

Ask Amy I (DOG EAR)

Written by Administrator

Thursday, 29 August 2013 00:00 - Last Updated Sunday, 11 August 2013 19:44

Dear Amy: I recently published my first book. Although it is fiction, a lot of the events and characters are based on my real-life experiences and the main character is based on me (though her actions are very different from mine).

I wrote the book under a pen name because I was afraid of negative feedback, but I told a few friends who I thought I could trust.

One of these friends, however, does not like the way I portrayed a character that I loosely based on her...

I read this in the paper's advice column the other day and shuddered twice at what this author did. Next week, we'll look at the second part of this. But let's focus on the above.

Specifically:

Are you out of your \$%*@\$ mind?

Look, there are a million stories out there, stories beyond your own narrow existence (that's why we read stories!) For God's sake, pull from those. Or even if you are going to write loosely about yourself, capture the feelings and moods you experienced and put them into some other telling. But never, Never, NEVER construct characters off the living (or dead) in a way that it can be positively identified.

This author could be up for libel - did she think about that? And if she "told" her friends via email, she's just left an admission to this fact.

Every writer sees people in their lives they wish to include in their novels. We meet interesting

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people and they are our fodder. But that should serve as the basis of your characters, not the footsteps-in-the-snow-from-the-murder-scene proof.

Even I've been tempted. In one of my books, I was going to hammer someone I didn't like. In the first draft of one novel, I described them to a T, even down to jiggling the name a bit as some sort of cross-before-the-vampire protection. But then I read some writing advice that yes, you might have fun doing this, but yes, how would you like to get sued and see all those royalties drain away? So now he/she was completely rewritten, appearance, dialog, background, everything.

I've been with a woman friend who leaned over a railing and her bottom was so delightfully tight it inspired a scene with my Phoenician princess. And there is a lady at work who was so dynamic that I put her into an erotic piece I posted on the net (under a pen name). But would I tell any of these people (or the hundreds of other people who have touched my life) that I'd done this? No.

The people you meet go into the color mix of your palette, to be mixed to form slightly different hues in the painted image that is your book. Don't paint-by-numbers. And don't ever use people directly in your novels.

And for God's sake, if you do, DON'T TELL THEM!

>>>IF YOU KNOW ME AND WONDER IF YOU ARE IN MY BOOKS, YOU'LL HAVE TO BUY A COPY AND SCOPE IT OUT. HECK, EVEN IF YOU DON'T KNOW ME, MAYBE I SAW YOU IN PASSING. ONLY ONE WAY TO BE SURE. GET YOURS HERE!<<<

P.S. If you want to see the most famous example of character assassination in popular culture, check [THIS](#) out. Look under **Inspiration**.