



The Four Faces of the Saboteur!



When I mention the Saboteur, most writers/artists think of the vicious inner critic, the Attacker, but that is only one face of the Saboteur. The Enticer, the Innocent, and the Unlucky are far more insidious forms of the Saboteur than the more widely recognized Attacker.

As I described in previous newsletters (take a look at Volume 10, Issue 2 and Volume 11, Issue 4 in the newsletter archive at <http://www.rosannebane.com/main/Newsletter.htm>), the Saboteur is the nasty inner critic who is never satisfied with your creative efforts and does all it can to keep you from enjoying and expressing your full creative power. It's the inner voice that tells you you'll never make it, never amount to anything and never do anything worthwhile. Therefore, according to the Saboteur, you should just give up your silly and feeble attempts to write or paint or perform and stop embarrassing yourself.

In addition to nonstop criticism of every small step you take in the direction of your creative dreams, the Attacker Saboteur will nag, threaten, insult, judge, denigrate and disparage you. But as painful as that is, the Saboteur can do worse: it can disguise itself so that you can't tell when you're being self-destructive and undermining your creativity.

Easy To Be Hard

When the Attacker is outright criticizing your writing/creativity before you even get a word on

the screen or take a step, it's easy to recognize that this is the Saboteur. It's also a relief to recognize this. After all, the Saboteur always lies, often by twisting a piece of the truth, so when you recognize the voice of your Saboteur, you know what it says is simply untrue. Alerted to the Saboteur's presence, you're more than willing to fight back.

One of the best ways to challenge the Saboteur is to refuse to accept its lies as truth. Another effective strategy is to refuse to let your Saboteur call the shots. Ignore its demands. The Saboteur is never willing to be ignored, so it takes a bit of effort to keep telling yourself "That's just my Saboteur; I don't have to pay attention," but it is possible and it's liberating to know what's going on.

When your Saboteur shows one of its softer, more subtle faces, though, it's harder to recognize what's happening. The disguised Saboteur is more dangerous. Without the constant criticism and insults, you can be tempted to believe the Saboteur's lies.

The Enticer

The Enticer is the smiling face of the saboteur that reassures you that everything is okay and your goals will just magically be fulfilled without



needing to face challenges or exert real effort. The Enticer deals in fantasy and lulls you into inaction.

The Attacker sucker punches you; the Enticer soothes. The Attacker rages and screams; the Enticer whispers in your head. The Attacker predicts rejection, disappointment and doom (based on your assumed failings as a writer/artist); the Enticer promises a sweet tomorrow you don't even have to work for today.

This form of the Saboteur will sweetly sympathize, "You've had a really hard day. It won't matter if you:

- Skip process today
- Take the day off from writing/creating
- Relax in front of the TV or with a computer game instead of going to the Y
- Have a cookie, just one, just one more... well, you may as well finish the bag now
- Wait until tomorrow, there's always tomorrow."

The Innocent

The wide-eyed Innocent form of the saboteur watches in stunned surprise when creative endeavors don't go as planned. This voice will say with all apparent sincerity, "How could this happen to me?"



While the true innocence of recognizing what you don't know and asking open-ended questions is essential to the creative process, the Innocent face of the Saboteur is a calculated pretense. True innocence is open to growing through experience; the faux innocence of the Saboteur has no intention of changing or letting you get unstuck.

Maya Angelou says, "When you know better, you do better." The Innocent claims it doesn't have the information or experience to know

anything for sure, and since it never knows better, it never lets you do better.

The Innocent deals in denial and inaction. Terminal indecisiveness makes it impossible to take action and move forward, therefore guaranteeing that your creative dreams will remain unfulfilled. And all the while, the Innocent will shrug and say:

- "I don't know what to do
- I can't figure this out
- Maybe I should wait until I'm not so confused
- I wish someone would help me
- It's not my fault; I didn't choose this."

The Unlucky

Sometimes sabotage comes in the form of accidents, injuries, illness, even relationships. Of course, sometimes an accident is just an accident;



even Freud said sometimes a cigar is just a cigar. But when the term "accident prone" comes to mind, when there's a repeating pattern behind the injuries, or when you end one unhealthy relationship just to get into another, consider the possibility that the Unlucky Saboteur is at work.

Please note that I am not making the New Agey assumption that if something bad happens in your life, you caused it. I don't think people get cancer, for example, because they "wanted to create that for themselves on some level." I think genetic predisposition and environmental exposure to toxins have a lot more to do with cancer than our thoughts. And at the same time, I know that what you think and believe about cancer can have a huge impact on your recovery. Sometimes. But not always.

I also know that people often do create their own "luck." My partner is one of the most optimistic people I know, and she has great luck

I really got a lot out of this class (Writing Habit) and am so glad I took it. I realized that forming habits is key in living a self-actualized life, at least for me. I learned to not listen to the Saboteur. I'm so grateful for my 'a-ha' moment – it's like a weight has been lifted. – Amanda Storm

most of the time. Another relative seems to live under a dark cloud; his life is one long series of bad luck stories. Is his pessimism the cause or the effect of his hard luck? Chicken or egg?

