

# Hearts Talk

The official journal of Romance Writers of Australia



## Master Storyteller

**This British-born, Adelaide-based novelist has released a Gallipoli-inspired tale, *Nightingale*, with Penguin. HT chatted to Fiona McIntosh in time for ANZAC Day (25 April). Many RWA members who have attended the masterclasses she also teaches have gone on to have publishing success, including Lisa Joy, Susan Murphy and Sandy Vaile.**

**Fiona, you've written fantasy, crime, junior fiction, and historicals, and now you're veering more into historical romance territory. Why romance and do you intend to stay in this genre?**

I don't believe I'm writing romance—still writing historicals in terms of genre. Instead, my perspective is that I'm writing romantic stories of historical adventure. And the romantic elements can be everything from the setting, to the era, to the location, to the theme and ultimately to lovers.

I don't always want happy endings and there is usually a body count by the end of one of my stories. Love stories are vital to my storytelling, but they are part of the fabric rather than the key reason for reading one of my books.

I don't really want to read a book that has no romance in it, so no matter what I'm writing, from fantasy to crime, romantic elements will be present.

**Your book, *Fields of Gold*, focused on India and *The Lavender Keeper*, France. What made you delve into Australian history with your latest Gallipoli-inspired release, *Nightingale*? And can you tell us about the research involved in this project?**

A member of the McIntosh family gave his life at the Battle of Lone Pine in August 1915 and I guess since I learned about Darcy Roberts of the Light Horse Regiment, I always thought his story would inspire a good tale.

However, I avoided writing it for many years for a few reasons. I didn't feel skilled enough to tackle the sort of story I wanted to write, so I held off until I did feel ready. I was busy writing fantasy when I learned about Darcy and I needed to wait for the right opportunity to write historical fiction of this nature.

I waited 14 years into my writing career before that right opportunity presented itself, and as I mentioned, when I felt ready to handle it. And mostly I didn't tackle it any earlier because Gallipoli is like a touchstone to Australians and New Zealanders, with an almost mythical quality that I didn't feel permitted to play with when I first had the notion



that Darcy would make a good yarn. But as we approached the centenary for the Great War, I felt a 'now or never' shove from the muse and decided to go ahead with the project and mark Trooper 799's life that was given all too young.

The research covered a lot of geography. I spent time in Egypt in Cairo and Alexandria a few years ago, knowing one day I'd write this. I also spent time in Turkey, both in Istanbul, Çanakkale and at Gallipoli at the battlefields. And as much of the story is set in southern England, I also spent time in London, Radlett [and] Brighton. I can't write my novels without doing this physical, feet-on-the-ground research.

Nevertheless, I spent a lot of time with a tower of books about everything from life in Constantinople in 1900—the culture, lifestyle, family life, how soldiers were recruited—through to the army's medical advancement in 1914. That meant learning as much as I could across many subjects, from how mortar wounds were treated through to early blood transfusions and life on a ward in an army hospital to life on a hospital ship or life in a recovery hospital post-war

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## Meet the Committee

It was lovely to see so many of our members at the ARRA Convention in Canberra last month—and so many of them final and win at its awards night—congratulations to all.

One of the many benefits of that weekend was the strategy and planning meeting I had with my fellow committee members. It not only allows us to talk about issues and problems that arise, but also to plan for the future of RWA and all the wonderful things we want to do for our members.

One of the people who is key in this role is Renee Hammond, our New Member Liaison and Volunteer Coordinator. Renee is a fascinating, energetic woman whose quietly spoken demeanor and generous nature is at the very heart of what I think RWA is about. It gives me great pleasure to introduce her to you all. Take it away, Renee.

*Leisl Leighton, President RWA 2014-2015*

### Renee Hammond

Hi, my name is Renee Hammond and I'm a volunteer junkie.

After three years of being the president of the school P&C [Parents and Citizens Association], and another three years as chairperson of the Katharine Susannah Prichard Writers' Centre in WA, I decided to follow my heart and volunteer for RWA.

I am your member services and volunteers coordinator. Emerging authors may also know me as the eLoop moderator. I am privileged to work with a fabulous team of volunteers who manage areas such as liaising with new members and organising the critique partner scheme, grants, individual writers support scheme, and eLoops.

When I'm not volunteering, I'm a wife, a mother of four, and a writer of contemporary women's fiction and small-town romance, writing as Renee Hammond, and spicy romance

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and paranormal romance as...sssshhh, it's a secret.

My role on the RWA committee is extremely rewarding and I'm delighted to be part of an organisation that nurtures the genre I love—romance.

If you would like to join our team of volunteers, I'd love to hear from you: [volunteers@romanceaustralia.com](mailto:volunteers@romanceaustralia.com).



Gotta love April for its public holidays! As well as the chance to spend time with loved ones, there's also the food to enjoy, from buttery hot cross buns to Anzac bickies, plus the opportunity for a spare minute to write...or something like that! Here's what's got us inspired this month...

#### Carla Caruso:

- ♥ Kylie Kaden's article on romantic suspense (page 8) and how straddling genres can feel like "not knowing which side of the aisle to sit on" at a wedding.
- ♥ Watching *Mad Men* and *Love Child* to get into a '60s/'70s vibe for some novel scenes I'm writing.
- ♥ Being part of the free ebook anthology, *Autumn Leaves*, plugging quality Aussie chick-lit.



#### Daniel de Lorne:

- ♥ Figuring out how I can deduct travel expenses after reading Fiona McArthur's yarn on her recent research trip to Broken Hill.
- ♥ Getting ready for a trip to Orlando, Florida at the end of the month.
- ♥ Implementing marketing tools I've picked up during recent OWLs so I can better promote my book, *Burning Blood*, which is due out in May.

## From Your Editors

## Master Storyteller

Continued from page 1...

in England. I read about life in the trenches in Gallipoli to life in a surgery tent on the frontline in Western Europe.

I had to find several hotels, including one in Cairo, another in Alexandria and my key one in London. Visiting the last one was fun and included taking a very posh afternoon tea for research purposes!

The majority of *Nightingale's* research was probably a year in the making while the actual writing of the novel was quick—14 weeks perhaps.

**You are a regular speaker at writing events and do big book tours. How do you find the time to write? Do you have a strict writing 'routine'?**

Yes, I'm disciplined. I have to be. Writing is my job, so it's not a case of finding time for it, but more accurately, that my life outside of writing needs to fit around the daily grind of crafting stories.

I work out a strict schedule for every book before I set out on the journey of writing and I know if I stick to the schedule that is full of strange, little numbers to motivate me, the manuscript will be ready to deadline. Numbers never lie! And using this philosophy has meant I've been able to write two books every year since I began writing in 2000.

**You're a mum to twin boys. How old are they now? And do you think having twins has helped you in any way in having to be creative and multitask to get things done?**

Our sons are 23, both at the stage of being ready to leap from the comfy nest. And no doubt I'll miss 'mothering' them, when they're off making their way, as we are terrific friends. But it will also free up time and I shall put it to good use.

I think every working mum is an amazing 'machine', and yes, motherhood has taught me about what is important—especially that the book will wait, words can be caught up, there's always fat in the deadline, and no matter how busy I've been with family stuff, 'back of brain' takes care of business, so I never stress.

When I sit down to write, the creative side kicks in, takes over and is ready to go hard. Plus there's that schedule that keeps me steady and can be adjusted if there's been a sudden demand on my time.

**You took up the mantle from mentor Bryce Courtenay in running commercial fiction masterclasses. What do you enjoy about these? And do you find them intense?**

Writing a novel is a lazy, warm Sunday afternoon at home with a pot of tea and a pile of homemade chocolate biscuits by comparison to hosting the five-day boot-camp of a masterclass. They're intense, emotional, energy-sucking, and I feel a towering responsibility for showing 18 slightly tense people, who've come with a dream, that they can achieve it.

Masterclass takes weeks in the build-up with planning everything from people's dietary needs to organising

speakers, social time, etc. Primarily, though, I'm working around six months out from each class in reading its work, preparing notes, adjusting the material, and indeed, administering to those 18 people's enquiries, needs and so on. It is, however, the most rewarding project I undertake. We now have 72 masterclasses across four cohorts. We have another 36 booked for 2015. And we have become family, so I continue to feel hugely connected to them and care about their progress. That's a lot of people in my life to remain in contact with regularly and it just keeps growing.

The workload of reading their manuscripts, preparing reports, working one-on-one, lecturing daily for up to six hours, and making it an entertaining week rather than dry and dull...plus the aftermath of follow-up and support is hefty. But to say it is anything but satisfying and inspiring would be a lie...

Already seven participants have turned dreams to reality and made the toughest leap of all from unpublished wannabes to published novelists with high-end, highly professional publishers from the Top Six in the world. I'm impressed by them and there will be plenty more [such cases] because there is so much talent out there.

