

LDM Authors  
Interviews by Sue Staats

It's getting close! Less than two weeks until Sacramento's very first Literary Death Match and everyone's pretty keyed up and wanting to know: who ARE these authors? And how are they preparing for this, a competition like no other? We sent them some questions on that very subject and found them to be getting fired up, their training peaking, ready to get into the ring!



*Note: Marcelo Hernandez Castillo wasn't available to be interviewed.*

**Sue: Have you ever heard of/seen/participated in a Literary Death Match? Have you ever wanted to participate?**

**Anthony D'Juan:** I had not heard of Literary Death Match. I knew of Stories on Stage, but LDM is all new to me. Now that I know about it, I MUST partake!

**Naomi Williams:** I'd heard of it, sure. One of those cool literary things that happens in cool cities and would never happen here. I was gobsmacked when invited to participate — right here in Sac! Maybe we're cool now? Have we finally "arrived?"

**Clare Frank:** I'd never heard of it until I got invited by Stories on Stage. They had me at the subject line. I would have said yes to any three of the words.

**Sue: Clearly this isn't just another literary reading. What are you doing to prepare? Any special training? Diet? Exercise?**

**Anthony:**  
Special training: vocal rest  
Special diet: pasta and donuts  
Special exercise: walk two miles a day

**Naomi:** I just came back from AWP, the big, noisy writers conference, held this year in Seattle. If I can survive that marathon sane and COVID-free, I can do this, right?

**Clare:** I used to do Crossfit, but I hurt myself. Who hurts themselves doing Crossfit? Oh yeah, everyone over age 28. So, I'm prepping for LDM with tons of at-home curls. Cheese curls. Don't judge. This is stressful.

**Sue: Do you have a strategy for winning? Want to share it with us?**

**Anthony:** Lots of prayer and hope and escapism.

**Naomi:** Sure. My new motto is: pleasure. Everything I'm offered or asked for, I think, "Will it bring me pleasure?" And if the answer is yes, I do it. Literary Death Match has "pleasure" written all over it. So, I win, no matter what.

**Clare:** I'm going to wear a firefighter t-shirt. It'll be a subliminal message: fiction, drama, poetry — they can't save your life. I can't either. I'm retired. But the t-shirt won't tell you that.

**Sue: Anthony, you're an actor and a playwright. Do you feel this gives you an advantage over the other literary forms represented (fiction, poetry, creative nonfiction)? Why? Or maybe why not?**

**Anthony:** More of a disadvantage — if I get too dramatic, the delivery might come out sounding fake.

**Sue: Naomi, you're a fiction writer. Do you feel this gives you an advantage over the other literary forms represented? Why? Or maybe why not?**

**Naomi:** It's not my fiction that gives me an advantage. If I have one, it's the surprise factor of a seemingly proper white-haired Asian lady who's irreverent and profane and unexpectedly candid in public.

**Sue: Clare, you're a writer of creative nonfiction. Do you feel this gives you an advantage over the other literary forms represented? Why? Or maybe why not?**

**Clare:** No advantage. But our tagline as fire chiefs in California was, "You can't make this shit up."

**Sue: Can you share what you'll be reading?**

**Anthony:** Reading the opening of a potential novella called *Come Get Me!* It's about a PI hired to find a missing person.

**Naomi:** I'm not sure yet. It might be about menacing houseplants. Or sex with cephalopods. Or marital conflict involving bananas.

**Clare:** It will be about a triathlon, a big fire and Governor Brown.

**Sue: On the LDM website, there's a list of hundreds of winners going back 17 years and they're all listed as "pugilists." Did you ever, in your entire career, think of yourself in quite this competitive way?**

**Anthony:** Not at all. I have never been competitive. I lack the foresight for it. But I still enjoy it.

**Naomi:** Oh, I've been a little pugilist my whole life, fighting, fighting, fighting. Delighted to wear that moniker.

**Clare:** From Day 1.

**Sue: What special talent do you bring to Literary Death Match? What are the odds of you winning?**

**Anthony:** The only special talent is my imagination, which knows no boundaries, but the odds of winning are low due to my habit of distraction.

**Naomi:** My special talent is that I'm physically very small but take up a lot of space psychically. And I've already won because: pleasure! Everything about this, like figuring out what to read and what to wear that night, or even this funny little interview, has been pleasurable and fun.

**Clare:** Did I forget to mention I'll be wearing a firefighter t-shirt?

**Sue: Will you be bringing a cheering section?**

**Anthony:** Yes! My cheering section is my wife!

**Naomi:** Oh, yes. Members of my family will be there and hopefully lots of friends. Also, I'm up "against" the fabulously talented beautiful human that is my friend Marcelo Hernandez Castillo. I know we'll be cheering for each other.

**Clare:** I am expecting a small contingent of people who are against fires.