

# Hearts Talk

The official journal of Romance Writers of Australia

Edition #278 | July 2016



## Story Master

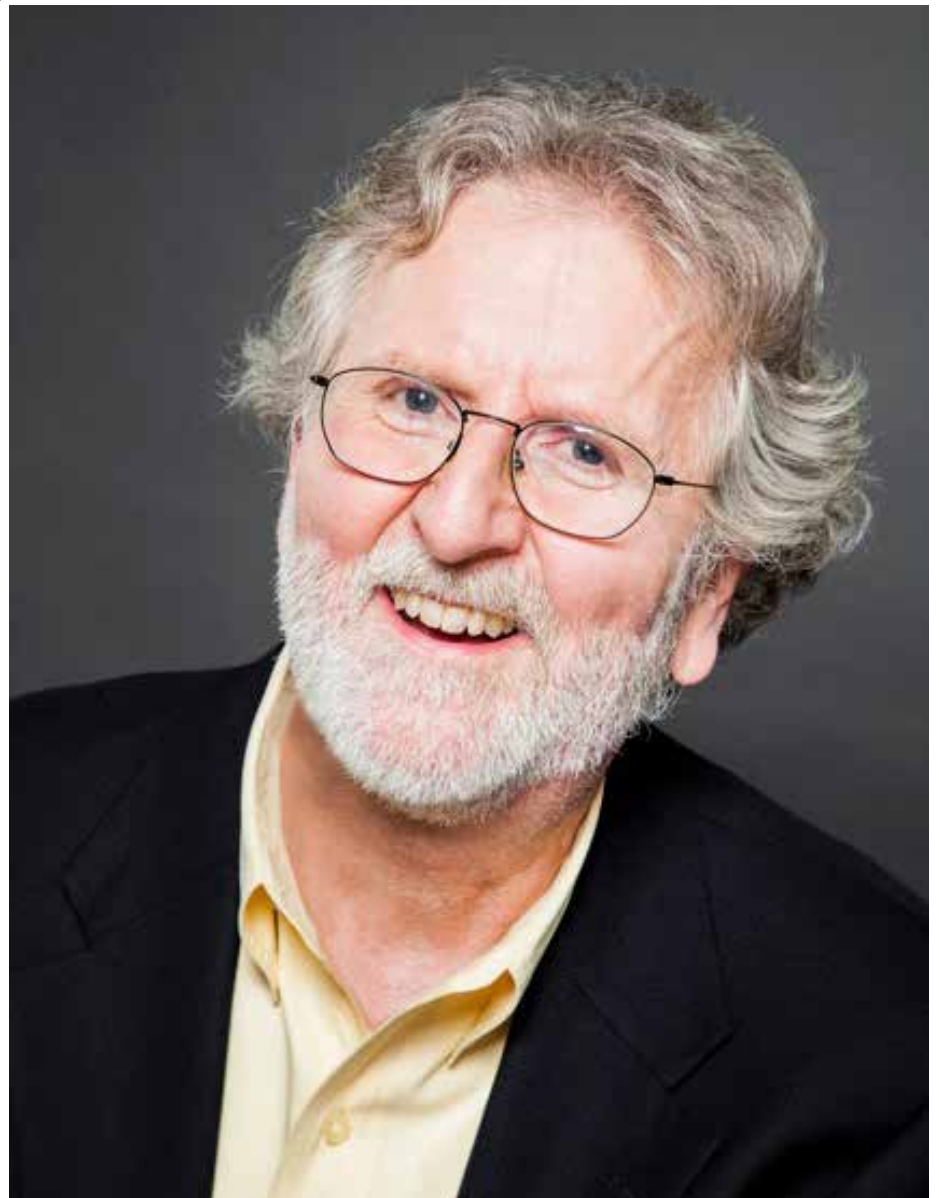
Hollywood script consultant and story coach Michael Hauge will teach a masterclass on the Friday of our national conference in Adelaide this August—his first time speaking at a Romance Writers of Australia conference ever. We spoke to him about what participants can expect, and more.

**Hi, Michael. Can you tell us a bit about what you'll be teaching at conference?**

The particular thing I'll focus on is how three things tie together: structure, character arc, and love stories. I've developed this over years of working in Hollywood with screenwriters, and then with novelists, speaking at nationals and to different chapters of the Romance Writers of America for the last 10 years.

When you write a story, whether it's a screenplay or a novel, the more visible the goal the hero is pursuing, the easier it is to envisage and the more emotionally involving for the reader or the audience.

Making your heroine's goal to be accepted, for example, is invisible. But if she wants to stop a serial killer, a kidnapping, an alien invasion—or to win the love of the hero—those are VISIBLE goals. They're the foundation



of what I call the 'outer journey': a journey of accomplishment.

The hero's or heroine's *inner* journey is a journey of transformation: moving from fear to courage. I will talk about how each of these journeys actually follows exactly

the same structure and why it's essential to understand both.

Then, when it comes to love stories, I'm going to talk about the single biggest mistake most love stories

*Continued on page 4...*



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Deadline for *Hearts Talk* submissions is the 8th of the month before publication.

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## From Your Editors



Well, winter has snuck up on us, and as hard as it is to believe, it's now only ONE month until RWA's 25th anniversary conference. Woo-hoo! Yup, almost time to rejoice in a quarter of a century of romance fiction fans joining forces in Oz.

Everyone who's anyone is going to be there, from Hollywood script consultant and story coach Michael Hauge to American romance powerhouse Heather Graham, who's written so many books and in so many different subgenres it makes us a little dizzy. Plus, US husband-and-wife writing duo Jim and Nikoo McGoldrick, and more editors, agents, writers, bloggers and readers than you can shake a pogo stick at. Can you tell we're a little bit excited? Hope to see you there! Here's what else has got us all giddy this month...

### Carla Caruso

- ♥ Rachael Johns' inspiring award win (head to page 13 for more details).
- ♥ The *Me Before You* flick—think I'm the only person in the world who hasn't yet read the book, but (sacrilegious, I know) I'm hanging out to see the movie.
- ♥ My two little men turning three on the 27th. Happy birthday, Alessio and Sebastian. The time has both crawled and flown!

### Daniel de Lorne

- ♥ Getting geed up about all the great speakers at workshops for the Adelaide '16 conference.
- ♥ Dancing to Kate Bush's *Wuthering Heights* in a red dress in Melbourne this month. Yep, you read that right. If you're in Melbourne, you should come along and join in the hilarity.
- ♥ Figuring out what to watch now *Orphan Black* season 4 is over. Who else has a crush on Felix?

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## Committee Profile: Victoria Purman

I've been a member of RWA since 2012 when the amazing Trish Morey told me at a workshop that if I wanted to write romance, there was no better organisation to be a part of.

She was right! Once I joined, I wrote my first book in six months, pitched it at the Gold Coast conference and won a three-book contract from Harlequin for what turned into my *Boys of Summer* series. The book that won me the contract—*Nobody But Him*—was nominated for a Ruby the next year, so believe me when I say I have much to thank RWA for.

That's why I put my hand up to become Sponsorship Coordinator this past year, which has been an excellent fit since Adelaide is

hosting RWA's 25th anniversary conference. Along with a brilliant team, led by the amazing Linda Brown as Conference Coordinator, we have worked hard to bring you what we think will be an incredible conference. I know how important conference was to my writing career, so for those coming for the first time—it's the best thing you can do.

In my "other life", I'm a trained journalist and I've done lots of writing jobs in my career. Now, I work part-time in communications. I'm the Deputy Chair of the SA Writers Centre and a long-time member of South Australia's youth arts funding body, Carclew. My tenth book, *The Three Miss Allens*, is releasing in October.





# Story Master

Continued from page 1

possess, whether it's on the screen or the page, and how it relates to those other elements.

Throughout this masterclass, I'll show movie clips as examples, and hands-on exercises will help people apply these principles to their own works-in-progress. I'll also be talking a bit about pitching and how you use the principles I've been talking about to persuade people to read your manuscript. [Check out Michael's Screen Australia industry lecture on pitching on YouTube for a head-start: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=KZrvGU10hA0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KZrvGU10hA0).]

## Can you 'name-drop' some of the celebrities you've worked with or films you've worked on?

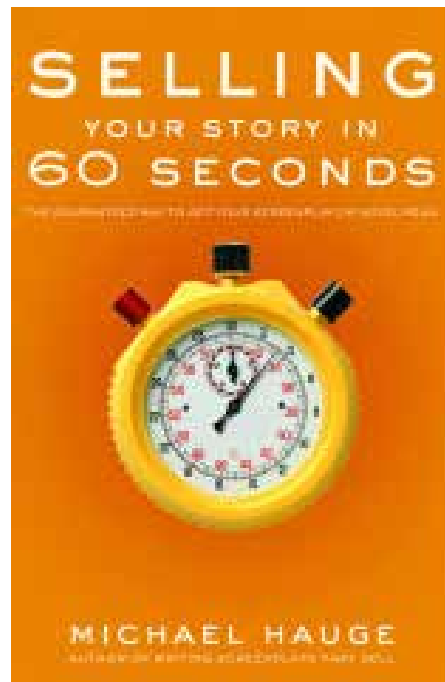
Probably the most well known person—and the one I've worked with the most in the 'name-drop' category—is [US actor] Will Smith. He first got a hold of me when he was filming *I Am Legend* and wanted some input on the script. I'd never met him and I had no idea he even knew who I was, frankly, but as a result of that, he also asked for some input with *Hancock* and that developed into me going on retainer with his company.