**You've begun taking location tours of your books for fans, such as to Europe with *The Lavender Keeper* and also to places like Turkey and Gallipoli for *Nightingale*. As a columnist for News Corp's *Escape* lift-out and having co-founded a travel mag with your husband, is such a gig the perfect 'marriage' of your two passions—writing and travel?**

Yes, you've nailed me! It's probably the perfect life scenario that I could have verbalised 30 years ago if someone asked me what I'd like to do for a living. Read, travel, write and dream up stories. But while there's been a hefty dose of luck and fair winds, I have worked to create this life and taken plenty of risk to do so and it does mean I am something of a workaholic these days as life blends into work.

For instance, I never go on holiday—if I've got a suitcase, I'm working. The last genuine holiday with no agenda other than to be slothful and indulgent was coming up to five years ago and that was for three days. No complaints. I would hardly whine about having to go to France most years or tripping off to Marrakech for some location work.

I can combine writing about travelling with travelling for writing and being able to research across the world, so readers can armchair-globetrot with me while deep in the drama of a lush, adventuresome tale.



## Ask a Marketer...

by Sara Hood

*Question: Copyright! I'm constantly in fear of getting it wrong in my book marketing and losing my house in the court case. Can you help? – Anna from Melbourne*

Good question, Anna. There's one very simple rule you can use to make sure you always stay on the right side of copyright law.

### **If you didn't create it, it's not yours to use for free.**

That's it. Easy.

But is it? Everyone knows a bush lawyer with some free advice for how to circumvent copyright or little loopholes that fit exactly what you need. How right are they?

By and large, most people don't understand what copyright is. For example, just because you bought that CD of Beethoven's *5th Symphony* you can't use it for free as the background music for your book trailer. What you bought was the right to play it for your own enjoyment, and in Australia you also have the right to re-record it so you can play it in your car or on your smartphone. You didn't buy the right to use it for anything else.

But, you cry, Beethoven has been dead for centuries, the copyright must have expired by now. That may be true (and it isn't always), but there are other rights on that work, including the orchestra that played it, the arrangement they played, and the record company that recorded and distributed it. Their rights are bound to be alive and kicking.

Faces have rights, too. As do the photographers who take them. The estates of Marilyn Monroe, Elvis Presley and Michael Jackson make enormous sums from licensing their images and fiercely prosecute anyone who uses them without permission. This also applies to living celebrities.

So if you take a pic of Lady Gaga or Justin Bieber and think that you have the rights because you were the photographer, you're wrong. You can put it on Facebook and say 'look who I just saw', but you can't use it in your book ad. The difference is between editorial use and commercial use. The line can be pretty fuzzy, so always err on the side of caution. If you're making money from it, then it's commercial.

Buildings have rights, too. Don't think you can use a shot of Sydney Opera House in your book trailer. Firstly, the photographer who took that pic will have a right and secondly so may the building.

**Creative Commons:** Creative commons is where someone creates a work which can, under certain circumstances, be used for free. There are different levels of creative commons. Some creators will allow you to use their creative commons work for free only for non-commercial use. You can find photos and music in creative commons. Google for it, then check the fine print. Once a work is placed in creative commons, it can't be withdrawn, so you don't have to worry that in a year or so it will become copyright again.

**Editorial Use:** You can, up to a point, use a copyrighted printed work if it is for editorial use. This is often referred to as 'fair use', though issues can arise. Make sure to clearly delineate the quoted words (italics, for example) and attribute them. A blog post is normally considered to be editorial, but there are exceptions. For example, a US magazine quoted the only part of a book people wanted to read. The publisher sued and won.

**Use of Book Reviews:** Some reviewers are happy to be quoted in book marketing. Others aren't. It's best to ask rather than presume it's fair use. You are, after all, using their review for commercial gain. Don't scan a newspaper clipping or take a screenshot and put that on your website. That newspaper or blog post is copyright. Instead link to the blog or newspaper's website from your website or Facebook page, or tweet the link.

Don't even think about using copyright music and claiming fair use. There is plenty of rights-free music you can buy.

### **So will Anna lose her house?**

Sticking to the above, I would say, unlikely. Put two lawyers in the room and who knows, but they ought to serve her well.

What are the risks if she pushes the envelope? How likely is it that some big lawyer will come after Anna and she'll lose her house funding the legal fees? The answer is, who knows? You'd think the chances are pretty low unless she's a blockbuster author who uses a famous face without permission in her ads and her book trailer containing unlicensed music goes viral. The question is how big is her appetite for risk?

Sometimes a lawyer is looking for someone to make an example of or set a precedent with. An under-funded mid-list or newly published author who can't afford a high-priced QC might suit their needs very well.

For me, though, the issue is more local. It's not about 'will I get away with it?' It's about your reputation in your community. It's about treating other people's rights with the respect you want them to treat yours. Are there loopholes and workarounds in copyright law? Of course. There's a whole industry of specialist lawyers to make that happen.

But if you want to live a happy and legally safe life, and not have to mortgage your home to pay legal fees, then why not stick with the simple line that if you didn't create it, then it's not yours to use for free. Then you can sleep tight at night.

**Disclaimer:** Don't, whatever you do, take this as gospel. If you want to delve further, Google is useful, though make sure you're reading about Australian law. And, of course, before acting on anything here or on Google, take advice from someone formally qualified to provide it.

*Sara Hood has more than 30 years' experience in consumer marketing communications. Visit [www.marketing4writers.net](http://www.marketing4writers.net) if you're published and want to sell more books.*

# Let's Do The Time Warp

by Jenn J McLeod

'Ouch!'

Time might have dulled the surface and blunted the blade, but the old carver still cut just fine. I reach for a Band-Aid, grateful the wound is small, with blood oozing rather than dripping. Very different to the gusher eight years ago when someone cut out my heart.

The knife had been a birthday present from my mum. It arrived by post the same day a wise author phoned to offer sage advice about cutting the backstory from my first manuscript because 'info dumps are bad'.

'Bad?' I'd replied, my voice echoing over the telephone line. 'Cut my backstory?'

Discarding the giftwrap, I slowly drew the knife with its shiny new blade from the scabbard, muttering to myself: *Might as well ask me to cut out my heart!*

'Yes, Jenn,' Wise Author said. 'Too much backstory holds the narrative back.'

'The what?'

'While revealing the past you need a balance between unfolding action and memory. That's how you keep the story moving forward. The more you can show of how the people act and speak in the past through the present, the better, so that you can avoid breaking off to 'explain'.'

'Oh, yeah, right. Ah-ha. Got it! Thanks.' *Now, if you twist that knife a little, I'm quite sure I'll feel less pain than if I cut my precious manuscript to shreds!*

'Good, Jenn, because there is a lot of quite general reminiscence or "backfilling" that interrupts the forward movement of your story.'

'For Pete's sake! The woman has amnesia. How else do I tell her story?'

**Flashbacks** show a reader (through a scene or series of scenes) something that happened preceding the story's present time in order to show the reader why characters are behaving in the way they are being portrayed, or how the current situation/s came to be.

**Foreshadowing** adds dimension by dropping hints of what may happen in the future and can be used to add depth to our characters or suspense to your plot.

**Triggers and transition statements** tip the reader that you are leaving the present with a sensory trigger, such as an aroma, a visual reminder, a sound or the touch of something in the present scene, which causes your character's memory to kick in and transition to the past event.

'Yes, memory is obviously integral to this story, so you will be revisiting the past a lot. But not by *telling* the reader.'

'How does the reader know if I don't *tell* them about her past?' I try keeping my voice light. 'The information is critical to them knowing the character's history, so they understand their actions and emotions. I have to tell.'

'No. You have to *show* the past, only you will need to show it in the present.'

'I'm going to make the past the present?' Clearly the gaping hole in my heart is causing this lapse in comprehension. 'What the...?'

'When a character is engaged in dialogue or action/interaction and the narrative breaks off to give a general sense of events from the old days, this is a form of "telling" rather than "showing". Showing is better as it requires more specific detail and vivid images or sequences. Are you still with me?'

'Oh, ah, yeah, sure.'

I then glanced at the gift card and thanked Wise Author for calling. I needed to ring Mum and say thanks for the new knife—the one that was now making me reach for another Band-Aid to stem the bleeding.

I'm ready to start my day's writing when the phone rings, the caller ID I recognise from eight years earlier.

'Hello, Jenn. It's been a while,' says Wise Author. 'And well done. I see you're now up to book number three *and* you've figured out the whole past/present thing.'

'I have?'

'Look at the opening to this craft article. Rather than starting with a paragraph "telling" readers about our conversation from the past, you've let them be a witness to it happening. By cleverly introducing the article with a memory trigger that is linked/relevant to the scene (the knife wound), you've taken the reader from the present, back to that day, then returned them to the present again.'

'So we're back in the present now and the dialogue above is an example of "showing" rather than "telling" something that happened in the past? Only in the present?'

'Yep. And the secret to success is strong triggers that open up the past, then home in on specific episodes, images, smells, dialogue and so on that will take us right into that past with the character.'

'You mean, a subtle but memorable opening trigger sets the scene and lets the reader know they are going to another time?'

'Exactly, but your transition back to the present is even more important.'

'I see that now.'

I really do. I also see blood seeping through the Band-Aid as I highlight an example of triggers/transition from my new release, *Season of Shadow and Light*, to share with you.

