

MY NAME IS DEREK.

I am a duke, a vampire, a Navy SEAL, a billionaire... I can be all of these for you.

But today, my muscular brothers* and I will serve as your guides through the hot, silky depths of worldbuilding.

JUST THE TIPS.

This topic is far too big to take in all at once. So I have included the principal points from the workshop in this handy eight-and-a-half-inch brochure.

*Please note: The term "brothers" might or might not refer to actual members of Derek's family. Fellow vampire warriors, the founders of billionaire and stud clubs, and buddies whom Derek served with in the armed forces also fall under this distinction.

WHO'S GIVING THIS WORKSHOP?

Meljean Brook is the *New York Times* bestselling author of the Iron Seas steampunk romance series and the Guardians paranormal romance series. *The*



Iron Duke was one of *Publishers Weekly's* Best Romances of 2010 and a *RT BookReviews* Reviewers' Choice Award winner. *Heart of Steel* was named one of Amazon's Best Books of 2011. Meljean lives in Oregon, is socially awkward, and can't walk through sliding glass doors.

For questions, comments, and more information about worldbuilding, contact Meljean at meljean@meljeanbrook.com or visit her website.

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THE GUARDIANS

Novels

Demon Angel
Demon Moon
Demon Night
Demon Bound
Demon Forged
Demon Blood
Demon Marked
*Guardian Demon**

Novellas

Hot Spell
Wild Thing
First Blood
Must Love Hellhounds
Angels of Darkness
*Into the Light**

THE IRON SEAS

Novels

The Iron Duke
Heart of Steel
Riveted
*The Kraken King**

Novellas

Burning Up
*Enthralled**
Wild & Steamy
Fire & Frost

OTHER SHORTS

Agony & Ecstasy
Under Her Skin

**will be published in the upcoming year*

CAUTION!

WORLD BUILDING

AHEAD!

(AND THINGS MIGHT GET A LITTLE DIRTY)

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START AT THE TOP...AND WORK ALL THE WAY DOWN.

SOMETIMES IT'S EASIER TO BUILD A STRONG FOUNDATION BY STARTING AT THE TOP.

Every world needs a strong foundation. How do you make certain yours will last through a few hundred pages (or the length of a series)?

Ask "So What?" and "Why?" over and over again. Most stories begin with a simple premise (vampires and werewolves are enemies) or an idea (my book will have zombies!). The tendency is to start building on top of it. My advice is to dig deeper, instead. For each detail, ask yourself why it matters and what it affects—then ask why *that* mattered and what *that* affected. Create layers of history and background. Every time you ask (and answer) these questions, your world becomes a stronger, better developed one.

The question "Why?" is the most powerful tool that a worldbuilder owns.

BONUS TIP: USE THIS TECHNIQUE FOR CHARACTER BUILDING, TOO!

CHANGE SHOULD HURT.

Don't arbitrarily change or forget previously-established rules in your world, because your readers won't forgive you or trust that you'll be consistent. If you need to change something, however, you can let your world evolve. Dig deeper. Peel away more layers. And whatever the change, don't make it easy. Your characters need to pay for it with their blood, sweat, and tears.

ASK YOURSELF: WHY DOES IT MATTER? HOW DID THIS START? WHAT DOES THIS AFFECT? THEN MAKE IT MATTER. CREATE A REASON. AND USE ITS EFFECT AS A SOURCE OF CONFLICT.

IF YOU BREAK THE RULES, SOMEONE NEEDS TO BE SPANKED.

DON'T CREATE RULES AND CONFLICTS, THEN TREAT THEM AS IF THEY NEVER MATTERED.

Few things are more frustrating to a reader than being told that something can never happen without dire consequences. . . but when that thing *does* happen, everyone just shrugs.

If your vampire and werewolf can't fall in love because their clans forbid it on pain of death, a reader deserves to see someone try to kill them (or at least come close to it) when they get together.

Allow your characters to overcome the difficulty. Allow them to change people's minds. Allow them to fight their way around or through any obstacles. But don't make the solution a simple one (or use a *deus ex machina*) and *never* let your resolution to a conflict be, "I guess it wasn't a big deal, after all!"

IF SOMEONE WITHIN YOUR WORLD BREAKS A RULE YOU'VE ESTABLISHED, THERE MUST BE CONSEQUENCES.

INFO DUMPING PROHIBITED

TAKE IT SLOW. YOU DON'T NEED TO GIVE IT UP ALL AT ONCE.

THERE'S NO SEXY DOUBLE ENTENDRE THAT INCLUDES THE WORD 'DUMPING'.

Avoiding the infodump means playing a delicate balancing act. The reader needs to know how the world works, but you don't want to bog the story down. Here are a few strategies that I've found useful:

- 1) Let your conflicts stem from the world itself, so that all of the information you impart does double-duty: telling the reader about the world, while at the same time explaining the conflict and moving the plot forward.
- 2) Make the mundane details do the heavy lifting. Illuminate your world in small flashes. What they eat, where they live, their occupations...use them to describe the world, one tiny bit at a time. Show what's normal by having little abnormalities crop up.
- 3) Give the reader everything she needs to understand what's going on. Don't play coy with details if their absence will leave a reader confused. If you want to keep something hidden until a later reveal, make certain that you've offered enough information for a reader to make sense of the plot and characters.
- 4) If you **MUST** infodump, do it as quickly as possible and get back to the action.

OUTSIDER AND NEWBIE CHARACTERS CAN HELP YOU AVOID THE DREADED INFODUMP.