

# Author's Guidelines & Instructions

**Reluctant Press Fantasy Fiction**  
*In Association With Mags, Inc.*  
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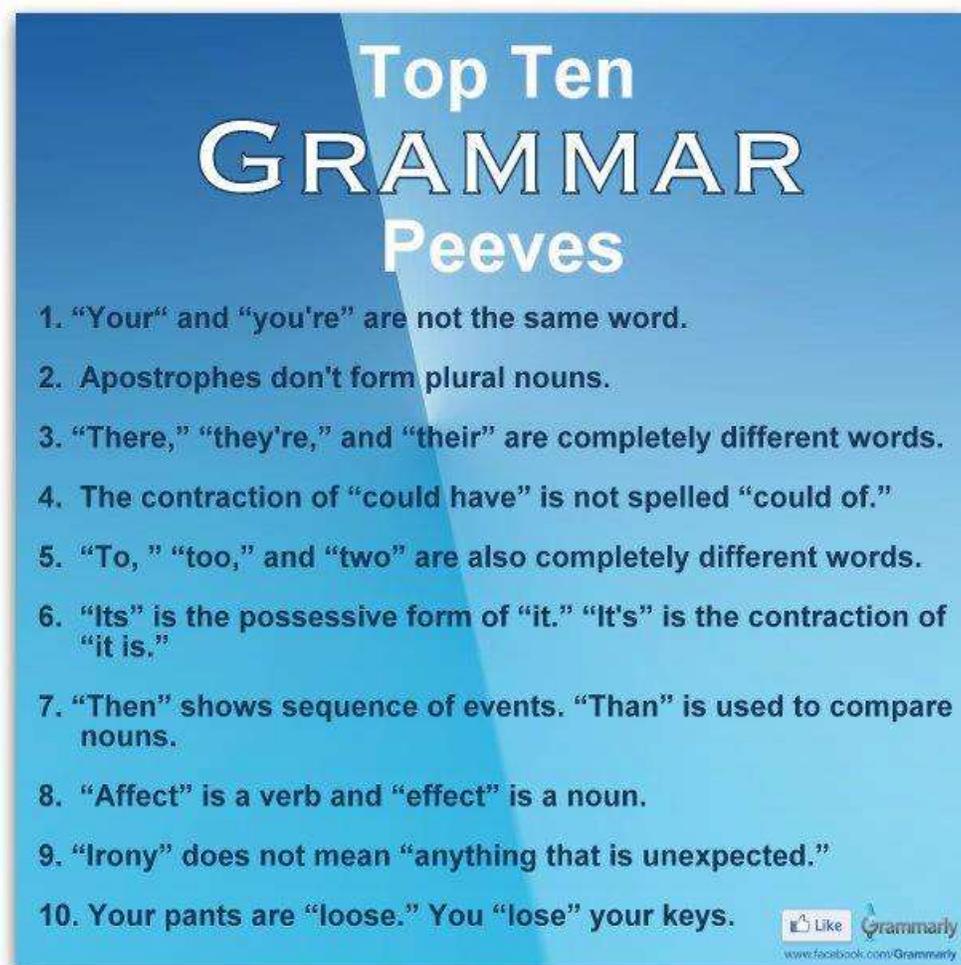
## Writing a Reluctant Press Story

Reluctant Press is interested in paying new or established authors for original, unpublished transgender fiction. The term 'transgender' in this case mean that we are looking for stories about crossdressing, transvestitism or sex change. We have established guidelines that can help you successfully write for us. Please read these guidelines carefully before submitting a story for consideration. Once you are sure a story meets all of our requirements you may submit it on disk or via e-mail as an attachment. You will also need to send a completed 'Author's Agreement' form via regular mail. [Click here for form.](#)

## Story Length

THIS SECTION HAS CHANGED! We publish three new titles every month. Our basic format is 5 by 8 with a saddle stitch binding, which is the format preferred by our readers according to surveys. To fit into this format, a story should be **between 18,000 to 32,000 words** in length. If you have two or more short stories that together fall within this range we can publish them together in one book for you. Do not submit stories or groups of stories outside this range.