### Chapter 4 – Season of Shadow and Light

*Alice was no longer tired. She couldn't afford to be tired—not here in this town and not even in the solitude of her **little guest room** on the top floor of the pub that, right now, was **doing a good job of impersonating an oven**. At her feet, an untethered Toto lay splayed out on his belly and panting, exhausted from the day's travel and heat. The fresh bowl of water Alice filled from the stained ceramic wash-basin in the corner of the guest room did no more than cause him to prick his ears when she placed it nearby, which was just as well, because he'd only have to be taken downstairs and outside to pee if he drank too much too late at night.*

***She patted the poor dog.** 'I'd rather not be here either, fella,' Alice mumbled, sliding the poorly set aluminium window open over a track filled with moribund bugs and decaying moths.*

*How she'd allowed herself to be here was hard to understand. Usually so calm and in control, she'd lost all composure **the day she arrived unexpectedly at Paige's house** to find her daughter so preoccupied with her iPad that she hadn't heard Alice let herself in with the key.*

*'You startled me.'* Paige flattened a palm to her chest. *'I didn't hear the door.'*

*'What's so interesting on that thing?'*

*'It's an ancient photo of Mum for Mati's craft project,' Paige had explained as Alice leaned over her daughter's shoulder from behind to kiss her cheek.*

*'Oh! Yes, I see.'* Alice stepped back as a memory of Nancy laid a painful punch on her forehead. For the next few minutes she tried distracting herself: filling the kettle, wiping sticky fingerprints from kitchen cupboards, silently urging the water to boil.

[Blah, blah...]

*The clamour of Alice's heart as it pounded against her ribcage took her breath away. She gasped a little, although to Paige it probably sounded like a scoff. 'Ridiculous, Paige! You're in no fit state to traipse off to some distant dust bowl, much less drag your young daughter along. You're supposed to be recovering. Besides that, a fuzzy photo is hardly worth a nine-hour—or whatever,' she added quickly, 'drive to Woop Woop.'*

[Blah, blah...]

*In the guest room of the hot pub, Alice tickled the **little dog's tummy**, drawing figure eights absentmindedly with an index finger. 'Only we're not in Saddleton, are we, Toto? And I have a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore, either,' she added, dreading the trouble it would make should this 'holiday', or that photograph, prompt more questions from Paige. 'And that's*

*how we've ended up in the middle of Woop Woop, little fella. A little too close for comfort.'* **Alice patted the still panting dog.** *'Some secrets are best kept for the sake of others. Wag if you agree,' she said, smiling when the dog's tail twitched. 'Good enough.'*

[end]

### Conclusion

No matter where we begin our stories, there's always something that came before. As authors we need to know everything that came before and why our characters act as they do, but that does not mean it all ends up in the story.

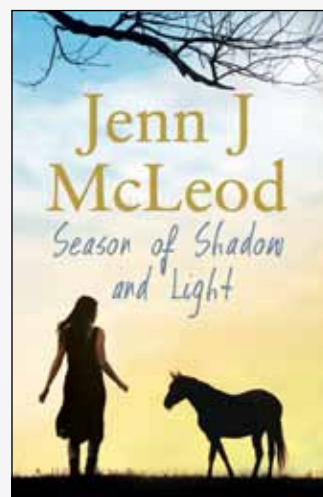
To include backstory in the opening pages is the same as saying to the reader, 'Hang on a sec. There's something about these characters and this situation that you need to know before we start.' Instead, we need to identify chunks of backstory, especially in the opening chapters.

If vital to the story then we need to replace the detail with clever transitions and flashbacks to enhance the present story and allow readers to understand why something is happening, or learn secrets from the past.

Clever foreshadowing lets them anticipate something in the future. You also have to be a bit sparing about how much you use backstory and flashback and how long the scenes are. Had I included all the [blah...blah...] from the above excerpt it would have run for five pages. The secret to long flashbacks is having strong/memorable transitions (triggers) back to the present. In this case, a cute dog and a hot guest room.

Sometimes you only need to show the past in brief snatches sprinkled throughout the book. Any trip back in time, whether they are in the present or the past, must keep your story moving forward. Focus on moments as they happen so that the reader can experience the full bag of emotions and be in the moment with your characters.'

**Jenn J McLeod (#WriteRoundOz in a fifth-wheeler caravan)**



## Why Romantic Suspense is Like a Designer Dog by Kylie Kaden

We bought our boys a spoodle for Christmas—a hybrid breed, pairing the friendly disposition of the cocker spaniel with the poodle’s intellect, and low-shed wool. We called him Rusty, and despite the worrisome statistic that males now outnumber females in my house 5:1, he’s adorable. Full of hybrid vigour, he represents the finer traits of both breeds.

In the same vein, I believe Romantic Suspense offers the best of the two top-selling genres in Australia: crime and romance. Blending sexual tension and mounting danger, it combines all we love about love—a romantic connection, with the push and pull, conflict and rich emotions that brings, but adding a twist of suspense that makes our heart race for a different reason.

Pioneered by the late Mary Stewart in the US in the 1950s, put simply, romantic suspense novels are driven equally and simultaneously by the threat of danger and promise of romance. Or to put it lightly, Bronwyn Parry describes it as “dead bodies and kissing, but not at the same time”.

You hear murmurs that subgenres can be difficult to pitch and hard to market. Stories with a crime element set in Australia are potentially a tough sell in the US, with different police processes making relatability harder. However, sales indicate it is definitely a growing genre, perhaps due to the

increase in readers seeking strong female protagonists and a little action (or chick-lit with grit).

Nora Roberts, Cherry Adair, Sandy Curtis, Helene Young, Chris Taylor, and Bronwyn Parry, to name just a few, have all had much success in the growing subgenre.

So is it for you as a writer?

I believe the most important thing an author needs to do is to keep the customer reading. To place those pesky words in that magic order to make people turn the page, and keep turning it. Pacing is critical, along with

getting readers to actually care about the characters, but having that extra intrigue—a ‘whodunit’ or baddie on the loose—makes it so much easier to keep readers engaged, invest, and make the journey with you.

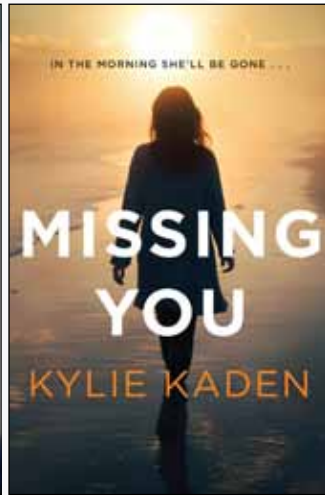
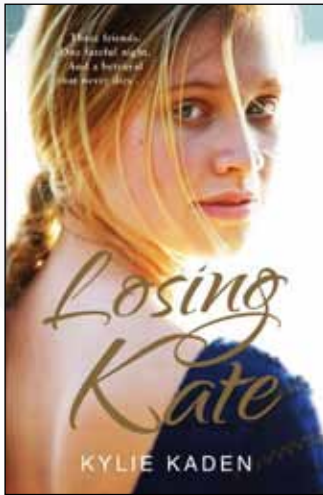
A story that weaves love and suspense, good and evil, sensuality and danger, isn’t without challenges: red herrings, when to reveal the villain, where to place the clues, keeping tabs on who knows what. It’s a little like a three-dimensional puzzle, littering scenes with seemingly superfluous facts and working out when key elements should be revealed in terms of the relationship between the hero and heroine.

Writing romance is hard enough—juggling characters’

**“Blending sexual tension and mounting danger, it combines all we love.”**







goals, motivations and conflicts, and developing a realistic connection between the couple. Weaving intense action scenes into a story without detracting from the subtle shift of a developing romance can be tough. But, if done carefully, both elements can work in tandem; action scenes filling the lows, romance buffing the edge off a fast-paced section, until both story arcs reach a crescendo that leaves the mystery solved, the villain detained, and reaching the happy-ever-after you were banking on.

Whether you think RS is for you, or you just want to add a bit of a twist to your love story, suspense is just another great tool to have in your toolbox—to heighten the stakes, give your heroine some grit, test your hero's worthiness, and illuminate the true character of the protagonists. After all, you never really know someone until you've seen them at their worst.

How do I use suspense?

I never set out to write a romantic suspense specifically (and I'm still not convinced *Losing Kate* fits squarely in the genre). But I did have the intention of having two equally important story arcs—the second chance at love for Frankie and Jack, and the unpacking of the mystery of what happened to their friend, Kate, who disappeared on a beach 13 years earlier.

Structurally, it was a brain-bender—many white-board markers and post-it notes were sacrificed as I interwove scenes from two parallel stories, linking the action of when Kate went missing to the residual emotional baggage the characters carried and unpacked together as adults.

My second novel, *Missing You* (out this month), also adds a mystery element when Aisha, a young mum, disappears. As Aisha's family inch closer to finding her after her blood-stained car is found abandoned, the reader is taken on a journey back to happier days when she met Ryan (the love of her life), all the while wondering what happened to Aisha. So it was another brain-twist, weaving scenes from present and past, from the heights of love and the depths of despair.

