

Improve your  
book sales...  
today

*Yes, really...*

**“ Fi is what I like to call my shredder.  
She takes my blurbs and tears them  
apart, and after several sessions of  
moaning, groaning, and a hefty amount  
of dragging my feet, they read so much  
better.**

**Thanks to Fi's help, my writing career  
has truly taken off “  
- USA Today Bestselling Author, Kel  
Carpenter**

# fiona jayde media

## CUSTOM BOOK COVER DESIGN

About a year ago, an author contacted me to redesign the covers for her science fiction series. The covers rocked Azimov style (and I'm a cover snob so that's hard praise to come by). Maybe they weren't right for her genre or audience, but I got a distinct feeling there was more to that story. I even asked my amazing cover artist friends what they thought – and everyone thought the artwork was awesome.

So what gave?

Now I'm really not that altruistic, but one of my pet peeves are knee jerk/short term reactions. Did this author get committee feedback? Did someone say something negative and all of a sudden something she loved turned into this festering mass of ugly? Was I completely losing my taste and all that was ugly was great again?

After talking with the author, I learned she had done Amazon ads (yay! Numbers!) - and while her clickthroughs were great, her sales were terrible. And great clickthroughs meant I was vindicated about liking the artwork.

To step back a bit: sales often follow certain steps: We see the amazeballs book cover. If the cover catches our attention, we click to the blurb. If the blurb is good, we get the free chapter or buy outright.

*Unless you're Stephen King.  
All hail Stephen King.*

In case of the Awesome-Artwork-like-Azimov-Author, the cover was doing its job. People clicked on the ad with the cover and once they got to the blurb, they slunk off. And that was sad.

Because while authors are realizing the need for a great book cover, the back cover blurb still gets the hairy eyeball.

*\*It's harder than writing the book!\**

“How can I condense all the stuff that happens in the book into less than a page? AND make it sound exciting?”

*“I'd rather shoot myself in the foot!”*

Back cover copy is hard – can't argue. In some ways, that bugger is harder than writing the book because you gotta turn off the part of you that screams “keep readers in suspense!” and keeps you from killing darlings.

You gotta kill the darlings. Make readers beg to keep reading. And I'll give you the steps for doing just that.

Grab a beverage. Ready?

## STEP 1: First Rewrite

Rewrite your blurb from the first person point of view of the main character.

If you do only one thing in this whole guide, this will get you the most bang for your buck.

It may seem funny, but you'll be surprised how much easier it is to convey voice that way, to sound more personable, to get out of the dreaded "high point of view" into the gritty of your story. If your character cares about what's going on, it will come through in the blurb. If they care, the reader will care. Empathy achieved.

Wait, this is easy? Or you already have it in first person POV? Okay Shakespeare, make the character narrate the story as if doing a narration over the trailer of the movie. Everything that's said needs to be visual.

*If it can't be seen,  
it can't be in.*

## STEP 2: Breathe.

Walk away for fifteen minutes, or a week. Time makes slashing your own work so much easier.

## STEP 3: Second Rewrite

Take the blurb you wrote and a highlighter (digital or physical if you printed out your back copy. (Don't smear neon goo on your screen and blame FJM all over kindleboards.) Highlight anything that isn't obvious or ordinary for a regular viewer. Do you use special terms? Acronyms? Names? World building scenarios? Are there any areas a reader would ask "why" about?

Rewrite each blurb with each of those highlighted areas explained/elaborated/cleared up.

Forget suspense, my friend - at least for now. Suspense is the main story question: will the character succeed or fail, and how will they achieve that success or failure?

Think of your blurb as a book cover with words: a fuzzy/blurry cover will look like a blob. Readers don't like blobs. If they see a blob, they will look at another cover without a blob - it's just how our eyes and brains work. We need structure.

With your back cover, you need to make things crystal clear. Yes, it will be super wordy but we'll get ruthless with the cutting later. For now - make everything explicit, and shove the world building by the ladle.

And yes, there's a special case for suspense. With that case, err on the side of visualization: everything in the blurb must translate to the frames in your book movie trailer. Make like Cameron and give us Pandora.

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CUSTOM BOOK COVER DESIGN

## Example

Best Selling  
Author

Heir of Shadows by Kel Carpenter

(used with permission)

yes, really, she said it was ok

Cursed can be taken many ways, so be explicit

Cursed can be taken many ways, so be explicit

Why is it "hapless"? Meaning the school doesn't know what to do with them?