## A Great Story Starts With Correct Structure and Grammar



## Structural Issues - this section is a 'must read.'

We don't mind doing basic editing work as this is part of what we do to make you look good, but we some authors need work harder at producing work that shows technical proficiency. Among our biggest problems:

**1. Correct use of quotation marks is critical and errors regarding their use abound:** "This is an example of a quote," she mused. "You should review the 'Author's Guidelines' regularly just in case you forget things like this." Note that the first clause of the quote, because it is followed

by the citation 'she mused' ends in a comma, not a period. Therefore, the next word is not capitalized unless it is a proper name. "Listen to me!" the editor commanded. "Even when questions or exclamations are used, the citation rule must be followed. Do you understand?" she asked.

Fixing punctuation can add dozens of hours to our editing time and is sheer drudgery. We took a vote and have concluded that enough is enough: Every story must use basic punctuation in a proper manner to be considered for publication.

"Punctuation generally goes inside the quotation marks," Ms. Chrissie noted. "You must use a comma not a period when an attribution such as 'she said' follows the quotation, and always use the correct quotation marks." Misuse of quotations, primarily incorrect placement of associated punctuation marks, is the number one problem our editors face, and fixing a poorly structured story is extremely labor-intensive.

Another problem we see with quotation marks concerns quotes from multiple individuals. Remember that when you change speakers you are changing subject, requiring a new paragraph. Do *not* place quotations from two individuals into one paragraph. [[Click here to learn more about the use of quotations](#)]

**2. Watch out for over-use of the past perfect tense:** For some reason - possibly in an attempt to stretch the length of the story - some of our authors use phrases such as "She had gone to the store" when "She went to the store" would make more sense. "After she had gotten dressed..." is overly wordy; use "After she dressed" instead. A few authors seem to use this jarring style as a crutch and every paragraph must be fixed. This makes your editors very unhappy. You don't want unhappy, overworked editors, do you?

**3. Inappropriate or excessive use of punctuation crutches:** Beware of the overuse of ellipses or exclamation points and avoid using types of punctuation intended for nonfiction writing.

An ellipsis ( ... ) is used in fiction writing to show an unfinished thought. Its usage, however, should be rare and well thought-out. Some writers like ellipses far too much and use them in every paragraph. [[Click here for more on the use of ellipses](#)]

Exclamation points are jarring and should be used sparingly if at all. Let your reader figure out what's exciting for himself. If one or more ellipses or exclamation points appear on two consecutive pages of your story you are using them far too often.

When discussing punctuation we need to also mention that certain items do not belong in fiction writing: Parentheses, slashes and abbreviations belong to the world of nonfiction and technical writing; they should be avoided except for the most common items: "Dr.", "Mrs." and "Mr."

**4. Avoid unnecessary text formatting:** Your story will be professionally edited and then turned into a book using a professional publishing program. We cannot use and must delete tab characters, double spacing, paragraph indents and extra spaces between sentences. Additionally, do not attempt to use colored texts or other artificial methods of emphasis. The editors will determine what does or does not need to be emphasized.

**5. If your story contains chapters, use them sparingly:** Chapter headings offer a good break for readers and are appropriate when there is a dramatic change in the story line. Most of our full-length stories have four to six points where a chapter break would be desirable. We should not, however, see 30,000 word stories with 20 chapters. If you feel your story needs more than five to ten hard breaks, it probably needs to be rewritten.

When you use chapter breaks, simply write "Chapter One" "Chapter Two" - don't try to get creative with chapter headings.

*Before you leave this section make sure you understand and have applied all that we have shared with you.*

## Content

Our stories are ultimately about crossdressing or sex change. It is important to remember that we publish transgender-themed stories, not sex stories with crossdressing wedged-in, and **all story characters must be aged 18 or over**..

Reluctant Press books may be categorized as erotica since they may contain strong sexual material (Except Young Adult books). RP stories are not, however, pornographic. Sex will be an integral part of the story but not the *whole* story. We like sex scenes, especially well-written ones that describe lovemaking sensitively and sensuously, rather than crudely. But the use of gratuitous sex merely to beef-up a weak story line is unacceptable. For more information see the '[Reluctant Press Categories](#)' section of this document.

We want to see a good story with a strong story line and believable characters. Crossdressing or sex change will be an integral part of that story, but realistic scenes and motivations must come first.

Characters need to show realistic emotions. Your characters should seem real, even if the situation involves fantasy or magic. This will be discussed further in the section titled [Character Guidelines](#).

Many Reluctant Press stories contain strong language that may be offensive to some people. Authors should note that we do not object to profanity, but we have observed that a few writers use strong language to try to punch-up a weak story line. This is not acceptable. Feel free to use strong, descriptive language, but use it in a judicious manner and remember that overuse of profanity causes it to lose its effectiveness.