It can be lonely writing stories that straddle genres. It's like

being at a wedding and not knowing which side of the aisle to sit on. (Or an author at a bookstore trying to find your own book). I was at GenreCon last year (a convention for genre writers in Brisbane run by QWC) and I still didn't really find my niche, surrounded by single-minded love-addicts, fantasy world-builders, or those with murder on their minds (with no interest in the distraction of lovey-dovey bits in their serious book). It did make me ponder what genre is, and why we have it.

With a broad scope of tropes and heat levels in romance, I can see the need for further definition. Genre has an important role. It defines a work in order to sell it, and create expectations to help readers decide to read it. However, I hope writers don't feel compelled to grind away the rough edges to cram novels firmly in the pigeonhole their publisher/agent needs. That would be sad.

In my experience, some of the best people (and books) are an eclectic mix. So write the story in you, not the one that fits into a popular genre or the next trend.

So in the same way romantic suspense is like our Spoodle, subgenres are like dog breeds: conventions that give people clues on what to expect.

When we tell people we have a Spoodle, they nod politely, tell us he's adorable, but never quite know what to make of him. I get that some like the predictability of pure-breed dogs, just as some readers like the comfort of conventions; and not to have someone cark it in the middle of what they thought was going to be a breezy summer read.

But as with every dog, every story is its own, whatever label you want to pin on it.

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# Road Trips and the Tax Man

by Fiona McArthur



Gotta love being a writer. Road trip—research trip—taxable deduction.

So research trips, what you can get out of them, what to take note of, how to account for them for the tax man, and things to take with you to help keep track and make taking notes easier.

I'm writing my second ruro/medical/women's fiction for Penguin and it's set in Broken Hill. I need research and real experience to make my fiction feel real to the reader—and me. As we all know it's a hundred times easier to write the actual book when the people in your mind know about the place where they live.

So I've taken an iPhone picture of the time as I leave home and of the speedo. I've collated the accommodation bookings in order in the plastic folder, one for each page. This means all receipts for petrol, accommodation and food are lodged for each day. Of course just downloading the latest app, Shoebox, helps. Snap with your phone using the Shoebox app—such a clever invention—and it even drops it all into your inbox collated when you ask for it.

Maybe a quick mention on Facebook to say you're heading off (hoping that people who stalk and don't friend you aren't casing your house!). This will help set up a following of your travels, or even better do a blog. Annie Seaton did a brilliant job when we went to Italy and she had a great following as we went along. A blog—especially with pictures—is also great for jogging your memory when you're back and writing the book, and for doing visitor posts with other authors. I'll be using mine for Cathryn Hein's blog, which I'll be a guest on.

Or do what I do and start a draft page on your website which you hide until the trip is long gone, the book is coming out, and tada, it's finished. Great to have up your sleeve when readers want to know where and how the whole story was born and nurtured.

So here's the plan. Two days of eight hours driving to Broken Hill with the husband. Next day an overnight trip to Mount

Gipps Station, then Eldee Station, then three days in the Broken Hill Outback Church Stay while I soak in the history and passion of the Royal Flying Doctors and the iconic town of Broken Hill, and then home. And back to my other job.

So let's practice—you're hitting the road.

## Day 1

So up through the rainforest and the Gondwana World Heritage forests to the lushness of the green Dorriggo Plateau, and then down through Armidale and the huge boulder-strewn landscape to Tamworth.

I always feel like taking a solvent to the graffiti on Thunderbolt's Rock. I'm sure the bushranger would have known what to do with people who felt they had to leave their name in paint for future generations. Or is that the same as a cave painting? Maybe it's a historic mark for the future? Grrr, anyway.

Through Tamworth and the world opens out to the plains out of Gunnedah, then onto Coonabarabran, the astronomy town. There's a nice little lagoon stop with rolling green grass and picnic shelters from the sun, which is a nice relief from the heat outside the air-conditioned comfort of the car.

Driving onward to Gilgandra and a check of the email and my Penguin publicist for *Red Sand Sunrise* wants to know if I could do an ABC radio interview from Mount Gipps Station on the Monday morning? Hell yeah. One of my sons wants money as well but that's another story.

Gilgandra is very cool. After a step back in time with an old-fashioned milk bar dinner at the Formica tables, real homemade succulent hamburgers with lots of salad on big white plates, and the lovely smile from the country chef, we moved into our motel for the night.

The Orana Windmill Motor Inn at Gilgandra (\$103 a night) is quaint on the outside and modern and airy on the inside, with a friendly young couple (plus toddlers in the background) doing a fabulous job as hosts. Everything is clean and fresh and just plain thoughtful. So much so we booked the same room for the return on Friday. Gotta love a place with fine coffee cups and lovely wine glasses and a wee lounge area to sit and spread your computer out on.

So the speedo was written down again, the docket for the fuel and the meal is in the back of accommodation sleeve, and the day's best photos uploaded as day 1.

## Day 2

Leaving at sunrise the sun is at our backs. I took a picture down the Gilgandra Street—one in the rear-view mirror of the car and one of the moon high in the sky ahead of us.

The roads are straight out here, well-sprinkled with kangaroos, foxes and eagles, all best to avoid running into but good setting-fodder for the book. Thinking of a roo accident for

the heroine and how plausible it would be for it to happen.

Just taking note of the signs of morning for descriptions—shadows across the road in slanting lines, sheep grazing on one side and dark brown cows and calves on the other. And the setting moon at one o'clock, a faint silver ball in the blue sky. Occasional squares of lime-green cropping, next to bone-dry paddocks of water rushes. It's hard to imagine this whole area is a floodway, but the sign on the road says it is. Remembering wild dogs can kill sheep despite the fact it all looks so peaceful!

Could be a conflict between the hero and heroine when he wants to kill a wild dog. What sort of plant is the grain at the side of the road at Warren—wheat? Check that with research. Pink-and-grey cockatoos. Green parrots bursting from beside the green-and-yellow grass at the edge of the tar. First emu at 7:20am, then another, then a family with three chicks clustered around the mother's long legs as she bends her neck to eat scrubby grass.

HiLux ute, raised, covered in dirt, big floodlights whip aerial, sleepy cowboy behind the wheel.

Double-decker bus, Outback—makes me think of *Priscilla* and whether we can have a painted hotel in my fictitious town to say they copied Broken Hill.

Thinking about places the characters are going to socialise. Maybe next book make a character from the same pub or café.

Noting the impact the railway has on the towns further out. Close to the rails and stations. Everything around it runs beside the road and the rail.

Nyngan. I smiled at the 'NY 5 km' sign. We were a lonnnng way from New York.

But Nyngan has the biggest solar plant in the southern hemisphere and a long row of painfully new silver telegraph poles march across the flat plains away from it. Apparently the site has every type of snake and the workers aren't happy about them. Imagine being the on-site nurse there! It makes me think of the solar plant on the Matthew McConaughey film, *Fool's Gold*. The signposts all say Broken Hill ahead and apparently if we miss the town we end up in Adelaide. Despite the fact we'll be there this afternoon, we're further from Broken Hill now than Adelaide is.

Hermidale, a tiny outpost, with a sign that says open at 5:30am for breakfast and beer—not quite my tippie but everyone is different.

Starting to see anthills, 65km out of Cobar, another swerve for a carcass, and checked the phone. Yep, no service.

My brain is certainly stimulated. My husband says I'm like the harbour—something happening all the time—but I love the constant input of new sites and it make my brain swirl.

We've just left Cobar, it's 29 degrees outside. Seeing lots of goats at the side of the road in small groups and a few more emus. There are the occasional stations, barrenly isolated, surrounded by red dirt and stumpy trees and marked by big gates and painted farm machinery, or logs and swinging

signs. All have the big mailbox on the road for the delivery of everything when town is a long way away and the mailman will pick it up for you. It all looks less prosperous now; more hit by the drought with grey tin sheds, broken cars, and machinery, and no silos like there was before.

In the middle of nowhere now and come across a big ridge of rocks running in a thin line full of boulders. Makes me think about when that boundary rider found what he thought was tin on the ridge of Mount Gipps station and it turned out to be the largest deposit of silver in the world.

It's a long drive and you do need to stop at a couple of those tucked-in rest areas along the way or the road gets waving and your legs go to sleep.

This is one. Glorious white-barked gum trees and soil and quite a nice breeze under the tree we're parked under. Out in the sun it bites through your shirt. It's 34 degrees now and almost at Wilcannia, flit through with just petrol and Broken Hill is in sight.

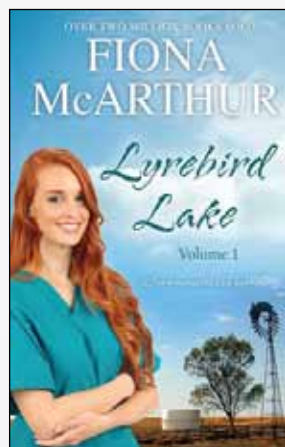
The land has changed again, to purple Paterson's Curse at the side of the road and yellow native bushes that are out in flower at the moment. Looks like native jasmine and very pretty but is probably a weed like Mr Paterson's bush.