He's got a movie coming out late this summer called *Suicide Squad*—that's a script I talked to him about as well. He usually has me come in, we'll take a look at the script and hash out what's going on, how his character's developing, and how it can be improved and deepened. I've also been involved with a number of projects that were being developed by his company that weren't intended for him to star in.

Along with writers, producers, directors and studios, I sometimes work directly with actors, or sometimes I've worked on scripts that they end up starring in. I worked with Morgan Freeman, and I was involved with a script that Julia Roberts ended up starring in. I also

consulted extensively on a script that was being developed for Tom Cruise and Reese Witherspoon—it hasn't happened yet, but I think they're still hopeful.

I've done quite a bit of consulting on Australian films, usually through Screen Australia. They asked me to consult once on the script for *Last Cab To Darwin*. I know that was very successful in Australia and won



**“There are certain techniques, rules and tools that Hollywood does very well.”**

some acclaim, and it's also being released this summer in the US, which is a real accomplishment for a foreign film.

## How did you come into your line of work?

I've always loved movies, and for a long time, I had this pipedream of going to Hollywood and breaking in. But that always seemed ridiculous, so I never even told anyone about it. Then finally it reached a point where I figured, if I'm going to do it, I'm

going to do it.

So I just came to Hollywood, knowing really nothing and not even having a clear idea of what I wanted to do, because I didn't know what all the jobs were. I knew I didn't want to act and I didn't think directing was it either. Then I found a film school and one of the classes I took was in 'story analysis'. That means being able to read a script and write a synopsis of it and give your recommendations, so that the agents or producers of the studios you're working for won't have to read a lot of crappy scripts.

So I started out as a 'reader', and then out of that, a producer gave me a job as a development director, which meant I was now working with writers and looking for scripts the company could produce. But I had always wanted to teach, too. I actually have a degree in education but it's in early childhood [and] I was a terrible kindergarten teacher! My calling was to teach grownups.

So I started doing lectures and classes from the point of view of someone who receives scripts—as in, this is what we look for and this is what's wrong with 99 out of 100 scripts.

Then when I'd lecture, participants would ask: 'Would you take a look at my script?', which led to my consulting. Then they'd say: 'Do you have a book?' So I figured I had to write a book, which became *Writing Screenplays That Sell*. Its 20th anniversary edition was released a couple years ago.

And those three activities have basically never changed. I lecture about story, I write about story, and I coach people on their stories and scripts.

## Why will romance writers benefit from hearing the principles of Hollywood screenwriting?

The most obvious reason is that Hollywood knows how to do two things really well. One is to create

an emotional experience for the audience, and the other is to make money doing it.

No agent or editor is going to buy, or even keep reading, a romance novel if they don't think it's going to make money. And to do that, it has to be emotionally involving. It's my belief that, by and large, the ways that a screenplay creates an emotional experience for an audience are pretty much the same ways that a romance novel will for a reader—the way you present your characters, the way you create empathy, the way you structure your story, the level of conflict, and so on.

If your goal as a fiction writer is to reach a mass audience—and every storyteller I know wants to be heard—then you need to know the things that are going to appeal to a large number of people. So I think there are certain techniques, rules and tools that Hollywood does very well, which will be very beneficial to romance writers.

### **What if a romance writer is interested in adapting their novel into a screenplay?**

If you want to try writing a screenplay and think that's

something you'd like to do on a long-term basis, great idea. But if all you want to do is see your novel up on the screen, I would think seriously about trying to market the film rights and let somebody else option it and hire a writer to adapt it.

So the short answer is: if you want to be a screenwriter, cool, then go ahead. If you just want to see your novel turned into a movie, but you don't want to run the gauntlet of having to do that yourself, then market it to someone else.

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**“Will Smith first got a hold of me when he was filming *I Am Legend*.”**

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And if you really want to write a novel that is going to be alluring to Hollywood producers, then there are certain elements you want to be sure to include and I'll be talking about that at conference, too.

### **What do you think makes a great onscreen love story?**

I think a really strong love story is where we, as readers or viewers, truly believe—and know exactly why—these two people are each other's destinies, so they're not just falling in love because the writer wants them to.

There also has to be a chasm that separates the two lovers; obstacles standing in their way which seem impossible to overcome. If the only thing standing between them is that one of them had her heart broken and now she can't commit, or there's a misunderstanding between them that could easily be cleared up, that's not a strong love story.

The third element of a really great love story is one where not only do the two people make each other happy, and not only are the two people romantically or sexually attracted, but where the two people help each other transform. The core of everything to me is the idea of transformation.

**For more on Michael Hauge, visit [www.storymastery.com](http://www.storymastery.com). To register for Michael's masterclass in Adelaide or the full 25th-anniversary RWA conference, head to [www.romanceaustralia.com/p/246](http://www.romanceaustralia.com/p/246).**

## **Story Mastery with Michael Hauge – Friday, 19 August 2016**

During this special, all-day seminar, Hollywood script and story consultant Michael Hauge, best-selling author of *Writing Screenplays That Sell* and *Selling Your Story in 60 Seconds: The Guaranteed Way to Get Your Screenplay or Novel Read*, will present his unique approach to creating compelling fiction, and to eliciting emotion in your readers.

Using lecture, clips from successful Hollywood films and hands-on exercises, plus an in-depth look at a blockbuster romance comedy, Michael will help you master the principles of story concept, plot

structure, love stories, character arc and theme.

Topics include the primary goal of all stories; the power of desire, need, longing and destiny; the essential conflict all characters must face; turning plot structure from a complicated concept into a simple, powerful tool you can easily apply to every story; the single key to creating character arc and theme; creating unique, believable and fulfilling love stories; the unique rules of romantic comedy: fantasy, duality, deceit; and adapting your novel to film.

If you want to elevate your fiction writing to the highest possible level, this event is a must.

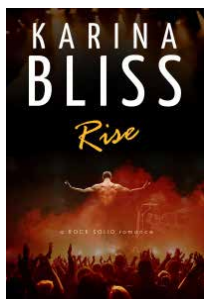
**Cost: members \$250, non-members \$275.**



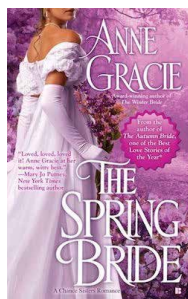
# Romantic Book of the Year Finalists

Congratulations to the Romantic Book of the Year (Ruby) finalists.

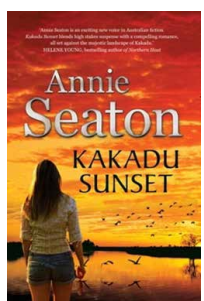
## Long Romance



*Rise* by Karina Bliss – self-published



*The Spring Bride* by Anne Gracie – Berkley/Penguin Random House



*Kakadu Sunset* by Annie Seaton – Pan Macmillan Australia



*Lethal in Love* by Michelle Somers – Random House Australia

## Romantic Elements



*A Dangerous Arrangement* by Lee Christine – Escape Publishing



*The Patterson Girls* by Rachael Johns – Harlequin MIRA



*Pay The Piper* by Mary Brock Jones – self-published



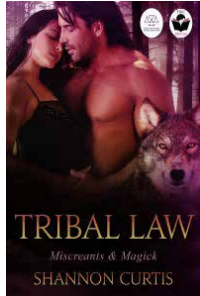
*Between the Vines* by Tricia Stringer – Harlequin MIRA



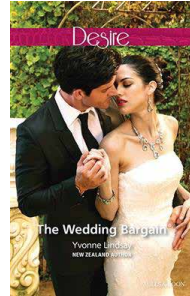
# Romantic Book of the Year Finalists

Congratulations to the Romantic Book of the Year (Ruby) finalists.