Finally, readers tend to look for specific themes that they personally enjoy. For some readers, their greatest fantasy is to dress up and then make love to a genetic woman. For others, their fantasy is to have men desire them. The latter may offend the reader who enjoys the former; therefore, we have created specialized categories to indicate the content of a book.

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## Reluctant Press Categories

Whatever story line you choose, your story, taken as a whole, should fit relatively neatly into one of Reluctant Press' story categories. These categories are:

**New Woman** - Stories in this category will contain some sort of an actual sex change. Such a change may be done surgically, may happen accidentally, may occur magically, or be forced upon a person. For a further discussion of the method of change, see the section titled [Story Themes and Genre](#).

**Her TV** - In Her TV stories, a male lead character will dress but not have sex change surgery. Sexual encounters or situations must involve genetic women. No sexual encounters with males!

**Adult TV** - A very common fantasy for the crossdresser is to find himself in a situation where he is a woman in every way. Adult TV stories find the crossdresser in sexual encounters with men. A male lover will always treat the CD'er as a woman, though, as this is an important part of the fantasy. A story in which the crossdresser has sexual relations with both men and women will be classified under this category.

**Young Adult TV** - Some adult crossdressers and transgender persons wish they had been given a chance to grow up female. They enjoy fantasizing about what it would have been like to be a young girl, to attend Girl Scout meetings... Go to the prom, etc. Young Adult TV stories indulge this fantasy in a non-sexual manner, without necessitating a permanent sex change.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Stories that have minors (under the age of 18) as main characters must NOT have any sexual content whatsoever. Stories that involve the sexual abuse, physical abuse, or exploitation of children will be rejected without comment.

**Spectrum** - This category is used when a book contains a collection of short stories that fall into more than one of the above categories. If you have short stories in multiple categories, the best combinations are Her TV with New Woman, and New Woman with Adult TV. Other

combinations are also acceptable, but Young Adult stories cannot be combined with other stories that have sexual content.

Remember: Categories help our readers select the themes they enjoy, while avoiding themes that make them uncomfortable they serve an important purpose. Make sure that your story fits into one of our categories.

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## The Successful Story

To be successful a story needs to grab the readers' attention fairly quickly. As a general rule, something interesting needs to happen in the first 15 pages of a book or the reader is apt to get bored and stop reading. Anything that entices the reader to continue on to the end will help guarantee the success of your story.

Your Reluctant Press story needs to be interesting, exciting and realistic. Your story should be told in a believable manner and should have a theme to which the reader can relate. We want you to be successful.

## Themes

Crossdressing or a sex change will be the ultimate focus of your Reluctant Press story but in creating that focus you will have to answer the question, how did we get here? Also, what made the person change their sex or decide to dress publicly as a woman? In answering these questions, certain themes present themselves.

**Magical Transformations** - Ever since the first story of a man becoming a woman, magic has been a centerpiece for gender fiction. Mainstream movies like *Switch* and *Goodbye, Charlie* involve the hand of God in simply MAKING a man become a woman. Magic is the realm of the supernatural: It may be a magical ring, an amulet, a potion, a curse, or what-have-you, but something happens that is beyond science and beyond our real-world experience. Perhaps half of the gender change stories ever written have involved some sort of magical transformation. Unfortunately, the popularity of this theme is also its biggest weakness. Before you submit a story with a magical transformation theme, you should ask yourself: *Has this story been done before?*

You should also consider whether there might be a more realistic way for your hero to become our heroine. Readers like magic, but they have also seen it a lot. Many of them have written to us saying that they are burned out on this theme and would like something different. Some readers actually write letters of complaint when we publish yet another magic story. Still, this theme has its fans and it should not be abandoned.

Our next question for writers of magic: Will the readers be able to relate to it? Reluctant Press readers enjoy a story that feels real to them. They particularly like stories that could, by some stretch of imagination, actually happen to them. The greatest weakness in magical transformation stories (beyond the fact that they have been done over and over) is that readers find that many of them strain credulity to the breaking point. Nevertheless, there is still a market for such stories, and if you can use magic in a creative manner that draws the reader into your world then by all means go ahead and submit your magical story.

**Forced - or coerced dressing.** This is the second most common theme in the gender fiction world. A person is forced to crossdress or live as a woman by a mate, a boss, a captor, or a lover. The reason this theme is so popular is that absolves the crossdresser of guilt. Think "reluctant," just like our name. The primary agent of force is coercion not violence in most cases. Your reader wants to identify with the main character (see Character Guidelines section). Some of these stories cross the line from gender fiction to Bondage & Discipline themes. While Reluctant Press accepts stories with light B&D content, we cannot accept stories in which B&D is the only theme.