It's 2:44pm and the heat haze is shimmering in the distance. Trees seem suspended in air above the earth in a gap where the mirage lies on the horizon. The pale yellow strands of grass at the side of the road are dancing in the hot wind. I see another emu totally unconcerned by the heat. Smart Alec.

There are very few trees and those that pop up close are stunted and small and the occasional cattle huddle with their heads in the shade and their rumps out to the fierce sun.

So we drove 775km today and headed straight to a heritage house motel with 12-foot ceilings and striped wallpaper. My husband is a little concerned about the stern bespectacled lady staring at us above our fireplace. I'm too busy writing down everything that happened.

*A series of articles on Fiona's travels will run in Hearts Talk over the next few months. Fiona's latest release is Lyrebird Lake Volume 1, a reprint of her first four Lyrebird Lake books with Harlequin. For more on the author and midwife, visit [www.fionamcarthuraauthor.com](http://www.fionamcarthuraauthor.com).*



# Meet the Organisers: Get Fresh in '15 Committee Profiles

RWA 2015 Conference: Park Hyatt Hotel, Melbourne • 21-23 August 2015

## Delwyn Jenkins and Jen Kloester: Programming Gurus

**How long have you been involved with RWA and why did you get involved in the conference committee?**

**Delwyn:** I lurked in RWA for a few years and totally under-utilised this fantastic organisation. I attended my first conference in Melbourne in 2011 and haven't looked back. I chose to volunteer for the *Get Fresh in '15* team because I owe a great deal to RWA and I thought it would be a concrete way of giving back. I pitched at the Fremantle conference and from that I was offered a publishing contract. I don't think I would have achieved my dream of becoming a published author without RWA.

**Jen:** I was lucky enough to be at the very first RWA Conference at Macquarie Uni and for a couple more after that before we moved overseas. In the early days it was very much a Mills & Boon-focused conference and I was privileged to meet people like Emma Darcy and Valerie Parv and to hear Marion Lennox who was then in the early part of her career. After we came back to Australia I rejoined RWA and have been to lots of conferences since then. It's always an inspiring experience and you get to meet so many amazing people—both published and aspiring to be published—plus, I got my first novel published with Penguin after pitching it at a RWA conference so I really wanted to give something back!

**You're the amazing RWA programming superstars and you have put in hours and hours and hours of work arranging this year's outstanding program. What has been the highlight/greatest achievement so far?**

**Jen:** Working with Delwyn has been a delight. She's super-smart and really savvy about meeting member needs and expectations. We both wanted to create a program that had breadth and depth and that would excite every participant no matter where they were in their writing career. We're really pumped that we have Mary Jo Putney and Patricia McLinn out from the States as well as our own local international bestseller, Graeme Simsion, as our keynotes and it's also been a real coup to have so many Aussie international bestsellers agree to speak on panels or to give workshops. I think the biggest highlight though has been realising just how many talented presenters we have in Australia and who want to be part of the RWA conference. While it made it hard to choose among the many submissions, it did mean we could create a program that (we hope) has a really good mix of craft, industry and practical workshops presented by an awesome group of skilled presenters.

**You're both clearly very skilled at this**

**role, how have you managed to secure such great talent to present at *Get Fresh in '15*? What's your secret?**

**Delwyn:** Persistence and the magic of Jennifer Kloester. Jen won't tell you this, but she worked her tail off securing our international guests. She followed up emails with phone calls to agents—most of which occurred at dodgy times of the day or night for us because she was usually calling the US. As far as the workshops go, we researched everyone who offered a workshop submission and went over their submission in detail. Then we measured that against the goals and needs of delegates coming to conference (whether they be Aspiring, Emerging or Established). And, of course, we had to ensure the program offered a diverse range of content. It's like juggling a baby duck, a raw egg and a chainsaw, but totally worth it when it's all done (and nobody's lost a limb).

**If by some miracle, you get a minute at the conference to participate in a session, which one/s will you attend?**

**Delwyn:** I'm really looking forward to Mary Jo Putney. I love her books, but more than that, she's responsible for one of my favourite quotes: 'Writers are desperate to be published but terrified of being found out.' I read that quote when I was pre-published and it resonated with me like nobody's business. I'm very excited about meeting her face-to-face. If I'm honest, there's a workshop I'd love to attend at every session, which makes sense seeing as I had a hand in the program.

**Jen:** It's funny you should ask that because just yesterday I went through the program and circled everything I would really love to attend and there's so many that there's no way it'll happen. I would love to go to C.S. Pacat's 'How to plot a page-turner' and Deb Werksman's talk on the evolution of today's publishing world as well as Alison Goodman's 'Scene Diagnosis' and the Media Bootcamp session and Alison Stuart's 'Simply Scrivener' and...you get the idea. I'm also really keen to attend Margie Lawson's 'Deep Editing', but I'm not sure I'll get to anything though :D

For more information about *The RWA Get Fresh in '15 Conference* please visit [www.romanceaustralia.com](http://www.romanceaustralia.com).



## Historical vs Contemporary

Moderated by Laura Greaves

Do days of yore get your blood pumping, or are you a 'here and now' kind of romantic?

### HISTORICAL

Elizabeth Ellen "EE" Carter is the author of the historical reads *Moonstone Obsession* and *Warrior's Surrender* (both published by Etopia). [www.eecarter.com](http://www.eecarter.com)

It's my pleasure to point out six ways that historical romance is superior to contemporary romance:

1. The gowns. One of the great lures of historical romances is the extravagant descriptions of sumptuous dresses and gowns, breeches and waistcoats. Contemporary heroines are all dressed up with nowhere to go on this point. Cotton, denim, polyester and spandex are as common as a trip to Target. And when it comes to unmentionables, no amount of skimpy whispers from Victoria's Secret can compare to the gasp of pleasure in the sensuous restraint of a corset.



2. The jewellery. No well-dressed Regency or Victorian heroine is complete without a stunning array of gems and jewellery. The blaze of diamonds, the fire of rubies, the flash of emeralds in the hair, on the ears, the neck, the wrist, the fingers—gold or silver—representatives of a heroine's status or a token of our hero's undying love. Unless your contemporary romance reading is of the billionaire hero type...

3. The sex. Nothing disrupts the flow of our voyeuristic voyage into the bedroom of our hero and heroine like one or the other interrupting coitus to pull out a condom. There are no such worries in historical romances—nature just takes its course and we get to enjoy the ride, so to speak.

4. The history. A well-written historical romance can open the door to a lifelong interest in and appreciation of history. Historical romance also connects with our time to further remind us that, whether our hero and heroine live now, 70 years ago, 100 years ago, 1000 years ago or 3000 years ago, people still live, loved, laughed and cried as we do today.

5. The fantasy. Historical romances heighten the fantasy quotient. Who doesn't dream of being a duchess, a princess, a lady pirate or swept up in a Cinderella-style rags-to-riches tale?

6. Shelf-life. I would argue that contemporary romance ages faster than historical romance. The very nature of a historical romance gives it endurance. A contemporary romance doesn't necessarily become a classic with age—it just dates.

### CONTEMPORARY

Mae Archer is the author of contemporary love stories *Return to Me* and *Hollywood Dreams* (both published by Momentum). [www.maearcher.com](http://www.maearcher.com)

Contemporary stories have so much variety and scope that will add unique flavour to your book. They reflect the world we live in, where women and men can be or do anything that they want, and so it can be set anywhere from a Hollywood movie set to a construction site to a dance school. The possibilities are endless and each setting adds another layer that can be used to create further tension.



Researching for a contemporary romance is so much fun because, while I'm still striving for accuracy and a sense of authenticity, I have so many avenues of research to access, from a YouTube instructional video to a newspaper article that tickles my muse and inspires a book. I even use Pinterest boards to create my world, such as finding my character's house, clothes, or food that they serve at a dinner party.

Complex plotting is required to ensure that the hero and heroine spend time together and have the opportunity for sparks to fly, while also introducing elements that create high stakes from a stalker who will do anything for revenge, to an ex who is blinded by jealousy, or an innocent who needs protection.

There is also a need to introduce the use of technology, and this opens up further opportunities for plot twists. From using SMS messaging as a faux date for the hero and heroine to communicate while watching a reality television show in their own homes, or a pushy best friend who hijacks the heroine's phone to send a much-needed message that will get the romance on track, it can be a tool to keep the romance going or to stall it as need be.

In conclusion, contemporary romance novels allow you to write one-of-a-kind stories, so let your muse run wild!

Laura Greaves is the author of *The Ex-Factor* and *Be My Baby* (Destiny Romance). Find out more at [www.lauragreaves.com](http://www.lauragreaves.com).

## Going Into Audio

by H.C. Brown

I am a great fan of audiobooks and have my iPod crammed with titles to read at my leisure, so you can imagine the excitement of receiving notification from my publisher that two of my books, *Cyborg Doms* and *Master Me*, will be available in audio format from Audible/Amazon later in the year.

The Rooster & The Pig Publishing, USA, contracted these books with a very generous royalty percentage. They are currently available everywhere in ebook format and *Cyborg Doms* is available in print.

My contracts included the rights for ebook and print but the offer to publish *Cyborg Doms* and *Master Me* in audio was a very nice surprise.