## Short Sexy



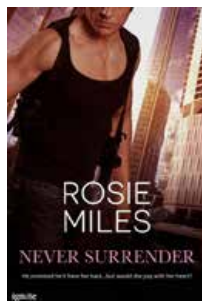
*Tribal Law* by Shannon Curtis  
- ARRA



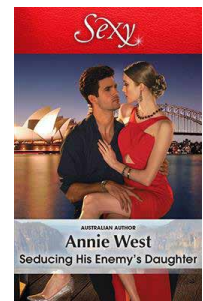
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by Yvonne Lindsay - Harlequin Desire



*Pretend It's Love* by Stefanie London  
- Entangled Lovestruck



*Never Surrender* by Rosie Miles -  
Entangled Ignite

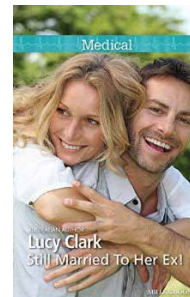


*Seducing His Enemy's Daughter*  
by Annie West - HM&B Sexy

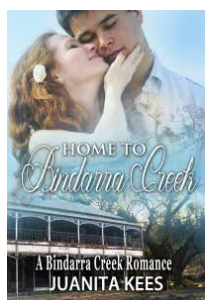
## Short Sweet



*You For Christmas* by Madeline Ash -  
Tule Publishing



*Still Married To Her Ex!* by Lucy Clark -  
HM&B Medical



*Home to Bindarra Creek*  
by Juanita Kees - self-published



*The Secret Son* by Joan Kilby -  
Tule Publishing



*Reach For The Stars*  
by Kerrie Paterson - self-published

# Romantic Book of the Year Finalists

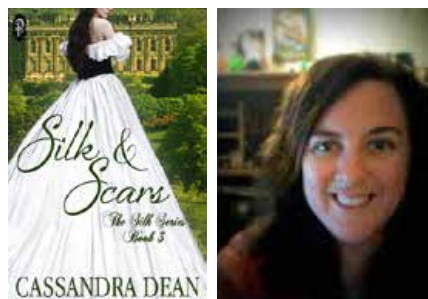
Congratulations to the Romantic Book of the Year (Ruby) finalists.

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## Novella



*Mistletoe Maverick*  
by Shannon Curtis – self-published



*Silk & Scars* by Cassandra Dean –  
Decadent Publishing



*Pursued By The Rogue*  
by Kelly Hunter – Tule Publishing



*What A Bachelor Needs*  
by Kelly Hunter – Tule Publishing

## Our Conference Supporters and Sponsors

It's not long now until the 2016 conference and RWA would like to sincerely thank all our sponsors for helping to make it all possible. Romance Writers of Australia is proud to welcome some very special sponsors on board for the 25th anniversary *Ain't Love Grand* conference in Adelaide in August. We'll have more sponsor news in August's *Hearts Talk*.

---

### Major Partner: Harlequin Australia



We are thrilled that Harlequin Australia is our Major Partner. Harlequin will help us celebrate 25 years of Australian romance writing with some very special events, including the Friday night Harlequin Cocktail Party and the much-loved Escape After Party on Saturday night after the awards dinner. And delegates will find Mills & Boon and MIRA books in their delegate satchels too.





Penguin  
Random House  
Australia



AUSTRALIAN ROMANCE  
READERS ASSOCIATION



Flinders  
UNIVERSITY



## Partners

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### Penguin Random House

We welcome Penguin Random House as a conference partner in 2016. They publish some of Australia's most loved romance authors, and we will, in particular, welcome bestseller Fiona McIntosh to present the Penguin Random House Plenary Address on Sunday afternoon. Delegates will also find books from Penguin Random House in their delegate satchels.

### Hachette Australia

We are very pleased to welcome Hachette Australia as a Partner in 2016. Through its *Books With Heart* online community, it is creating a strong romance community. Delegates will receive a book from Hachette in their delegate satchels and will see the *Books With Heart* coffee carts over the course of the conference selling coffee.

### Fuji Xerox

Fuji Xerox is a new partner and the generous sponsor of our *Little Gems* anthology this year.

### Australian Romance Readers Association

Once again, ARRA is organising the Saturday night author signing with 64 authors and we thank ARRA and its members for all they do to support and promote Australian romance writing.

### Flinders University

Flinders University is partnering with Romance Writers of Australia to deliver two peer-reviewed academic days, bringing together a diverse and dynamic community of researchers on love and romance.

### Dymocks

We are pleased to welcome Dymocks Adelaide as our official conference bookseller. Mandy Macky and her team are such great supporters of romance writers, often hosting book launches in their Rundle Mall store.

### Jolleys Boathouse Restaurant

Adelaide's iconic Jolleys Boathouse Restaurant is proud to welcome RWA's VIPs with a lunch on the banks of the Torrens River, sampling some of SA's finest food and wine. It's Oprah's restaurant of choice when she's in Adelaide!



## Supporters

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### Haigh's

Haigh's is the oldest family-owned chocolate maker in Australia and proudly South Australian. Delegates will receive vouchers in their conference satchels for 10% off Haigh's products. Luckily there is a Haigh's shop at Glenelg—a short walk from our conference venue, the Stamford Grand Hotel.

### SA Writers Centre

SA Writers Centre is a not-for-profit organisation that aims to foster, develop and promote writers and writing. The centre, which has over 1200 members, was the first of its kind in Australia and continues to act as a resource for people of all ages and experiences, assisting both new and established writers on every aspect of craft and publishing. The SAWC has been the meeting place for South Australian Romance Authors for more than two decades.

# Sponsor Spotlight: **Harlequin Australia**

We're thrilled to welcome Harlequin Australia as our Major Partner for the 2016 RWA Conference in Adelaide. For as long as RWA has been in existence, Harlequin has been a supporter of Australian romance writers and their books.

Once again this year, Harlequin will be providing books for our delegate satchels, which we know are a member favourite, and as well as the Harlequin Cocktail Party on Friday night, we'll all be dancing the night away at the Celebrating 25 Years of Harlequin Mills & Boon Awards Dinner After-Party.

We look forward to celebrating 25 years of romance writing in Australia together.



## Harlequin Australia Author in the Hot Seat: **Tess LeSue**

**Amy T. Matthews, who is a creative writing lecturer at Flinders University in Adelaide, is organising RWA's academic University of Love conference stream this August. She also now writes as 'Tess LeSue' for Harlequin. We chatted to Amy about her new MIRA book, *Bound For Eden*, and more.**

### **Amy, tell us about your publishing journey.**

Like most authors, I've written for as long as I could hold a pen. I used to make books with my mum before I could even write. I'd tell her the story, she'd write the words down, and I'd draw the pictures, then we'd staple the pages together. Even then, most of them were romances.

I always knew I wanted to be a writer but I didn't treat writing like a career until my mid-twenties. I just drifted along, studying, working, travelling, bouncing through life the way you do in your twenties. But when I was 26 years old, I quit my job (as a wedding coordinator) and went back to university to do honours, and then I did a PhD in creative writing.

I didn't really know what kind of books I wanted to write; partly that's because I enjoy writing everything. My honours supervisors said I had 'breadth', which I think is a curse as much as a blessing. It means I don't have a 'natural' genre or voice. I like it all and kind of want to give it all a go.

I wrote 'literary fiction', which was really just fiction that blended a bunch of genres and was hard to market. As a result, it was hard to get it published (and it still is). I have two books out under my own name (Amy T. Matthews): *End of the Night Girl* (fiction) and *Navigating the Kingdom of Night* (non-fiction).

But the thing I didn't cop to at university (although I certainly do now) was that I loved romance. While I certainly was a nerdy lit kid who read Steinbeck and Woolf and Solzhenitsyn and Sylvia Plath for fun, I also had an addiction to historical romance novels. I devoured everything I could get my hands on: Kathleen Woodiwiss, Rosemary Rogers, Shirlee Busbee, Johanna Lindsey, Jude Deveraux... So while I read and wrote literary fiction, I also read and wrote romance. I wrote my first historical romance when I was 18 or 19.

The literary books were the first to get me noticed, when I won the Adelaide Festival Unpublished Manuscript Award, was longlisted for *The Australian/Vogel* literary award, and shortlisted for the Dobbie



Literary Award and Colin Roderick Literary Award, but I had every intention of publishing romance, too. In many ways, it's my first love.

In 2008, I joined the South Australian Romance Authors after going to a workshop Trish Morey gave at the SA Writers Centre, and the same year, I went to a RWA roadshow and the RWA national conference. I've been to every conference since. I had never met writers like the ones in RWA: professional, generous, driven, supportive. When I joined, I had two young kids (they were one and three at the time) and a day job and it was hard to stay motivated to write (especially juggling more than one genre of manuscript!), but RWA gave me the energy to keep going.

I entered competitions (coming second in the Emerald, the STALI single-title, and the Emerald Pro, and winning the Anna Campbell Award), and I pitched at every conference. I submitted queries and had requests and got rejections. Man, did I get rejections. One of the hardest weeks of my life was the week I got seven rejections in seven days. And one of the books getting the most rejections was one I most believed in. Fiercely. I loved that book. But it was a Western, and nobody wanted Westerns. They wouldn't touch them with a 10-foot pole.

And then I hit a year when my whole life seemed to fall apart. I lost my job. My marriage ended. I couldn't sell a book. So there I was, with two young kids, no husband, no job... and the rejection letters streaming in. I won't lie. I felt like I was out for the count. On a practical level, I had no way to pay the mortgage. On a personal level, I didn't know who I was anymore. Getting a rejection letter when you're in that place is like being kneecapped.

But the thing is, I had you lot. It was other romance writers who picked me up off the floor and told me to apply for the Members Assistance Fund to go to Fremantle. *Fremantle? I can't go to conference! Look at the wreckage here...* Apply, they told me firmly. They sent me links to the application. They wrote me letters of support. *I can't*, I told them, *that money is for people who need it.* **You** need it, they said. And they were right. I did.

In 2013, I got the Members Assistance Fund and went to conference, where I pitched. In a fairy-tale, I would have sold the book. I didn't. But something equally great happened. One of the NY editors told me that Westerns were hot again and I should dust off mine and send it out.