**Three cursed sisters. One hapless boarding school in Montana. High school just got a little...Supernatural.**

Suggest deleting "and her sisters" to focus more on the protag and keep her in the spotlight

**Selena Foster and her sisters know better than anyone the cost that comes with great power, because while Alexandra can play with fire and Lily can heal anything, Selena is more deadly and destructive than Daizlei Academy is ready for.**

Conflict here is implied but needs to be explicit

What does she promise exactly? To whom?

**In order to keep the madness at bay, she makes a promise that leads her down a dangerous path where right and wrong is not always clear. Things get complicated though, when her path crosses with the enigmatic Lucas Hunter, who may be the only person alive who can unravel every terrible secret Selena's keeping—and she can't stay away.**

**When loyalties are tested and her sister is placed in mortal danger, Selena must finally decide how much her secrets are worth, who to trust, and who to kill.**

Be more explicit what is the mortal danger

## STEP 4: Third Rewrite

Put down the scissors, we're not cutting yet.

What's the main story question? What are the stakes? What will happen if your character wins? What will happen if your character loses?

This last part is super important: this is what will get readers craving to learn more, at least until you're Stephen King, and then all you'll need is your name on the cover.

Now we'll reorganize the word heavy monstrosity you created in the previous step. Let's break it into three parts - just like story structure.

First Paragraph: Ordinary World: who the character is, where, when, why.

Second Paragraph: State the problem, why it's important. How is it affecting the character? (Basically, what sh\*\* will hit the fan if the character doesn't address the problem?)

Third Paragraph: Give us the struggle. How is the character tackling their problem? What will happen if they win? More importantly, what will happen if they fail? This is where readers click that "buy now" button. Make them thirsty to know if your character gets the girl, finds the murderer, wins the space race, or saves his kingdom.

## STEP 5: Fourth Rewrite

Now that we have a three part monstrosity nobody in their right mind would read through because of the tiny font your cover designer used to fit that thing on a trade paperback, let's get out the scissors. And the highlighters. (sorry! This one is easy, promise).

Highlight once again all the backstory, world building, pertinent visuals that make your story unique, things a regular reader wouldn't know about.

We will be stripping them out, but we need them. So, do the old "A long time ago, In a galaxy far far away" and condense the world building into tag lines. Readers love tag lines. You can place a tagline between each of the three paragraphs in your copy. These little workhorses will frame your blurb in back story, important acronyms, and world building, without breaking up the pace of the masterpiece you're about to write next.

"Triplets cursed from birth.

Haunted by inner demons. Hunted by Monsters.

High school just got a little...Supernatural."

# STEP 6:

## Fourth Rewrite

Start shredding. Rewrite the blurb again in the correct POV, in the three story structure, and rip out all the bits that weigh it down. The framing is there and you can focus on the characters, with the backstory just clear enough to make things crystal. And while you're at, cut any words that can be removed: that, then, was. Cut 'em right out and watch your pacing improve.)

Run your blurb by a few people and gauge reactions. I bet you'll be happy with the result.

Below are snippets from blurbs I've done with my authors. I offer a 'blurb torture' product (gotta put all those writing books to use!), and in this case, I go through and comment on my biggest pet peeve: unclear writing.

# Example

## Heir of Shadows by Kel Carpenter

(used with permission)

**“When Selena Foster’s aunt ships her and her sisters off to boarding school, Selena should be thrilled...”**

*I think the aunt mention is powerful because it subtly implies they are orphans and alone in the world and the aunt doesn't care much. Hello empathy for the characters!*

**“The line between right and wrong starts to blur.”**

*Action verbs! Power!*

**“Instead she struggles to ignore the urge to kill.”**

*Elaborate on the “urge” – that verb can be strengthened as it's the crux of her struggle.*

# Example

Rise of the River Man by L.S. O'Dea

(used with permission)

**“It doesn’t surprise me that my life’s going to end like this. I’m a Guard. Most of our lives end like this—killed by the Almighty’s. We’re stronger than the Almighty’s. Faster than them and can see and hear better than they can, but they hold all the power.**

*(Excellent stuff here. What we don’t know yet is what is a Guard exactly – what is a Guard’s job or function or purpose? What is an Almighty – same questions? Why do they hold all the power? Try to incorporate those answers into the phrase above, but if it feels clunky, err on the side of explanations and visuals, and we’ll refine more as we go.) We could argue that the readers don’t need to know any of these things and that’s part of the mystery, but unless that’s the story question, these answers provide further depth of character and world.”*

So now it’s your turn. Get the scissors, ramp up the coffee. Start writing and cutting. And hey, all those taglines? Perfect for quotes on social media and teaser graphics. Yay for double duty. And if you need help, I offer a blurb critique service with similar steps and a lot more snark.