Moving books into audio is more involved than I expected. I am glad my publisher is handling all the details and will be covering the expenses. In the first instance, I had to fill out a narrator information form. This listed the sex of the narrator, nationality,

and type of voice—smooth, rough etc. The publisher made a selection of narrators, which most suited my stories. Each read and recorded a few pages of my books. I am currently listening to the auditions and once I pick one it will be full steam ahead.

I believe audiobooks are coming of age and I hope more publishers will offer this format option in the future. Personally, although I love holding my print book, audio is a fantastic way to listen to the beauty of an author's voice.

*Cyborg Doms: Science Fiction Romance*

Fane Jacobs, or 636, is a genetically and robotically enhanced human, with the ability to change his appearance at will. Trapped on Terros 9 in 3010 with a psychopathic owner, Gryd, his duty is to entertain Gryd's guests with his skill in the dungeon. Forbidden to show emotions, he longs for the comfort of a lover, and finds comfort in dreams filled with the image of a beautiful woman.

Classified as machines on Terros 9, cyborgs have no rights. Unable to stand the situation another moment, Fane steals a starship, and travels back in time to Earth in 2040. While exploring the city, a gang member shoots him when he goes to the aid of a woman during an attempted rape.

The woman, Dr Tamara Bright, drags him to her surgery, but she discovers his integrated neural matrix and other enhancements on the Bio Scanner. Will she turn away or fall hopelessly in love with the deliciously, handsome cyborg?

[www.hcbrown-author.com](http://www.hcbrown-author.com)



## Q&A with Hachette Australia's Fiona Hazard

**Publisher Hachette Australia has launched its own audio list, which is available for digital audio download through Audible.com.au and iTunes. We asked publishing director Fiona Hazard why.**

**Why has Hachette Australia decided to release an audio list?**

We felt that the time was right to launch our own audio list. Most people are enjoying audios and we have a great list of books that suit the audio reader.

**Will romance titles be included in this, and if so, can you mention any at this stage?**

We will be releasing select titles in audio and will make further announcements throughout the year. Our next audio release will be Beccy Cole's *Poster Girl*, read by Beccy Cole.

**Why do you think there has been a rise in the popularity of audiobooks? Does this interest look set to grow?**

Consumers are looking for different ways to enjoy stories and listening to an audio means that you can carry on doing other things, whether that's driving, catching the train or just enjoying listening. The popularity of podcasts and

recent series like *Serial* have also really increased the interest in the listening experience.

**Does Hachette have any stats on what the average audio-reader is like and where/when they're tuning in?**

Previously high prices and format restrictions really limited the audience for audiobooks here. Now with affordable digital download and subscription offers it can be anyone, anywhere—mums on the school run, commuters, truckers doing long haul. So it's both a growing audience and a more diverse one in terms of both gender and age [hence] we don't think in terms of an average listener or listening location anymore. For us, it's really all about producing a great listening experience for whoever, wherever.

**Is there a particular style of narrating that's favoured by readers or that Hachette will be focusing on?**

We are focusing on ensuring that we have exactly the right narrator for each book so that the voice marries with the content of the book. Having the author narrate the book also adds to the listening experience. The author is intimately acquainted with their characters and can bring them to life.

Anne Gracie here. My guest this month is Melanie Scott, who writes contemporary romance for St Martin's under her own name, and fantasy as M.J. Scott for Penguin USA. Two different genres, two different author identities and, therefore, two different websites, [www.mjscott.net](http://www.mjscott.net) and [www.melanie-scott.net](http://www.melanie-scott.net).

## A Rose By Any Other Name...

by **Melanie Scott**

Sometimes it seems like every time you turn around as a writer, there's another choice to be made. Often, one of the first decisions you have to make after selling or deciding to publish a book is what name you'll use.

Once upon a time, publishers might have dictated that a writer take a pseudonym for a number of reasons. An "unattractive" last or first name, a bad sales record, writing "too many" books a year or wanting to write in more than one genre. Which is why Nora Roberts is also J.D. Robb and Jayne Ann Krentz has Jayne Castle and Amanda Quick books and a lot of other writers have double identities.

To pseudonym or not, that is the question.

When I first started writing, I wanted to sell a category romance to Harlequin Mills & Boon. I had decided I'd probably use a different last name if I sold to them. Mostly because I had a day job using my own name and wasn't sure about outing myself.

I figured I could handle a different last name but was pretty sure that trying to learn to answer to a completely different first name would be no fun at all. But then the first book I actually sold ended up being a fantasy. So I had to think about the whole name issue again. Did I want to be Melanie Scott? Melanie Something-Else or another name altogether? I eventually decided on M.J. Scott.

M.J. is easy enough to answer to as I've been called that before. So M.J. I was. Then I accidentally sold a single-title contemporary romance series to a different publisher a few years later. And the name question came up again. Did I want to stay M.J. for a quite different genre for quite different books (my fantasy is darker than my contemporary)?

Publishing attitudes to names had changed a bit. Pretty much anyone who takes another name makes it an open secret now (unless they are writing a never-the-twain-shall-meet combination of genres like erotica and YA or want to maintain privacy between writing and real world stuff) and many authors publish multiple genres under one name.

But I decided to use Melanie Scott for my contemporaries (I wasn't so worried about the day job factor any more as everyone I work with knows). Part of that was good old-fashioned "I want to see my actual name on a book" (something I've heard quite a few authors with pseudonyms lament over the years) but part of it was wanting to signal that "this is different" to my readers. Which meant I suddenly had M.J. and Melanie aka the evil twins to deal with.

To thine own self be true (but wait, there's two of you).

Here's what I've learned about multiple writing names (some of which might apply if you want to have a pseudonym that's kept separate from personal stuff too).

1. It's a lot of work. I have two websites, two newsletters, two Goodreads author accounts, two Amazon author pages, two Facebook pages, plus a Facebook profile. As my identities aren't a secret and both are kind of my actual name, I decided to limit the craziness and have one Twitter handle, one blog and one Instagram, G+ and Pinterest.

If I had really different names that might not be possible and those would have to be separate as well. If you want to keep the names really separate or secret that you are both then you will absolutely have to duplicate everything. Even with limited duplication, it is still a lot of extra work and time.

2. It's more expensive. Two domain names, two websites, two mailing list subscriptions, two sets of promo materials etc.
3. Signing books with two different names is confusing. So far I haven't messed up at an actual signing but I've signed the wrong name to a contest prize book (luckily I realised before I sent it). I'm pretty sure I'm going to screw it up at some point at a signing and will have to shout the poor reader another book.
4. Talking about two different versions of yourself can be confusing. Each of my names calls the other one the evil twin. I have no idea who the good twin is. Sometimes I have no idea who I am (that may just be too many deadlines).

And that's without getting into juggling multiple publishers, which is a whole other article.

So a rose by any other name may smell as sweet and sometimes that other name might be a must-have (and I still think it was the right choice for me), but before you go changing things up, make sure you realise what you're getting into. And remember to choose a name you can answer to!



## When I'm Not Writing...

by Lexi Richer

When I'm not writing, I'm an astrologer. Most people who come for an astrology reading want to know the future. Or, more precisely, want to be told they have a good future. But this is not really what astrology is all about.

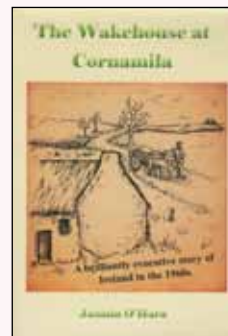
Transits, which analyse the effect of the movement of planets, can give a sense of how things will play out. The astrology chart will show what personal qualities an individual has—her strengths and weaknesses.

Romance is often on the minds of people who seek my services. Finding a soulmate can be rather tricky. Indeed, we all know that falling in love is a mysterious process, which accounts, I think, for the huge popularity of romance novels. We all want love and can have it. I utilise the astrology readings to assist my clients to understand themselves so they can maximise opportunities for lasting love.

When I'm reading astrology charts, I often think of 'what if' scenarios. I try to envisage the story that's wrapped around the charts. I like to explore how characters with certain signs respond to each other. For example, a Scorpio man with his moon in Taurus will have an instant attraction to a woman with her sun in Taurus. A Cancer man will often fall in love with someone who nurtures him.

The Sun and the Moon play a big role in who we are attracted to and our need for nurturing. The Sun, in some way, will signify what a woman wants in a man as the Moon signifies what a man wants in a woman. Mars and Venus (the masculine and feminine, respectively) tell us how the sexual instinct and the need for relationships interact.

And then there's the Saturn Return. At about age 29, we reach a crossroads in life that can be clearly identified on the astrology birth chart. At this time, the planet, Saturn, returns to its location at the time of birth. It is



associated with difficulty, the slowing down of activity and responsibility. There is the feeling that the rug has been pulled out from under our feet.

Writers seem to intuitively know this. Many romance novels feature a heroine around this age when their lives are being turned upside-down. The change of gear experienced at this time makes for interesting conflict—and readers love a character who rises to the challenge.

They say write what you know. My background as a registered nurse makes medical romances a logical setting for me. As a pillion passenger, who explores the Queensland bush by motorbike, I also envisage natural settings and scenarios for my romances.