Which I did.

It got rejected. A lot.

And then it sold. To [Harlequin] MIRA, to people who loved it as much as I did, who 'got' it, and

who have worked hard to produce a beautiful book. And when I look at *Bound for Eden*, I think of that time and how hard it was, and of the romance writers in my life who pulled me up off the floor and prodded me along and got me over the line. (Just so you know, since those dark days, I got my dream job and my dream man, too. And sometimes I think y'all are my fairy godmothers and made that happen along with the book.) But in all seriousness, the MAF and the opportunity to go to conference in one of the darkest times of my life is something I will be forever thankful for.

### **What inspired you to set *Bound For Eden in the Wild West*? And can you tell us more about the novel?**

I am the biggest movie buff and I love classic films. I think films like *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*, *Shane*, *The Searchers* and *High Noon* were all big influences on me. Not to mention the revisionist Westerns like *Unforgiven* and *Dances with Wolves*. I loved the TV series, *Deadwood*, too. And I also loved Johanna Lindsey's Westerns from the late '80s and early '90s.

I think it's partly because I'm Australian, so the romance of the frontier is familiar to me (and the American West has a hopefulness in its mythic representation, which is different to Australia—our frontier myths have historically been more gothic). But it's also because in Westerns, women have agency; they are admired for their sass and for being strong and independent and capable. They're not marriageable misses and decorative objects. They're tough and often ride right alongside the men, gun-slinging and cursing and breaking free.

*Bound for Eden* was so much fun to write. Just the most fun. It's a romp of a book, full of adventure and mistaken identities. Alex Barratt is fleeing from the murderous Grady brothers, with her younger brother and sister in tow. Disguised as a boy, she joins a wagon train captained by

the irresistible Luke Slater. Luke has no idea that the scruffy boy in his care is none other than the woman of his dreams. And it's just so much fun watching them making a mess of things as they head West!

### **'Tess LeSue' is a pseudonym. What was the inspiration for this, and why do you write under two names?**

I chose to write under a pseudonym because the romances are so different from the literary fiction I write under my own name. They're just such different markets and I didn't want to confuse readers. That was the only reason for it. It's certainly not a secret. Both of my websites link to each other.

### **How do you manage to straddle both worlds: genre fiction and literary fiction/academia?**

Sometimes it feels like straddling, but only when I'm dealing with bureaucracy. The rest of the time it's just a reflection of who I am. I think of it as like playing an instrument. You can play a lot of different music with the one instrument. Reading, thinking and writing is what I do. I just play different 'music' with those instruments.

I love all kinds of writing, from the scholarly to the commercial, and to my mind they're just different ways of expressing ideas (and often the same ideas). Some music suits an idea better than others. And I love teaching. It's so much fun to talk books and theory and craft for a living. But I will confess it's not easy (as you all know all too well), working full-time, parenting and trying to squeeze in writing, too. The straddling that's difficult is the one all of us have to cope with: how to find the time and energy to keep writing.

### **What is it about historical romance novels that appeals to you?**

I have always been obsessed with history and my first degree was in History and English. *End of The Night Girl* and *Navigating the Kingdom of Night* were concerned with World War II and the Holocaust. Everything I do seems



to circle around history. I've always inhaled historical novels of all kinds and historical romances have a special place in my heart.

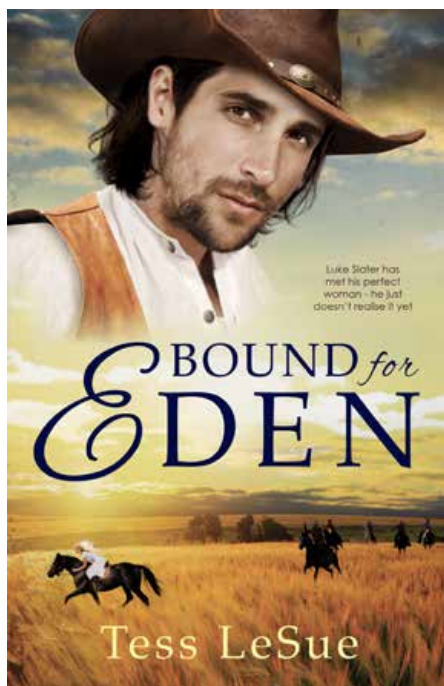
When it comes to historical romance, what I love is that it is a fantasy version of history. History really sucked for women. I mean, it *really* sucked. I have a friend, who is a well-known novelist, and she wishes she lived in the 19th century, but I can't think of anything worse.

I probably would have been a scullery maid, or working in the fields, or slaving in a factory; I probably would have had 13 kids, and had a one-in-four chance of dying in childbirth; my husband would have had every right to hit me and rape me; and by the age I am now, I would have been an old woman. I'd much rather be here and now, thank you very much.

As a woman, reading history is quite chastening. You know you would have had a hard time of it. But reading historical romance is something else altogether. Historical romance is a fantasy. The romances I write are like the Technicolor musical version of history: more *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* than the actual Wild West (which must have been brutal for women).

### Which writers do you most admire?

There are far too many to name them all! I'll stick to historical romance or we'll be here all day. There are so many who inspire me. I envy Julie Garwood's deft touch. She has the quirkiest heroines and she's laugh-out-loud funny. I know I'm guaranteed excellent fun when I pick up one of her books. I still have a soft spot for Jude Deveraux (I must have read *The Velvet Promise* 60 times), vintage Johanna Lindsey (1980s/90s era),



and LaVyrle Spencer (her Westerns were so evocative).

I adored Kathleen Woodiwiss when I was a teenager (and the cross-dressing heroine in *Ashes in the Wind* was probably a big influence for *Bound for Eden*—I found the hero and heroine's exchanges so funny in that book when he knew she was a girl in disguise). Judith McNaught is another classic author I'd have to cite as a major influence.

The more recent authors I've learned from are Anne Gracie (my, can she write!) and Anna Campbell (whose powerfully energetic voice makes me weak with envy), Lisa Kleypas (whose plots I think are so fun) and Julia Quinn (for froth and charm). Can I also throw in Larry McMurtry? He's not romance, but his Westerns are a huge influence on me as a writer. I just love his work.

## Hoot! Hoot! OWLs for the rest of 2016

### SYNOPSIS, BLURB, COVER LETTER, BIO: YOUR BOOK-SELLING TOOLS

**Presenter:** Samantha Bond

**Dates:** 05/09/2016–02/10/2016

[www.romanceaustralia.com/owl/24](http://www.romanceaustralia.com/owl/24)

### MAKE FACEBOOK YOUR FRIEND: SIX WAYS TO MAKE FACEBOOK WORK FOR YOU AS A WRITER WITHOUT MORTGAGING YOUR HOME

**Presenter:** Sara Hood

**Dates:** 03/10/2016–30/10/2016

[www.romanceaustralia.com/owl/23](http://www.romanceaustralia.com/owl/23)

### SELF-PUBLISHING FOR BEGINNERS

**Presenter:** Cathleen Ross

**Dates:** 01/11/2016–28/11/2016

[www.romanceaustralia.com/owl/25](http://www.romanceaustralia.com/owl/25)

### HAVE YOU HEARD ABOUT MISS JONES? UNDERSTANDING CHARACTER-DRIVEN PLOTING THROUGH ANALYSING *BRIDGET JONES'S DIARY*

**Presenter:** Samantha Bond

**Dates:** 01/11/2016–28/11/2016

[www.romanceaustralia.com/owl/26](http://www.romanceaustralia.com/owl/26)

### WRITING THE SHORT STORY FOR SUBMISSION

**Presenter:** Louisa Bacio

**Dates:** 28/11/2016–25/12/2016

[www.romanceaustralia.com/owl/27](http://www.romanceaustralia.com/owl/27)

# Win for Rachael... and Romance

RWA member and Perth rural romance queen Rachael Johns pulled off a coup in May, winning a prestigious Australian Book Industry Award (or ABIA).

Every year since 2000, the Australian Publishers Association has presented the ABIAs and the announcement of the winners is the biggest industry event on the nation's literary calendar.

A diverse and respected judging panel of more than 100 industry figures, publishers and booksellers compile the shortlist and select the winners, acknowledging the best books and most talented creators.

Rachael's novel, *The Patterson Girls* (Harlequin MIRA), was in a shortlist with *Close Your Eyes* by Michael

Robotham (Sphere, Hachette Australia), *The Lake House* by Kate Morton (Allen & Unwin), and *The Perfumer's Secret* by Fiona McIntosh (Michael Joseph, Penguin Random House).

On winning the General Fiction Book of the Year award, Rachael says: "Honestly, I was seriously gobsmacked when Juliet Rieden, editor of *The Australian Women's Weekly*, named *The Patterson Girls* as the winner for General Fiction Book of the Year. It was such a surprise and honour to make the shortlist but I never expected to win up against such fabulous authors. It is a great honour for me and for commercial women's fiction in general,



Rachael Johns with Harlequin Australia's Sue Brockhoff on the night.

and I hope because of it, people take more notice of what great things Aussie romance writers are doing at the moment! This is definitely the highlight of my writing career thus far."

