

Conventional wisdom for writers

One piece of conventional wisdom in the writing trade is you must feature your protagonist in the first chapter. That seems to be something of a cardinal rule, yet it is one I am inclined to break.

At the moment, I want my opening scene to feature Ricky Sullivan who is not expected to be the main character in my book. He will have his own story line and I think it will tie in with that of my protagonist, Jared. I will put Jared in the opening chapter, but more as an observer, not critical to the action taking place.

In the bigger picture, I am envisioning this story playing out as four simultaneous story lines, one for each of the four men I have visiting Las Vegas together. The members of this ensemble cast are Ricky, his older brother, Tommy, and their friends, Jared and Eric. The latter two worked at Danton Institute together in my last book, *Carrie's Secret*. Tommy was mentioned there as well. We saw Tommy, Jared and Eric all playing poker at Jared's apartment. Now, in this new book, untitled as of yet, we will learn that Tommy has a gambling problem and perhaps a sociopathic personality disorder.

The challenge of any novel is to create interesting characters and story lines that pull the reader along. No matter how compelling these story lines may be, readers will not care unless they care about the characters. So for now, my focus is on fleshing out my characters. I will try hard to "show" them to you, rather than "tell" you about them. (That's another old piece of conventional wisdom that I do believe in.)