**Circumstances** - The job you want is finally open, but they are only interviewing women! What are you going to do? Circumstance themes have been the mainstay of popular gender works like *Tootsie* and *Some Like It Hot*. Crossdressing spies and panty raiders come under this category.

**Voluntary** - This is the most under-used category in the realm of gender fiction. The reason for this is that it takes a lot more work on the writers part to show how a man loves to dress as a woman (and make it interesting and exciting) than it is for the writer to simply have something happen to the main character. Authors are encouraged to think of creative ways of showing men being women just because they want to. Remember, though, your story still has to be exciting!

**Supported** - Most (though not all) crossdressers are married and monogamously heterosexual. What they wish they could have would be a mate (wife, girlfriend, etc.) who would actually want them to crossdress, she'd help them with their makeup, take them shopping, show them how to walk, how to talk, how to stand...Then take them out and show them off. We know a few lucky transvestites who have had the wonderful experience of supported dressing, but for the rest of them it is up to you to provide the fantasy.

Choose your theme carefully and make sure your story is fresh and interesting. While Reluctant Press provides basic editing, layout and illustration, the real power of the story must come from the author.

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## Genre

Deciding the theme in which crossdressing or sex changes occur will to some degree dictate the overall plot style or genre of your story. Our readers like stories that have crossdressing or sex change as the centerpiece but which are set in a rich environment. In this section we will consider some of the genres in which transgender issues may be presented.

**The Romance Novel** - It shouldn't be too surprising that since our readers love being women, they also fantasize about doing girl things, such as reading romance novels. This format is frequently requested but our experience shows that pure romance novels do not sell well. If your story is about romance, make sure it has some adventure, some danger, and a bit of spice too. Your readers want to be entertained, not just romanced.

**Science Fiction** - Many Reluctant Press readers also enjoy science fiction novels and have expressed interest in seeing this genre used for crossdressing/sex change stories. Here again, experience tells a slightly different story: Science fiction genre stories have been among our poorest sellers. This is not to say that Science Fiction won't work. Our suggestion is that if you choose to use this genre, make sure the characters are strong and believable, and keep the plot centered on people rather than technology.

**Adventure** - The adventure genre when used as the underlying format of a gender story, has proven successful on an intermittent basis. Treasure hunts, cloak & dagger stories, and police undercover stories have all had success on a spotty basis. Like the science fiction genre, we believe that the Adventure format can work but the genre needs to take a back seat to your development of characters and the interweaving of gender issues.

**Westerns** - Reluctant Press has published two stories in the Western genre, and found them to be a bit of a disappointment. We believe that this format is probably a bit weak for developing gender themes but you may have a new and unique approach that will pique our interest. Don't be afraid to write in the format if this is where your heart lies, but be aware of the potential pitfalls.

**The Mystery Novel** - This format has shown potential similar to the Adventure genre. The chief pitfall one must keep in mind before writing a mystery novel about crossdressing or sex change is that our readers are looking for fantasy entertainment. As a rule they don't like stories where people get killed, or stories that depress them. Never write a story where crossdressing is seen in a negative light.

**Fantasy Fiction** - This is the common realm of the magical change. Fantasy fiction draws us into the world of curses, magic rings, magic mirrors, witches and warlocks. We are aware that some readers feel this genre is overdone but we think there is still some potential for new and

creative approaches. Consider writing a fantasy story where the change occurs because of circumstances or light coercion, rather than through supernatural occurrences alone.

**The Gothic Novel** - There is almost no track record for gender stories in this genre. We believe that the potential exists if a gothic story can be written which entertains and excites the reader and avoids dwelling upon depressing subjects.

**Horror** - The consensus is that this is not a suitable genre for gender fiction but we refuse to completely rule it out. If there is a way to do this format which will create a positive outcome for the crossdresser or transgender heroine, and if it can be done without depressing our readers, then we'd be willing to consider it.

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## Character Guidelines

### *The Centerpiece of your story*

Character development will make or break your story. In our annual surveys, our readers beg and plead with us to see characters that are more fully developed. They hunger to have vicarious experiences through our heroines. Alone, we cannot provide readers with the thrills they crave but with your help we can give them what they want. The following guidelines will help you write better characters, characters with which the reader can identify.