## The Full List of the 2016 ABIA Winners

**Book of the Year 2016:** *Reckoning: A Memoir* by Magda Szubanski (Text Publishing)

**Biography Book of the Year:** *Reckoning: A Memoir* by Magda Szubanski (Text Publishing)

**General Fiction Book of the Year:** *The Patterson Girls* by Rachael Johns (Harlequin MIRA)

**General Non-fiction Book of the Year:** *Island Home* by Tim Winton (Hamish Hamilton, Penguin Books Australia)

**Illustrated Book of the Year:** *The Happy Cookbook* by Lola Berry (Plum, Pan Macmillan Australia)

**International Book of the Year:** *Gut: The Inside Story of Our Body's Most Under-rated Organ* by Giulia Enders (Scribe Publications)

**Literary Fiction Book of the Year:** *The Other Side of the World* by Stephanie Bishop (Hachette Australia)

**Matt Richell Award for New Writer of the Year:** *Salt Creek* by Lucy Treloar (Picador Australia, Pan Macmillan)

**Book of the Year Older Children (age range 8 to 14 years):** *Illuminae* by Amie Kaufman and Jay Kristoff (Allen & Unwin)

**Book of the Year for Younger Children (age range 0 to 8 years):** *The 65-Storey Treehouse* by Andy Griffiths, illustrated by Terry Denton (Pan Macmillan Australia)

**Small Publishers' Children's Book of the Year:** *The Underwater Fancy-Dress Parade* by Davina Bell, illustrated by Allison Colpoys (Scribble, Scribe Publications)

**Small Publishers' Adult Book of the Year:** *All Fall Down* by Matthew Condon (University of Queensland Press)

**Lloyd O'Neil Award:** Brian Johns

**Pixie O'Harris Award:** Jackie French

**2016 Independent Book Retailer of the Year:** Readings

**2016 Book Industry Innovation Award:** Quirky Kid

**2016 National Book Retailer of the Year:** joint winners Dymocks Books and Booktopia

**2016 Publisher of the Year:** Allen & Unwin

**2016 Small Publisher of the Year:** NewSouth

# Looking Back at Romance Fiction

This August, Romance Writers of Australia celebrates 25 years. Yes, a quarter of a century! Hence, we thought it was a good idea to do a retrospective piece on the romance writers and books that have inspired us over time. We spoke to some of Oz's established—and newer—authors about their thoughts.

## Anne Gracie

**Anne is an award-winning author of 19 novels and published with Berkley USA, Penguin Australia and Harlequin International. She's famous for her Regency-era historical romances, which have been translated into 18 languages.**

**Anne, you've been published since 2001. What changes have you noticed in the way romance novels are now written?**

I do think things have changed, though to me it doesn't feel that long a time. Of course some writers have always delivered superb reads, and that hasn't changed, but I've been rereading some of the romances I first read, and yes, some changes are obvious:

By comparison, modern books tend to have less description, tighter storylines, and more happening, faster.

I think also the heroines, in particular, are much more active, less 'acted upon', and more skilled in a variety of ways.

There's also more political correctness, even in historicals, where attitudes and mores of the time are softened and made more appealing to modern readers. We are



talking about commercial fiction, after all, in which the beliefs and attitudes of readers need to be taken into account.

I also think some books today are 'cleverer' in that they go deeper into the personality and background of the characters. These days, characters and their issues have to be psychologically convincing, as well as appealing to independent modern women, and I think that the general population is more educated about various psychological issues than they used to be.

**Have publisher expectations changed over the years?**

I'm not sure that they're publisher expectations as much as reader expectations. Publishers respond to the market, and readers' choices drive that market.

As society has changed so have readers' preferences. Readers have little sympathy these days for a heroine who is a domestic doormat or a hero who is simply a passion-driven brute. The character archetypes are more nuanced, and deeper, I think.

As for love scenes, they're getting more explicit all the time, a trend we see in movies and on TV. The boundaries are always getting pushed. Whether or not the love scenes move the reader emotionally is, I think, something quite separate and different from the explicitness of the writing.

In some of the older books with very

little explicit description, the authors have created great sexual tension—sometimes much more powerful than the much more explicit and adventurous modern books.

Or perhaps it's just that the market is flooded with sexually explicit but fairly averagely written books, which makes readers jaded.

**Are there any romance fiction trends from bygone days, which you're glad are no longer popular?**

I hated the 'rapey' style of romance that was around in the '80s—the so-called 'forced seduction', where the hero forced himself on the heroine, and it was somehow okay because deep down she loved him.

It was started, I think, by the publication of *The Sheik* by E.M. Hull in 1919. In that book, the sheik raped the heroine repeatedly—and she fought him every step of the way, but in the end, she came to love him. It was the *Fifty Shades* of its day. It was made into a silent movie with Rudolph Valentino and women fainted in the aisles, watching it.

So it's a powerful fantasy with many readers, and though it's not nearly as widespread or as obvious as it used to be, it still comes back in variations.

**When did Regency romance get really big and what do you think was the catalyst?**

Georgette Heyer was the writer who more or less created the Regency genre. She's the reason the Regency is the only historical



period we associate with romantic comedy, when, in fact, people in any time can be funny. But she was a brilliant writer and wrote some of the funniest exchanges ever. Jane Austen, of course, added to that impression, though she was writing contemporaries at the time. However it happened, Georgette Heyer became a model for a lot of writers.

I'm not sure when the Regency got big. I came late to genre romance and didn't know a lot about the US market at first. That's when there was a real boom in the '70s and '80s,

I think; when the US historicals really boomed. And in the US, Regencies for some reason—perhaps Heyer again—became associated with 'sweet' romance i.e. no sex.

I was very confused at first, when people kept telling me Regencies had no sex, and I was reading Mary Balogh, who had very intense sex scenes in her Regencies.

But the genre keeps reinventing itself. When I first started writing, people were already saying the historical was dead, but it keeps coming back, and I'm still happily writing them.

### **Is there an author or book from a particular decade that has had a real influence on your writing?**

Georgette Heyer was a strong influence on me. I've been reading her since I was 11, so when I tried my hand at historicals, the Regency era was the obvious choice for me, as I'd absorbed so much from her books.

Heyer's stories are full of lively, often very funny dialogue; wonderfully varied secondary characters; strong and interesting heroines; and great plots. Her world was textured and historically accurate, and above all, fun! I wanted to do that, too.

## **Valerie Parv**

**This international bestselling NSW author has penned 70-plus books and garnered over 29 million sales. She was made a Member of the Order of Australia in 2015.**

### **Valerie, Mills & Boon first published your books in 1982. What changes have you noticed in how romance novels are now written?**

Actually, this year I celebrate 40 years of being published in book form since 1976! I was, of course, a child prodigy :) I have certainly noticed big changes in romance novels, starting with viewpoints.

When I started, single viewpoint ruled, and there was no first-person or hero viewpoint. I was one of the first to experiment with hero POV [point of view] and loved it. Readers did, too, and we've never looked back.

These days I find a lot of novel-writing references TV and movies, meaning we jump right into the story and keep things moving to the end. Where once the novels were a kind of window into different settings and cultures, the internet and more accessible real-life travel means readers don't need those elements so much.

I paint my backgrounds with a very light touch, focusing far more on character development and interaction and more dialogue. Some of that is my own style. I've always been keen on dialogue, so the market has changed around my preferred style.

### **Have publisher expectations changed over the years?**

The tropes have never changed. These are the conventions that readers love. Some, such as the marriage of convenience and the virgin bride (virgin groom as well now), are harder to justify in a world where moving in together is no big deal. Ditto single parents. Once upon a time—to coin a phrase—having a baby by yourself was scandalous. These days it's every day. The 'who's your daddy?' type of conflicts no longer fly—DNA testing put paid to that.

In my opinion, publishers have always looked for what sells best, whether it was 'royal' books or single dads. Unfortunately, this tends to crowd the shelves with particular books. And it seems to me that these expectations are narrowing rather than expanding in the romance genre. It's one reason I've ventured into sci-fi, to have that freedom back. Romance is still a part of what I write, because I'm naturally a romantic, but I have stronger, nerdier elements that I'm absolutely eating up.

Years ago, I wrote a romance novel called *The Leopard Tree*, where the hero just might have arrived by UFO. It went through the entire

acquisition process until Alan Boon decided UK readers weren't quite ready for a UFO in a romance novel. Fortunately, their sister company, Silhouette Books New York, loved the idea. I heard later that my UFO book had become the poster child for unconventional stories.

Love scenes have become more adventurous, still gently handled within the genre, but the bedroom door is wide open now with some lines downright erotic and space for male/male and female/female books, ménage a trois, or anything else the writer can imagine, provided they're well-written. I still recall reading a book early in my career where the heroine had an abortion



without knowing it—some kind of pill, I seem to remember.

I must add that some of the best writing and editing is found within the romance genre. I've published with almost a dozen major publishers in different countries, and nowhere have I found the editing to be as rigorous as through the various Harlequin editorial offices, and I've worked with their editors in London, New York and Toronto.