This year of the Chinese Goat and of Saturn moving into Sagittarius gives a lot of impetus for creativity, research and attaining goals.

My first published novel is *The Wakehouse at Cornamilla*, released by Erin Press. I have two romances awaiting publication and another in the pipeline. [www.thewelloffire.com](http://www.thewelloffire.com)

Lead an intriguing double life? Let us know at [hteditor@romanceaustralia.com](mailto:hteditor@romanceaustralia.com).

## Hoot, Hoot! Announcing Your May OWL

### Weaving Setting into your Scene

What do S.E. Gilchrist & Stacey Nash have in common? Why, they're a hoot!!! Well, they are...but they are also the presenters of the May OWL for RWA on *Weaving Setting into your Scene*, which will run from 4 May to 31 May. The cost is \$25 to current RWA members and \$35 to non- and lapsed-members.



**Overview:** A story is made up of characters, events and the setting or scene. It is set in a world; a world of YOUR

making and it's important that the world, scene, setting is believable to the reader.

Whether you're writing contemporary or fantasy or science-fiction romance, the scene or the setting of the book plays a vital role in capturing reader interest. It can be used to evoke varying emotions in the reader and propel the reader to keep turning those pages.

Over the course of four weeks, Suzanne and Stacey will show you through a weekly lesson and exercises/homework the methods they use to create the worlds they write about.

You can find out more here at [www.romanceaustralia.com/owl/10](http://www.romanceaustralia.com/owl/10) including how homework will help you get more out of the course, but is not mandatory.



## Contests

with Erica Hayes

### Little Gems Short Story Contest

Our 2015 *Little Gems* placegetters are:

First: Kat Colmer—*For the Love Of Gnomes*

Second: Rowena Candlish—*How You Love Me*

Equal Third: Lisa Barry—*Peridot Silk*

and Anne Prince—*The Rules Of the Game*.

Anthology placegetters (in alphabetical order):

Elizabeth Ellen Carter—*The Tin Bear*

Heidi Catherine—*Peridot Eyes*

Kat Colmer—*Sweet Bombe Alaska*

Stella Frances—*Fragments*

Nicole Grant—*Lost and Found*

Fiona Greene—*Secrets Of the Past*

Harriet Jarvis—*The Enemy Next Door*

Kerrie Paterson—*Lost Love*

Anne Prince—*The Greening of Love*

Ute Rozenbilds—*Time Heals*

Michelle Skidmore—*The Peridot Package*

*Little Gems* Manager Lis Hoorweg says: “The standard was very high once again. The 15 successful entries scored above 94%, and all of the 63 entries received scored 70% or above.”

As usual, the anthology will be available in a lovely print edition by conference time. Thanks to all our judges, and congratulations everyone!

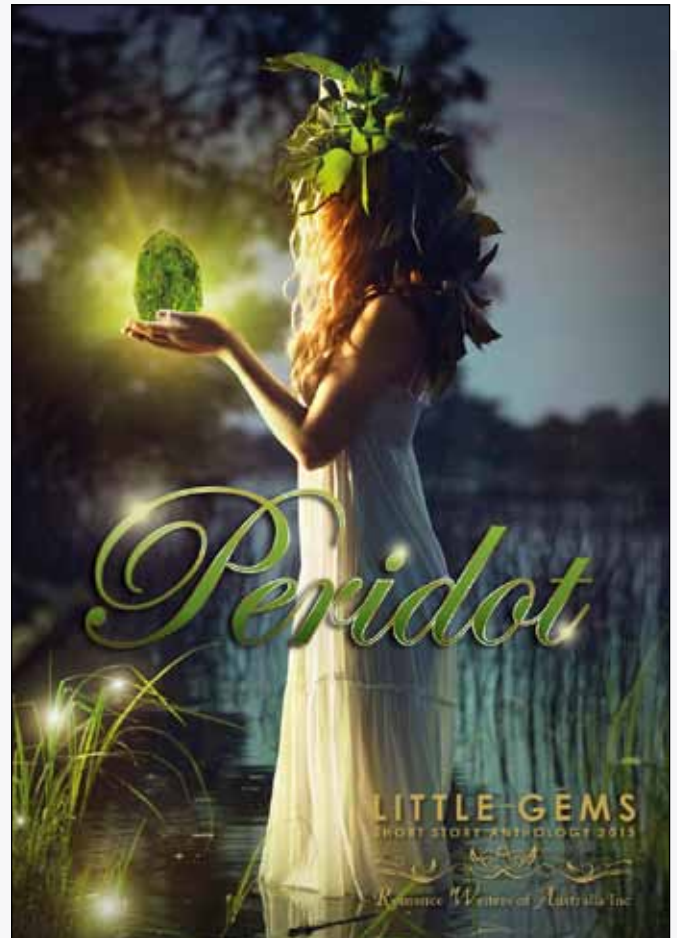
**The *Little Gems* Anthology Cover Contest** winner is (once again) Sheridan Kent, with this fabulous cover. Competition was fierce, with four covers making a hotly contested short list.

Thank you to all entrants for their fabulous artwork, and to our final judging panel, including our expert judge, graphic designer David Whitbread.

### Valerie Parv Award 2015

Our final contest for the season is nearly upon us. Where else can you get the chance to earn a year of mentorship by Australia's own Queen of Romance—multi-published HM&B, single-title, sci-fi and writing craft author, not to mention Australia Day ambassador and all-round guru—Valerie Parv?

The VPA will open for entries on **17 April**. If you're Aspiring



or Emerging, and unpublished and uncontracted in novel-length (40K+) fiction—that includes non-members who meet the same criteria—you're eligible. Your entry consists of the first 10,000 words of your unpublished romantic novel manuscript, plus a 1000 word synopsis.

Check the RWA website for details: [www.romanceaustralia.com/p/110/Valerie-Parv-Award](http://www.romanceaustralia.com/p/110/Valerie-Parv-Award)

### Cover Contest 2015

Want to show off your book's awesome cover art—and shower some love on your fellow RWA members' covers? Now's your chance! The Cover Contest for books published in 2014 is opening for entries during April.

Any member can enter their published cover art online, via the RWA website. Favourites will be decided by popular vote amongst members, and the winners announced at the RWA Conference in August. Check the website for details.



## Are you on Pinterest?

RWA is. You can find us at [pinterest.com/RWAus](http://pinterest.com/RWAus). Each month the new release covers will be added to our boards. Check us out. Thank you to Erica Hayes for setting this up and maintaining it.

## SUBMISSIONS

Melbourne publisher **Inkerman & Blunt** has announced a callout for submissions for its next collection, *Australian Love Letters*, edited by Bruce Pascoe. It says it's looking for "lip-stained papers of romantic love, the tear-marked pages of loss, and the blooded welts of passion, jealousy and desire, we're searching for heartbreaking notes from the fields of war, postcards from distant and glorious places, memos on the fridge and *Dear John* letters, emails and texts sent when love's departure is too cruel to speak of face-to-face." It can be from you to someone else, or you can imagine you're someone else writing to their lover. It can be addressed to whoever, or whatever you're in love with. Deadline for submissions: 29 May. Details: <http://inkermanandblunt.com/home/australian-love-letters-ed-bruce-pascoe>

Literary mag **Overland** has set up a new page on its site that lists a schedule of all its upcoming prizes in the one place: <https://overland.org.au/prizes/>.

From **Brian Grove's** *My Perfect Pitch*:

US-based publisher **Kensington** is currently accepting un-agented submissions for a myriad of fiction and non-fiction genres. It pays an average advance against royalties of \$2500+. Check its profile here: <http://myperfectpitch.com/book-publishers-usa/kensington/>

Tennessee-based **Etopia Press** is looking for manuscript submissions. It publishes romance and erotica, all subgenres, for adults and new adults. It also considers themed short story contributions for anthologies. Etopia pays advances of up to \$1000. Visit <http://myperfectpitch.com/book-publishers-usa/etopia-press/>.

Take a look at **Algonquin Books**. Three reasons: it is accepting fiction

and non-fiction submissions. It is known to pay hefty advances. But also, on its profile page, there is a video in which an Algonquin editor spells out why the majority of manuscripts he receives are rejected. Very enlightening. <http://myperfectpitch.com/book-publishers-usa/algonquin-books/>

## NEWS

From Publishers Weekly:

After 10 million views for free on **Wattpad**, indie romance author **Jerilee Kaye** published her novel, *Knight in Shining Suit*, priced at \$US2.99, with **Smashwords** and became one of the company's all-time bestsellers.

After word broke on 3 February that **Harper Lee**, author of one of the most-loved and bestselling American novels of all time, would be releasing a sequel to *To Kill a Mockingbird*, both the new and old books shot up Amazon's bestseller lists. In February, the new book, *Go Set a Watchman*, to be released by **HarperCollins** this July, claimed the number one spot on **Amazon's** chart, with *Mockingbird*, written 50 years prior, jumping from 7564 to the number two spot.

A Dutch artist has created a book that uses facial recognition to decide whether you are worthy of reading it. If it senses that you are either too excited or in a sour mode, it will lock itself shut, preventing you from reading in the wrong frame of mind.