**1. Create REAL people.** Our readers sometimes note that main characters in crossdressing stories occasionally seem a bit artificial. Their emotional reactions and responses sometimes seem out of character with what you'd expect from yourself or someone you know. To help make your characters real, ask yourself these questions:

*Is my heroine behaving as I would if I were in her situation?* Readers want to be able to identify with the lead character. This applies whether you are writing from the first or third person perspective. If you were in the situation in which you placed your lead character, you would probably have many feelings at once: apprehension, anxiety, excitement, perhaps fear and maybe even sexual arousal. Your character needs to feel the way a real person would feel. Our only caution here is that negative emotions should not be over emphasized. There must be a positive outcome and crossdressing/gender change should be viewed, ultimately, as a good thing - or at least as mixed with a reasonable emphasis on the positive.

*Would any person I know ever actually do something like this?* Although your story may be set in a faraway land, the human beings that make up your story still have real feelings. Except for coercion, people usually do not act overtly against their own self-interest except in cases of heroism. Human beings seek comfort, security, and love - and they tend to avoid pain and suffering, with a few notable exceptions. Can you say the same about your characters?

*How does it feel to change ones sex?* How does it *really* feel? What is it like to go out dressed in public for the first time? Are you ashamed? Embarrassed? Frightened? Excited? Aroused? Nervous? You, the author, must answer these questions in detail. Our readers have stated that they want to see more of what the character is feeling as she goes through changes. Readers beg of you as an author: Please give us more attention to the inner experience of our heroines!

*Can I relate to the life my heroine leads?* Is her life, taken as a whole, realistic and believable? Even in the 23rd century or on a far planet or in the distant past, people are still people. People get hungry, they get tired, they are afraid sometimes, they are happy sometimes, they have hopes, dreams, fears, and concerns. Real people want security and they want to be loved. A man who goes out dressed as a woman for the first time and isn't worried about getting caught is not believable as a human being. A person who never has to stop to get something to eat, or has sex continuously for a week without becoming exhausted is NOT a real person! Mundane things are part of life; one should not dwell on them but neither should they be left out.

*What is it really like to make love as a woman for the first time?* Surely, the emotions of this situation must be overwhelming. One can readily imagine that the heroine must be as overcome by her own emotions as she is consumed by the passion of the moment. Readers want to experience this through your heroine. It is your job to think this through in detail, and then write about it in a sensitive and sensuous manner.

*Would I enjoy, as a Fantasy Island vacation, or as a real life-swap, living the life of my heroine?* Probably not everything that happens to your main character is pleasant because she is living a real life in unusual circumstances, but overall your heroine needs to have positive experiences that make readers want to fantasize about what sort of life she has.

**2. Create an attractive heroine.** Remember that our readers want to identify with the lead male who becomes female (or who cross-dresses) - does anyone actually want to be ugly? As a reader, I want to live the life of a pretty, young woman, not the older, slightly overweight less-attractive person that I really am. That is the basic purpose of fantasy fiction.

**3. Give your heroine a whole life by adding detail to her existence.** This literary device is sometime referred to by the descriptive term, brand-name reality. When you show that her life is real, - that she is surrounded by real people and real things - you help your readers identify with her. Example: Your heroine smokes. What brand does she smoke? Does she light her cigarettes with a cheap lighter, a nice one, or matches?

**4. Show realistic motivation for everything your heroine does.** Motivation is an area where we frequently find stories to be lacking. Readers sometimes complain that a story gives no reasonable explanation of why the heroine cross-dresses or changes her sex. Without proper motivation, a story line will be weak. Get inside your character's head, find out what she's thinking, and write about it.

## Submitting Your Story

You may submit complete stories by mail or e-mail. Do *not* send partials, samples, or rough drafts. The submitted manuscript must meet our format guidelines to be considered for publication and will not be returned. Read these instructions carefully and be sure to follow them.

1. Acceptable word processor formats include: Microsoft Word, WordPerfect, MS Works, MS WordPad and Rich Text (.RTF) format. All computers, even old ones, are capable of handling one or more of these formats. Macintosh computers still run WordPerfect and Word programs and even older versions of these programs are fine. There are several free word processing programs available that can produce RTF files, too, so you don't have to spend money. If you have a Mac, be sure to give your file an appropriate extension before attaching it to email: .doc for Word files, .wpd for WordPerfect files, or .rtf for Rich Text Format files. If you need help getting started, write to us.