**Are there any romance fiction trends from bygone days, which you're glad are no longer popular?**

I'd have to say I don't miss the autocratic hero who saw it as his job to set the heroine straight. At least

multiple viewpoints gave readers an insight into why he behaved this way. When all we saw was his outward appearance, he was a lot less appealing and generally didn't unbend until the last pages when he admitted he'd been fighting the attraction to the heroine all along. Not my cup of tea, and I generally wrote more equal relationships.

I always saw it as my mission to subvert many of the tropes—for example, twins mistaken for each other was a romance standard. We all wanted to write at least one. In my book, *Centrefold*, one twin was a financial journalist and the other, a centrefold model who complicated the professional life of her twin. I

had the journalist substitute for her twin but the hero was aware of it from the get-go, and set her up well and truly. Fun to write.

**Is there an author or book from a particular decade that has had a big influence on your writing?**

Starting out, I read all the successful romance writers I could; dozens of books, until I felt I had a sense of why the books worked so well. Then I wrote the story I hadn't found, and I still recommend writers do this, no matter the genre. Make yourself aware of what's been done, and why. Don't try to reinvent a genre that's already working. But find a way to write the book you want to read, within the genre.

## Marion Lennox

**This Harlequin favourite from Victoria has written over 100 romance novels and been published since 1990.**

**Marion, what changes have you noticed in how romance novels are now written?**

I don't think our attention spans have shortened, it's just that background is now a given. When I first started writing I spent a lot of time setting the scene, describing place and appearance. Even action sequences were longer because I needed to blend in detail.

Because of massive media exposure, my readers now have a much broader base of experience to call on. If I say my lovers are on the Great Barrier Reef, even my overseas readers will have seen images many

times before. Thirty years ago, a reader sank into a book to transport her to another place as well as to another experience. Now a simple sentence can take her to that place and I can get on with the romance.

I'd agree, though, that we have a much larger choice of shiny things vying for our attention. Readers are now much less likely to tolerate a dull romance because there are so many excellent alternatives.

**Have publisher expectations changed over the years?**

Heroines have certainly changed—for the better. Readers generally no longer tolerate a doormat heroine, waiting for Mr Right to transform her into something of worth. Love scenes have also changed, with many readers more comfortable with more explicit descriptions.

Publisher expectations have also shifted. With the sheer mass of books now out there, publishers attempt to categorise so readers can find what they want within that mass. The subsequent requirement for authors to choose a category and stick with it can be very confining.

**Are there any old fiction trends you're glad are no longer popular?**

The bodice-ripper era was truly horrible—the 'no means yes' romance that surfaced strongly for a decade and did so much harm to our industry. Of course, it's still out there—everything's still out there—but it's a shame that what is now a very small part of our industry has given such ammunition for disdain from those who haven't looked closely at our industry for a very long time.

**Is there an author or book from a particular decade that has had a big influence on you?**

Here are four writers in the order I found them. All have had a profound effect on my writing. Georgette Heyer started writing in the '20s. She taught me that romance could be funny as well as riveting. Mary Stewart, writing from the '50s, taught me how wonderful a truly alpha hero could be. Lauryn Chandler's RITA win in 1995 taught me that gentle, humorous and real has a place in romance writing. Lauryn's success gave me the courage to stick to what I love. And finally, Joanna Bourne, writing now, gives me a timely reminder that action is awesome and the best heroines are the ones with spunk.



# My Fave Retro Romance Reads

## Scotland-based Aussie chick-lit author Georgina Penney

"For me it was definitely *It Had To Be You* by Susan Elizabeth Phillips for the '90s. Looking back, I think I loved the second-wave feminist nature of the heroine, Phoebe. She loved clothes, makeup and embraced her own sexiness, while also having her own share of insecurities.

The story's main concept is a 'bimbo' getting ownership of a football team, but Phillips turned it on its head. She wrote a warm, funny and touching story, depicting Phoebe as coming into her own, while the hero, Dan, has to face his own insecurities and deal with his emotions better than he has been to date.

In short, it's a very '90s story, showing gender roles shifting without being in-your-face political. In fact, I think I've reread the story 100 times and I laugh at all the jokes and cry at all the sentimental bits every time."

## Canberra erotic romance writer Rhyll Biest

"'80s: Barbara Cartland and Mills & Boon (I was only 12 and the books were nice and short!).

'90s: Georgette Heyer all the way!

2000s: Rachel Gibson and Susan Elizabeth Phillips (fun and flirty).

2010s: E-readers meant I got to read all the saucy stuff without people being able to see what I was reading/buying, so I discovered wonderful authors of 'smart' erotica like Cara McKenna and Charlotte Stein."

## Adelaide paranormal/contemporary romance writer Maggie Mundy

"I am old enough to have read the *Outlander* series when they first came out [from 1991]. I think what interested

me about the books was that they were new and pushed boundaries.

[Author Diana Gabaldon] dealt with bigamy, and yet as a reader I was accepting of it. She also dealt with rape and domestic abuse and tried to show how present-day attitudes did not always fit.

The books were rich in history and detail, so you almost felt you knew what it would have been like to live there in Scotland. I read as far as the third book. I have to say I started to find them a bit depressing and repetitive. As a reader, I could only take so much happening to the characters I loved!"

## US chick-lit author Tracie Banister

"*Patterson's Island* by Jane Corrie came out in 1978. That was back when Harlequin released a couple of new paperback romances every month, and you could pick them up at the drugstore and grocery store. *Patterson's Island* was the first romance novel I ever read, and I was instantly addicted! I continued reading Harlequins all the way through high school.

Another romance that had a big effect on me was Kathleen Woodiwiss' *A Rose in Winter*, which came out in 1981. I didn't read it until several years later when a friend at work recommended Kathleen's books.

Her books were historical romance; and they had such great plots and characterisations they inspired me to attempt writing a novel myself!

I definitely think that Kathleen's books were representative of the time as they had those steamy covers with half-undressed couples in passionate clinches. (The term, bodice-ripper, was coined in 1980, so most of the historical romances of that time had those covers.)

*Crocodile on the Sandbank* by Elizabeth Peters was released in

1975. It's classified as a historical mystery, although it did have a strong romantic element with Peabody and Emerson meeting and falling in love in that first book!"

## Adelaide romantic suspense writer Sandy Vaile

"I'm a gal who grew up on fantasy and horse stories, but kind of lost my way after being bitten by the 'real world'. Marriage, work, children and bills; they all kept me from reading and creative writing for 13 years.

But once I picked up the *Twilight* books (purely to see what all the fuss was about, you see), I was hooked. Stephanie Meyer defined the first decade of the 21st century for me, because she reignited my love of reading, and once that spark was lit, I couldn't keep my imagination from conjuring all kinds of amazing stories for myself to write.

I know the *Twilight* series has its lovers and haters, but I say 'don't knock what works'. Stephanie has created an extensive world with seriously flawed characters and an intricately woven plot. The result is an emotionally gripping story, and I believe that's what captured the imaginations and hearts of so many women.

These books breached the barrier between young adult and adult literature and put the romance genre into the mainstream. Now I've always been drawn to the dark side, and in this story the picture of who's good and bad is blurred.

Although I don't write fantasy—the lure of unravelling a mystery and following a heart-pumping trail of trepidation is what I most love in a book—I can't deny that reading *Twilight* was a decade-defining experience for me."



# Prepare For Take-off!

## An Emerging Writer's Contest Win Success Story

by **Cassandra O'Leary**

Hey, newbie and emerging writers. Have you checked out writing contests but felt daunted, or wondered if they were worthwhile? This article about my contest win could be your inspiration!

### **We Heart New Talent contest**

In February 2015, I entered the global *We Heart New Talent* contest—part of the online Romance Festival, a collaboration between HarperCollins, Harlequin, and digital-first imprints including Avon Maze, Carina UK and Harper Impulse.

I had a completed manuscript titled, *Up in the Air Over You*. Having already 'subbed' it to several contests and publishers, I'd received positive feedback, but no publishing contract. I checked the *We Heart New Talent* contest website. Winners would be selected in the categories, comedy, weepies, and holidays. Three publishing contracts were up for grabs!

My story is a romance—kind of funny, but with serious aspects. My heroine is a bright, quirky Irish flight attendant and my hero is a sexy Aussie CEO with gruff, grumpy tendencies. Both have baggage, and story themes include travel and finding the right direction in life. I wasn't sure it was 'comedy', but I entered the first three chapters and 100-word pitch.

### **Up in the air...**

Nothing happened for months. Then in August 2015, I received an unexpected email from an editor at HarperCollins UK. OMG! I WON the Avon Maze section of the *We Heart New Talent* contest. She asked me where I was at with completing the manuscript, and when I could submit the full.

My husband looked at me and asked what was wrong. I couldn't speak. I must have looked like a stunned mullet. Then he laughed because apparently I

smiled like a crazy-woman. I had really, truly, won a global writing contest and a publishing contract...pending submission of a manuscript that was up to scratch. Panic set in... I downed some wine, managed a few sentences to hubby, and emailed the editor back. I requested time to revise my manuscript—it had been months since I'd worked on it. She agreed, and asked me to check in when it was ready.