Driven by its acquisition of **Harlequin**, revenue rose 20 per cent at **HarperCollins** in the second quarter ended 31 December 2014, over the comparable period in fiscal 2014, hitting \$469 million.

**HBO** has announced the air dates for its miniseries adaptation of **J.K. Rowling's** novel, *The Casual Vacancy*, with the British slice-of-life drama set to premiere in the US in a two-night block in late April. Meanwhile, the

*Harry Potter* author has alluded in a tweet that she was starting her next novel in honour of World Book Day.

Fresh off his seven-year run as troubled novelist Hank Moody on TV series *Californication*, actor **David Duchovny** has published his first novel. *Holy Cow* has been described as "a madcap postmodern fairy-tale narrated by a wisecracking teenage cow named Elsie".

For her *Oprah's Book Club 2.0*, **Oprah Winfrey** has selected **Cynthia Bond's** debut novel, *Ruby* (Hogarth). The first new selection in over a year, *Ruby* is the club's first paperback pick. The selection was welcome news for the struggling writer.

The **Association of American Publishers**, **Penguin Random House** and **Twitter** have announced the dates and featured authors for the third Twitter Fiction Festival to take place, virtually and globally, 11–15 May. **Margaret Atwood**, **Jackie Collins**, **Lemony Snicket** and **Chuck Wendig** are all slated to participate. During the festival, writers will receive daily time-slots during which tweets will be live-streamed to the Twitterverse.

**Interlude**, a boutique publisher of LGBTQ romantic fiction, is launching **Duet**, a young-adult fiction imprint, in June.

**Wattpad**, the online reading and writing community, has released *After Dark*, an app that offers its users a curated selection of romance and erotica.

*Divergent* author **Veronica Roth** is set to write a new two-book series, HarperCollins Children's Books told The Associated Press. The books currently are untitled, with the first one expected in 2017 and the next in 2018.

## Member News

**Belinda Williams** has had Momentum sign her up for three more books in her contemporary romance series *City Love*. The first book, *The Boyfriend Sessions*, was released last October, and the next three will be released this year and in 2016.

**Louise Roberts** has accepted a two-year worldwide publishing contract with Luminosity Publishing, UK, for her latest historical romance novella, *Letter from a Stranger*. The ebook is scheduled for release in June.

**Janet Woods** has had an offer by Severn House for her latest book, *Foxing the Geese*.

**Vanda Vadas** pitched her historical novel to literary agent Alex Adsett at last year's conference, and says: "Alex asked to see the full manuscript. Alex championed my novel, and long story short, in the week leading up to Christmas Eve 2014, I had three offers—from three of the top five Australian publishers—to publish my book. I have since signed with Random House Australia to have my historical novel, *The Pirate Lord*, published as an ebook due for release on 1 June 2015."

**Renee Hammond** has signed a contract with Eternal Press, US, for her contemporary women's fiction novel, *Pathways*. Release date to be confirmed.

The winners of the 2014 Australian Romance Readers

Awards were announced on 7 March at ARRA's Awards Dinner in Canberra. Winners of the Members' Choice awards were as follows:

**Favourite Cover:** *Play* by Kylie Scott

**Sexiest Hero:** Adam in *Outback Ghost* by Rachael Johns

**Favourite New Romance Author:** Alli Sinclair

In the main categories, the winners were:

**Favourite Paranormal Romance:** *Shield of Winter* by Nalini Singh

**Favourite Sci-Fi, Fantasy or Futuristic Romance:**

*Magic Breaks* by Ilona Andrews

**Favourite Short Category Romance:** *The Honeymoon Trap* by Kelly Hunter

**Favourite Historical Romance:** *The Winter Bride* by Anne Gracie

**Favourite Contemporary Romance:** *Play* by Kylie Scott

**Favourite Erotic Romance:** *Down and Dirty* by Rhian Cahill, Lexxie Couper, Jess Dee and Sami Lee

**Favourite Romantic Suspense:** *Safe Harbour* by Helene Young

**Favourite Continuing Romance Series:** *Stage Dive* series by Kylie Scott

**Favourite Australian Romance Author:** Kylie Scott

Congratulations to all the winners!

### Events

with Kate Wigseller

htevents@romanceaustralia.com

### IN PERSON EVENTS

Costings Code: M=Member, NM=Non-members. FMI=for more information.

#### Sunday 12 April

##### Book to Blog and Back

When: 10:00am – 4:00pm

Where: SA Writers Centre

Cost: NM \$160 M \$95

FMI + bookings: Ph 08 8223 7662 or

<https://sawriters.org.au/event-registration/?ee=169>

#### Friday 17 April

##### Maximising Your Online Media Kit

When: 10:00am – 4:00pm

Where: ACT Writers Centre

Cost: NM \$245 M \$160

FMI + bookings: Ph 02 6262 9191 or

<http://www.actwriters.org.au/events/upcoming-workshops-events.shtml>

#### Saturday 18 and Sunday 19 April

##### Self-publishing with Steven Lewis

When: 10:00am – 4:00pm

Where: ACT Writers Centre

Cost: NM \$450 M \$295

FMI + bookings: Ph 02 6262 9191 or

<http://www.actwriters.org.au/events/upcoming-workshops-events.shtml>

#### Saturday 2 May

##### Write Smarter: Project Management for Writers with Claire Scobie

When: 10:30am – 4:30pm

Where: QLD Writers Centre

Cost: NM \$160 M \$110

FMI + bookings: Ph 07 3842 9922 or

<http://www.qwc.asn.au/events/workshops-masterclasses/workshops/brisbane-write-smarter/>

#### Saturday 2 and Sunday 3 May

##### How to Audition Your Characters—a Masterclass with Valerie Parv

When: 10:00am – 4:00pm

Where: ACT Writers Centre

Cost: NM \$315 M \$250

FMI + bookings: Ph 02 6262 9191 or

<http://www.actwriters.org.au/events/upcoming-workshops-events.shtml>

NEW RELEASES APRIL 2015



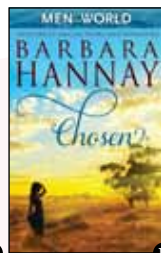
*All That Sparkles*  
**Claire Boston**  
Momentum



*Burnt*  
**Karly Lane**  
Harlequin MIRA



*Chaos Broken*  
**Rebekah Turner**  
Escape Publishing



*Chosen*  
**Barbara Hannay**  
HMB Special Releases



*Fairway to Heaven*  
**Lily Malone**  
Escape Publishing



*Guarding His Heart*  
**Annie Seaton**  
Entangled Publishing



*His Outback Cowgirl*  
**Alissa Callen**  
Tule Publishing



*Just One Night? Meant-To-Be Family*  
**Carol Marinelli & Marion Lennox**  
HMB Medical



*Lyrebird Lake Vol 2*  
**Fiona McArthur**  
HMB Special Releases



*McKellan's Run*  
**Nicole Hurley-Moore**  
Allen & Unwin



*No Rescue*  
**Jenny Schwartz**  
Escape Publishing



*Outback Fever*  
**Suzanne Brandyn**  
Indie Published



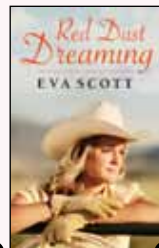
*Out of Rhythm*  
**Shona Husk**  
Escape Publishing



*Poetic Rhythm*  
**Selene Zanetti**  
Siren Books



*Propositions*  
**Tania Joyce**  
Momentum



*Red Dust Dreaming*  
**Eva Scott**  
Escape Publishing



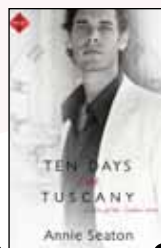
*Spiritbound*  
**Dani Kristoff**  
Escape Publishing



*Starling*  
**Virginia Taylor**  
Kensington Publishing Corp



*Sting*  
**Jennifer Ryder**  
Indie Published



*Ten Days in Tuscany*  
**Annie Seaton**  
Entangled Publishing



*The Bliss King - Captive*  
**Ainslie Paton**  
Indie Published



*The CEO's Baby Surprise*  
**Helen Lacey**  
HMB Cherish



*The Envoy*  
**Ros Baxter**  
Escape Publishing



*The Millionaire and the Maid*  
**Michelle Douglas**  
HMB Forever Romance



*The Shattered Court*  
**M.J. Scott**  
Roc (Penguin Group USA)



*The Sheikh's Princess Bride*  
**Annie West**  
HMB Sexy



*The Spy Who Tamed Me*  
**Kelly Hunter**  
HMB Sexy



*The Tycoon's Mistress*  
**Emma Darcy**  
HMB Sexy By Request



*Treasured Secrets*  
**Kendall Talbot**  
Escape Publishing

**E** Title available as ebook  
**P** Title available as print book (and often ebook too)

Please visit [www.romanceaustralia.com/newreleases](http://www.romanceaustralia.com/newreleases) to upload your new release cover for a future edition of *Hearts Talk*. Covers must be received by the 8th of the previous month.

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[www.endeavour.com.au](http://www.endeavour.com.au)

*Hearts Talk - April 2015*

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