

Meeting Notes: TJ Bennett on "The Black Moment... and Beyond"

by D'Anne Avner

TJ Bennett, LARA's 2005 Golden Heart Finalist, spoke on "the black moment." She says every book hinges on the black moment: that instant when the hero/heroine is convinced he or she has lost. Think, "What's the worst thing that can happen to my characters?" Then make it happen and deal with it.

TJ stressed that you can't go back from the black moment, and the more powerful the moment, the more fulfilling the resolution.

Conflict is the first founda-

tion of the black moment. The needs and fears of one character must conflict with the needs and fears of the other. Character flaws and relationship barriers are the second and third building blocks. Your characters must go through escalating steps to make the black moment as believable as possible.

Have your hero and heroine want to change to resolve the story. Love is a sacrifice; ask yourself *what must they give up to be with the other?* Then have them be prepared to give that up. When the black moment is resolved the story is pretty much over, so don't linger long after the black moment.

TJ reminded us that the most important thing to remember is that "Love is not the goal. Love is the reward for *reaching* the goal." When the characters meet their goals, then love can be waiting for them at the end.

She also states that writers have



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a black moment, too: they need to write the scenes they don't want to write, remembering that bad things happen to good people. Put to paper those heartfelt emotions that make up those tough scenes and you'll suck in your reader as well.

Thanks for the tips, TJ, and good luck at Nationals. Now attack those black moments, people!

D'Anne Avner has been a LARA member for almost 5 years and serves as the PRO liaison. She has 5 completed manuscripts and isn't afraid to pitch them.



Audience members listened to TJ's presentation on "The Black Moment" during the April 2005 meeting.