I rewrote and revised the 'saggy middle', tightening scenes to increase the pace, and submitted the full manuscript in November 2015. The editor acknowledged my email but asked me not to announce contest news yet.

### **The waiting game**

The New Year came. I'd almost lost the plot! I'd been sitting on my hands for months without Facebooking or tweeting contest news. I spilled the beans to my writing group and family, though. In February 2016, my new editor emailed. She said she looked forward to working with me and loved my fresh voice and 'very commercial' story.

### **Action stations**

Things started happening. Acquisitions approved my book as part of the UK summer release schedule. My book gained a new title, *Girl on a Plane*. I loved it! Next came the cover design. I was asked for input and suggested the heroine in her flight attendant uniform, maybe a plane in the sky. I received the cover design...and fell in love. Not everyone likes the cartoon/illustration covers, but I HEART them. To me, it captures a sense of fun, along with the feel of glamorous vintage travel posters.

### **Signing on the dotted line**

In April 2016, I received a letter of offer. Hooray! I soon received the formal contract and 'Welcome to Avon Maze' information. I consulted a publishing consultant, who advised about digital-first royalties and confusing contract clauses (a possible print release at a later date, international rights, blah, blah). I scheduled a phone call with my editor in London and we talked through the contract, the editing process and promotion. I signed a contract (hooray!) and popped the champagne. Then I waited some more. Why not?

### **Editing madness**

I soon discovered digital-first moves fast in the editing stage. I received detailed editorial notes and thousands

of revisions—to be done in six days. All while juggling a part-time job and two kidlets. Yikes!

I did the edits. Twice. Once for my main editor, then for a freelance copy editor. I answered queries about plane-seating positions, why I chose a Singapore setting and not Bali, and meanings of Aussie slang phrases. Yes, I got to keep 'budgie smugglers' but lost a reference to 'snooty French waiters'. I fixed my timelines, including references to time of day and flight duration. I wrote pages of new words, explaining the hero's motivation and actions of secondary characters whom I'd left hanging. By the end of May, my page proof corrections were done and dusted.

### **Exciting news!**

Finally, I got the okay to announce my exciting news. For anyone who was asleep, I blitzed Facebook, Twitter and the online universe, sharing my book cover. I also launched a new website at [cassandraolearyauthor.com](http://cassandraolearyauthor.com). Check it out! The editorial and social media teams at Avon Maze have been super. The coordinated cover reveal was fun, and my book soared to the top 10 in Amazon genre categories in the first days of pre-orders. Yowza!

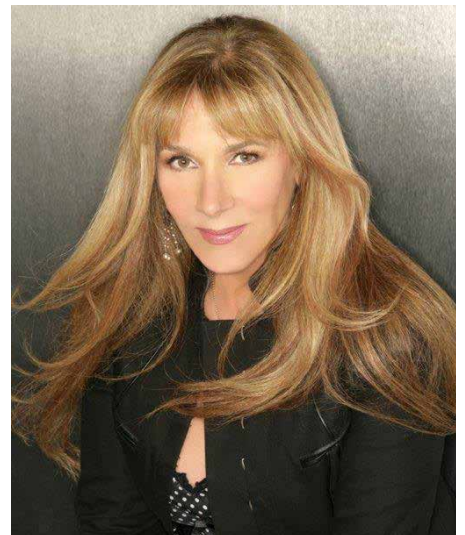
### **Taking flight**

Over a year since entering a contest, my contemporary romance/romantic comedy novel, *Girl on a Plane*, will be released on 18 July. I can't wait to see it take-off into the world. Wherever I travel in my writing career, the contest was an excellent launch pad. I hope my story inspires others to take a leap.



# 5 Minutes with Heather Graham

Bestselling American romance novelist **Heather Graham** will head to our shores for RWA's 25th anniversary conference in Adelaide this August. As well doing a keynote address, Heather will teach a workshop, entitled *The Things We Do with Words*, and speak at the academic *University of Love* conference event.



## **Hi, Heather. Have you been to Australia before?**

No, coming over is fulfilling a lifetime dream. Wouldn't hurt if I get to kiss a koala!

## **What will you be doing at the conference?**

Getting to know my Aussie contemporaries.

## **You've written paranormal, suspense, contemporary, and historical romance. How do you switch between subgenres?**

I love all of these, and read endlessly.

## **How do you keep your writing fresh with 150-plus novels and novellas to your name?**

I think of characters as people, and as people, we are all different and all have different stories to tell, and look at the world differently.

## **Is it right you have a background in theatre arts?**

Yes, and to that end, we do a dinner theatre every year at Writers for New Orleans and at the *Romantic Times* conference.

## **You have five children. Any advice on how to juggle writing with parenting?**

To me, the children were really great. I learned how to focus no matter what was going on. To this day, I get to feel like a Dr Seuss. I can write in a car, going far...on a plane, on a train...

## **Tell us about some of your current projects.**

I'm doing a follow-up to [romantic thriller] *Flawless*, called *Perfect Obsession*, out March 2017. Three new, as-yet-to-be-titled *Krewe* books [*Krewe of Hunters* being a series of paranormal romance/psychological thriller novels], and

a first for me, in January, *The Rising*, a young adult book with my friend, Jon Land.

## **Tell us about where you reside.**

It's sunny South Florida. I love it!

**To register for this year's RWA conference, visit [www.romanceaustralia.com/p/246](http://www.romanceaustralia.com/p/246).**

# Are you looking for a critique partner?

RWA's critique partner scheme provides a self-selection critique partner register.

Applicants can be matched to form ongoing critique partner relationships.

Full details and how to apply at **[romanceaustralia.com](http://romanceaustralia.com)**.

# Fast Fiction: Back to The Future?

by **Carla Caruso**

I am a technology dinosaur. I'm on social media platforms because I have to be, but my time on Facebook and the like is usually pretty minimal. Until recently...

Over May and June, I was a 'digital writer in residence' at the SA Writers Centre. What made me put up my hand for the role? I got paid (a little bit), it offered a creative challenge (I could do something with the mermaid plot that had been swirling around in my head), and I could do it (mostly) from home in my tracky-dacks.

My idea was to tell a tale online about a mermaid stuck in the city. Luna's captured by a baddie and escapes, but finds she can't get back in the water without being racked with pain. I dubbed the project 'Mermadelaide' and decided the storytelling would be done via daily Facebook and Instagram posts.

I had half of the team already assembled. My husband, James Elsby, is a photographer, my sister, Daniella Caruso, is an illustrator, and in a previous life, I was a fashion journalist, styling shoots for newspapers and magazines. I'm always harping on about us combining our skills, but we rarely do it—now I had a great opportunity!

Next, I found an aspiring model (Jade Allen) and makeup artist (Kimberley Bradshaw from The Blushing Creator) via a Facebook page for amateur photographers and models. (I was on a budget.)



The pictures of our mermaid heroine—or Jade—were taken at the city and beach all in the one day, with other images used in between to 'fill out' the story. And then we went 'live'.

So how's it all been? Well...I've had more fun than I thought I would, and I've actually grown fond of Instagram and all its hashtags (#bookstagram, #authorsofinstagram, #booknerd, and on it goes.)

It's also made me wonder if 'fast fiction'—and indeed, using social media for storytelling—is a way of the future (or back to the future if you consider the serial fiction of Charles Dickens' era). Social media and Netflix have impacted on people's reading habits, as reported in Dr Jan Zwar's recent Macquarie University research paper, *Disruption and Innovation in the Australian Book Industry*.

And some, like US crime author James Patterson, have chosen

to go with the tide, pandering to our shortened attention spans. (Patterson's just released a series of novella-length ebooks called *BookShots*, which can be read in one sitting.)

Perhaps telling stories through social media could also be another way for authors to reach younger readers. Hey, my nine-year-old niece has Instagram and Snapchat accounts, set to private!

At any rate, the SA Writers Centre gig has inspired me to try my hand at another digital story, this time called *Ghostelaide*. I just have to convince the rest of the team (the hubby mostly) to take part again, and followers to come along for the ride.

In the meantime, you can check out Luna the mermaid's journey here: <http://bit.ly/250WENP> and <http://bit.ly/1R9xZwN> (chapters in reverse order, as per social media's chronology, naturally).



Anne Gracie here, introducing my next guest, the wonderful **Annie West**. Annie is a *USA Today* bestseller who has written 29 books for Harlequin, Mills and Boon, in the "Sexy" or "Harlequin Presents" line. She's an international success story with readers in more than 26 countries. Her website is [www.annie-west.com](http://www.annie-west.com).

# An Introvert's Guide to Being an Author

by **Annie West**



Most authors I know are introverts. Maybe because many people who dream their lives in books rather than real life are introverts attracted to the idea of turning that passion into a career. Who knows? Of course there are extrovert writers and they include some of the most talented authors I know. But right now it's the introvert state that interests me because that's me, the introvert living an author's life.

By introvert I mean someone who gets energy by spending time alone. Their inner world of imagination, memories etc. is particularly important for recharging the batteries. A researcher might debate this definition but it works for me and hopefully makes sense to you.