2. By Mail: Place your story on a USB drive, a flash drive, an SD card or a CD-ROM, unless you are submitting by e-mail. Make sure you keep a copy for yourself! Disks are occasionally damaged in the mail and you may have to re-send the story. On a separate sheet of paper, write a brief synopsis of your story and indicate its Reluctant Press category.

3. By E-Mail: If you are submitting by email, send your story as an attachment, NOT in the body of the email. Make sure the subject line of your e-mail reads "Story Submission" and give a synopsis of your story in the body of your e-mail. You should also state the Reluctant Press category of your story, its approximate length and provide a short back-cover blurb. Send your story to [editors@reluctantpress.com](mailto:editors@reluctantpress.com)

Handwritten or typed manuscripts are no longer accepted. If you do not have a computer, you can probably borrow one or even use a library computer. We no longer have the time to optically scan and reformat typed manuscripts.

**A completed Letter of Agreement form must accompany your submission.** You must submit one form with each story. NOTE: This is a legally binding agreement. You should print out an agreement, fill it out and mail it to our office the same day you submit your story. We have the author's agreement form available online in Adobe Acrobat format: [Click here](#)

## TERMS AND CONDITIONS

### COPYRIGHT

Since you are the author you retain copyright except for the rights to publish your story in English, which you confer upon Reluctant Press. To do this, you must provide all the information that is requested on the Letter of Agreement form. Technically, copyright law protects a pre-published manuscript, even if a written copyright has not been filed.

You must affirm that any manuscript submitted to us is not encumbered in any way by previous publication or use.

**Public Domain Warning.** Manuscripts can be placed in the public domain by an author's carelessness or by design. There are two basic ways this can happen: 1. Release of the manuscript either in typed hard copy form or by electronic means, that then results in the publication, either in whole or in part, of the story on the Internet or on a computer bulletin board. It is your responsibility as the author to make sure this doesn't happen. 2. General circulation of a manuscript to various publishers without a clear Letter of Agreement.

**Simultaneous Publication.** Reluctant Press does not accept simultaneous submissions. By signing the Letter of Agreement, you affirm that you have not submitted this story to another publisher unless you have already obtained a rejection letter from that publisher. If you have previously submitted your story to another publisher, you must obtain a rejection letter from that publisher before submitting to us. You must also write to them informing them that they cannot publish your story should they change their mind later. NOTE: If we discover that your book has been published by another publisher, or if you or your agent release your story to public domain through publication on the Internet or by any other means, we retain the right to recover from you all of our costs related to the publication of your story, including but not limited to: costs of production, editing, artwork, and lost revenues. Publishing is a costly undertaking and you should not underestimate the legal consequences if you do anything to diminish the value of your work.

**Previous International Publication.** The Berne Convention provides the basis for international law concerning your copyright. However, if your book has not been published in the English language before, we may consider it for publication. You must disclose all details of such previous publication on the Letter of Agreement.

### BOOK PUBLISHING RIGHTS

We reserve the right to be the sole publisher of your book so long as we are in business, both for print and digital publishing. This shall include International book publishing rights, North American Serial Rights, and digital/electronic publication rights. All other rights are yours (i.e., movie, television).

### PAYMENT

We will pay, on final acceptance, a one time payment of \$2.00 per printed page of the finished product, excluding pictures & ad inserts, up to a 100 page limit. The final length of your book will depend on a number of factors, including editing decisions, layout, and illustrations included. You will also receive one copy of your book.

### EDITING

Each author must rely on the judgment of Reluctant Press staff regarding content. We accept a story as the author's best effort, and **we retain the right to edit your story in whatever way we see fit to make it suitable for publication.** Changes made by editorial staff can be both major and minor. Typically, stories are edited for:

Basic copy desk blue pencil editing, such as spelling and grammar, time sequencing and continuity, deletion of inappropriate material, deletion of repetitive content, revisions related to weak motivation or character content (See discussions above), revisions correcting historical or other inaccuracies, revisions due to legal considerations, revisions to help a story fit into appropriate category, and changes of name, title(s), chapter headings, layout, length, themes, and outcome.

We will try to notify you within 90 days regarding acceptance or rejection of your story. If you haven't heard from us in 90 days, drop us a reminder note. Once a story is accepted, it may be from 3 to 12 months before it actually appears in print (depending on our backlog of stories). Once your story is published, you will receive your payment, 3 complimentary copies of your book, and one copy of each of the other stories published that month.

Thank you for your interest in Reluctant Press.

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