Misfortune is **not** a sign that you're sabotaging yourself. But your Saboteur can and will make the most of any misfortune to interfere with your creativity.

The Unlucky deals in disappointment and dejection. The Unlucky Saboteur will heave a huge sigh and say:

- "What's the point?"
- Someone else has probably done it before
- Publishing/winning a grant/getting a gallery showing/some other form of recognition is all about who you know and I just don't have the connections
- Someone will steal my idea
- I just can't catch a break."

The Unlucky Saboteur is a real Inner Eeyore, and listening to it will only make a sad, gray ass out of you.

Four Faces, One Goal

All forms of the Saboteur have one common purpose: to keep you from expressing your creativity, make you miserable, and destroy your self-confidence and self-esteem.

The Saboteur knows where you are most vulnerable (it *is* you, after all) and it will always exploit your greatest weakness. If you're a perfectionist like me, your Attacker Saboteur will point out each and every mistake you make, taking particular glee in those that have gone out into the world already so you can't easily correct them.

Meanwhile, your Enticer Saboteur will urge



you to hold off on submitting your work "just a little while longer to make sure it's as good as it can be." Before you know it, it's been months since you've taken the kinds of risks writers/artists simply must take.

The Innocent Saboteur will keep you telling yourself "I just don't know what to do next" and act surprised that no one has come to your house and pulled your writing out of your desk drawer or downloaded your photos from your camera or gathered your creative work in some way and shouted "Eureka! You're a genius. I can guarantee you a contract for a million dollars today."

And the Unlucky Saboteur will bemoan the pain, disappointment and rejection of the risks you took that didn't pay off and lament the chances you didn't take that certainly would have succeeded if only you had tried.

Don't Fall for It

Make no mistake: vicious or seductive, innocent or unlucky, all aspects of the Saboteur will tell you lies to accomplish its goal of interfering with your creativity and your enjoyment of life. Don't fall for it.

Learn to recognize your Saboteur's voice. Take note of the kinds of things each of Saboteur's four forms say. Notice which faces of the Saboteur are most active in your life.

As soon as you recognize the Saboteur, remember it's lying and it's out to get you. Ignore its suggestions and go back to your writing/creating, process-play, self-care, or whatever you intended to do.

Do not let the Saboteur detour you from honoring your commitments, no matter how sweetly – or viciously or bemusedly or despairingly – it talks to you.



This class (Writer's Resistance) really inspires students to use emotion and logic in order to dig deep and bring back joy that writing can bring to your life. I learned how to recognize what stops me from writing and take positive steps to overcome it. – Kris Lawson, Writer and Editor



Please contact me to talk about how coaching and classes can give you the encouragement, information and tools you need to challenge the Saboteur and achieve your creative dreams.

612-722-4139

Rosanne@RosanneBane.com

Put the Saboteur in its Place in a Loft Class This Spring

The Writing Habit at Eagan Wescott Library (Fridays, 1 to 3 pm, March 19 thru April 23). You'll be encouraged and supported as you develop sustainable writing habits, become accountable to yourself and take action to achieve your writing goals. Our weekly check-ins give you a place to celebrate and reward your success.

Writer's Resistance at the Open Book (Wednesdays, 5 to 7 pm, March 17 thru April 21). Weekly check-ins will help you recognize when and how you resist your writing. We'll explore which of the common forms of resistance you've used to avoid writing, what resistance has to tell you and how respond appropriately to it so you can achieve your dreams and goals.

NEW! Beyond Organic: Revising Spontaneous Fiction at the Open Book (Tuesdays, 6 to 8 pm, April 27 thru May 18). Spontaneous writing that grows organically from improv, freewriting, NanNoWriMo and other discovery writing techniques energizes the writer and frees her/him to access unconscious material in ways that more structured, planned writing cannot. But at some point, the writer has to prune that big, gangly, organically-grown manuscript to create a story that really works for readers. We'll use readings on craft, discussions and writing exercises to make conscious choices to strengthen your instinctive first impulses.

Writing Habit Topics

- Recommended Practices
- Action Map Your Writing Project
- Put Plans into Weekly and Daily Action
- Six Stages of the Creative Process
- Identify Allies
- Go Forward with Sustainable Habits

Writer's Resistance Topics

- Clarify the Writing Vision
- Understand the Neurology of Resistance
- Please Don't Feed the Saboteur
- Motivate Yourself
- Resolve Unsolvable Problems
- Move Beyond Excuses, Illusions and Obstacles

Beyond Organic Topics

- Focus the Plot
- Raise the Stakes and Tighten the Tension
- Inventorying Characters
- Choose POV
- Fine Tune the Pacing
- Play with Setting

Students should have a complete short story or at least half a novel to work with. You can expect written feedback from the instructor (on up to 15 double-spaced pages).

For more information or to register for Loft classes, go to www.Loft.org or call 612-379-8999.