered. Her body spun around.” Show the individual, not her organs, acting. Do say, “Betty rolled her eyes. She lowered her head. She spun around.”
- Her hands flew to her mouth. Her body turned, and her feet flew down the street.
 - **She covered her mouth with her left hand, turned around, and ran down the street.**
- Avoid using a character's work identity within her POV. “The bar maid took them a beer.”
- The public school teacher had just spotted two of her students.
 - **Betty had just spotted two of her junior-high students. (This revision makes it clear that Betty is the subject of this sentence and lets us know she is a public school teacher.)**

Observing a Character through the POV of a Third Party

- In a third party's POV, it's fine to use visual characterizations (blonde, tall, green eyes) to describe a character being observed. Use the appropriate name or pronoun, occasionally “the other woman” or “lover.”
- Anne watched the tall, green-eyed blonde show her tits on Bourbon Street.
 - **The sentence above is correct because Anne is seeing Betty from her perspective so can notice her physical attributes.**
- Use references to hair color, especially blonde, only when characters first meet, or if they are mere acquaintances. Having a character refer constantly to her lover as “the blonde” depersonalizes the lover and makes the character seem shallow. If this is your intention, fine. Otherwise, use the lover's name.
- Suddenly she realized she was staring at her lover.

- If you say Anne was “staring at the blonde,” you are telling us either she didn’t know Betty or that she thinks she’s a total airhead and their relationship is extremely shallow.
- Use references to another person’s work identity (the teacher, the wait person) sparingly.
 - The teacher was appalled.
 - If you use the word “teacher” in the sentence above, the reader doesn’t know if you’re referring to Betty or Anne. It’s clearer to say “Anne was appalled.”
- A third party can use the possessive in ways that Betty cannot. Examples:
 - “Betty’s eyes rolled. Betty’s head jerked up. Betty’s face fell.”
 - She watched Betty’s hand fly to her mouth. (This sentence is correct.)
- Another character cannot observe what cannot be observed:
 - Betty lowered her eyes, filled with despair. (This sentence is incorrect because it puts us in Betty’s POV. Another character cannot observe “despair,” though she can observe the signs of despair, as shown below.)
 - Betty lowered despair-filled eyes. or Betty lowered her eyes, evidently filled with despair. or Betty lowered her eyes, obviously in despair. or Betty blushed. These sentences are correct because another character can observe what Betty can’t observe about herself.
- A third party may observe anything visual about bodies in motion in almost any way, if it doesn’t involve assigning feelings or intentions she can’t know.
 - You cannot say, “Betty was afraid she would lose her job” **without showing the reader that Anne has a special insight into Betty.**
 - You can say, “Betty was probably afraid she would lose her job. She did that every time she broke a rule,” if Anne knows her well.
 -