If you've met me, you know I can be loud. I often talk a lot—usually when enthusiastic about something. I love being with other people who fascinate me—at readers' and writers' conferences, social lunches, whatever. I enjoy giving presentations too, though this was something I had to work at. I've occasionally mentioned that I'm an introvert and received disbelieving looks. It's not that introverts don't enjoy company. On the contrary, it can be the best thing! I return from conferences, for instance, after a few days talking to peers, inspired by so many fabulous women and enthusiasm fairly sizzles in my blood.

Yet I need 'cave time'. I may be buoyed with enthusiasm after a discussion or a conference, but having quiet time to sort through

new ideas, make sense of them and generally get myself in order is a necessity. Life being life, I've never been able to indulge in utter seclusion, and to be frank I'm not sure I actually want that. But I need downtime, even in small chunks, to recuperate and get myself moving.

Fine, you say. You spend most of your time alone. But being an author isn't solely about writing. There's social interaction and promotion, blogs and interviews and pieces your publisher wants, asking about everything from your daily routine to your childhood, your likes and dislikes and what you're doing next. There's social media where you share some of your life and there are personal requests too. Even when you enjoy doing this, it impacts on your mental space and focus.

Public time as an author, while usually a delight, is draining too, even if it's not at a big reader conference. Though on that, I recently attended two large reader festivals back-to-back over five days. I had a ball. But even when I wasn't giving presentations or being part of a panel or booksigning, I was interacting with readers, publishers and authors. By the end, though I was thrilled, excited and happy, I was out on my feet. My brain was whirling and turning to mush. I wanted just to sit in a quiet café and gather my thoughts. Or spend a week at the beach with a bag of books and no work... Hey, I'm an author. I'm allowed to dream.

So I thought I'd share a couple of tips

for the other introverts out there.

- ♥ Accept that you need quiet time and mental space occasionally. Do NOT feel guilty about it. It's just the way you are.
- ♥ Learn to say no once in a while. If everyone else wants to party and you're feeling strained, it's okay to take a rain check.
- ♥ Schedule the 'other' work that goes with writing—promo/social media/other stuff—into a particular time of day and focus on your writing for the rest.
- ♥ At conferences schedule some time to unwind, even if just for 20 minutes. It really is okay to skip a session to have a one-on-one discussion or to rest and regroup.
- ♥ Know that after big events you may need time to recuperate. Build that into your schedule. Use that time when you find it hard to focus doing the adminstrivia you've been putting off. Then, when you're ready, dive back into the writing.
- ♥ If you are a full-time author, make sure you don't become a recluse. Interaction with people other than the postie and your family helps keep you sane! Take a class, organise a date with friends or volunteer somewhere.

If you've got tips of your own, do let me know. You may see me at a conference, or you can contact me via Facebook or my website.

**Annie's latest book is *The Flaw in Raffaele's Revenge*.**

# Member News

RWA member **Anna Jacobs**, who writes historical sagas and contemporary novels, celebrated two milestones in May—her 75th birthday and her 75th book!

Anna says: "I had my first novel published in 1992. My, how the years have flown. And I'm even more enthusiastic about telling stories than when I began—it's addictive."

Her 75th book, *A Time to Rejoice* (Hodder & Stoughton), is number three in her four-part Rivenshaw series.

"The stories are set in 1945-6 just after World War 2, a time I remember pretty clearly considering I was only four when the war ended," Anna says. "Well, I met my father for the first time then—rather memorable! He'd been overseas for four years. I must say, it was fascinating to research the era with an adult eye."

Read the novel's first chapter here: [tinyurl.com/gutnqgn](http://tinyurl.com/gutnqgn).



**Kate Loveday** has signed a contract with The Wild Rose Press for her *Redwoods* trilogy, comprising *A Woman of Spirit*, *A Liberated Woman*, and *A Modern Woman*. The books are historical fiction with romantic elements.

Registration is now open for **Romance Writers of New Zealand's** 23rd annual conference, *All You Need Is Love...And a Great Story*, being staged from 12-14 August. Full details at [www.romancewriters.co.nz](http://www.romancewriters.co.nz).

**Do you have some good news? Send it to [hteditor@romanceaustralia.com](mailto:hteditor@romanceaustralia.com).**

## Contests

with **Erica Hayes**

### **Ripping Start Winners**

As judged by Deb Werksman from Sourcebooks Casablanca:

1st: Cassandra Pennington

2nd: Jo McAlister

3rd: AJ Macpherson

Congratulations to our placegetters. Deb has provided some excellent feedback for each finalist—we thank her very much for her time and expertise in judging our contest.

Thanks also to Leisl Leighton for finishing off the contest management, to all our volunteer judges for their outstanding efforts, and to everyone for their patience.

## Conference Program Advertising Now Open

**Be seen by nearly 400 delegates at the 2016 Adelaide *Ain't Love Grand* conference. Advertise in the conference program now.**

### **Full-page**

148mm wide x 210mm high

**\$380.00**

### **Half-page**

Portrait: 74mm wide x 210mm high

Landscape: 148mm wide x 105mm high

**\$190.00**

### **Quarter-page (portrait)**

74mm wide x 105mm high

**\$95.00**

All ad placements will be inside the program at RWA's discretion and exclude back cover, inside front cover and inside back cover.

Contact Victoria Purman at [sponsorship@romanceaustralia.com](mailto:sponsorship@romanceaustralia.com).

**All payment and advertisements required by 15 July 2016.**

Advertisements to be provided in high-resolution (300dpi) pdf format.

# Marketing Questions Answered

with Sara Hood

## 5 Facebook Myths That Could Be Holding You Back

Ack. These myths keep reappearing, usually because someone is selling a course to 'help you beat the Facebook algorithm'. Yeah right. Or because they've just misunderstood what Facebook has said or done.

The reality is that Facebook is a fantastic social network of great value to writers, but you need to put some effort into understanding how it works. Some people don't do that and then it holds them back from finding more readers for their wonderful books.

These are probably the five most common myths about Facebook that I come across:

### 1. Posts to a personal profile are distributed to more people than those on a business page.

Nope. Personal profiles and business pages are governed by the same rules in the algorithm.

### 2. Facebook restricts my posts to my fans to make me advertise.

Nope. There's no denying that it's harder than it was a few years ago to build a page's following organically (i.e. without advertising) than it used to be, but the key criteria for distributing your posts to your fans is whether you have posted what your fans find valuable. Note: not what you want them to know, but what they want to see.

### 3. Video posts always do best.

Nope. Content is king. Whatever your fans enjoy is what they will engage with. If they like video, then they will engage with video posts, but only if the content is of interest to them. You can't just sling up any old bit of video and presume that 'video is killing it right now' so your video will get great reach and engagement just because, you know, it's video.

### 4. Facebook has said they are restricting business pages' posts to 6% of fans.

Gaaah. It's hard to track this back to the source because it's now lost in the mists of rumour and supposition, but it seems that the original comment was made at a private briefing to Wall Street analysts and the caveat has got lost.

This was that *on average* a post to a Facebook business page will reach 6% of the audience. We all know where averages come from. Don't believe me? On the Facebook page for Record Store Day in Australia (which I 'admin' so have access to the data), the last three posts delivered 3566, 7853 and 6677 reach, on a page with 16,690 fans (likes). So that's 21%, 47% and 40% respectively. It can be done. It is easier to grow your fans if you advertise (and RSD does advertise) but then you must deliver content of value or your posts still won't go anywhere.

### 5. No one who is anyone is on Facebook these days.

Really? At the end of March 2016, Facebook had 1.65 billion monthly active users and none of them are 'anyone'? It is by far the most popular social network worldwide. The nearest rival is WhatsApp (owned by Facebook) at 1 billion. By comparison, Instagram has 400 million and Twitter 320 million (data from [statista.com](http://www.statista.com)). If you drill down into sweeping statements about no one being on Facebook anymore that means:

♥ *Their* audience isn't on Facebook. For example, the demographic for Facebook users is rumoured to have become older with some (but not all) teens moving somewhere more

cool (where they won't bump into posts from their mother).

- ♥ Their audience *is* on Facebook but doesn't go there to read posts about their topic. For example, some teens just use Facebook to organise parties.
- ♥ The individual is using a personal profile, not a business page, so has no idea what reach they are getting, but because they get little engagement they presume that no one is there.
- ♥ (Warning: confronting!) The individual isn't using Facebook that well, doesn't get much reach, and instead of finding out how to do it better, they claim that no-one is on Facebook and they give up. This is so sad.

So there are five Facebook myths busted! If I have one plea this month, it's to find out how Facebook functions and make it work for you and your marketing. It may be that it's not ideal for your books, but don't dismiss it because you haven't been able to make it work up until now. Have another go!

**Send your questions to [sara@marketing4writers.net](mailto:sara@marketing4writers.net). Sara has more than 30 years' experience in marketing and marketing communications. Find her at [www.marketing4writers.net](http://www.marketing4writers.net).**

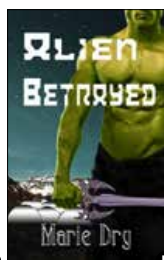




## NEW RELEASES JULY 2016



*A Dance With The Laird*  
**Dora Bramden**  
Indie Published



*Alien Betrayed*  
**Marie Dry**  
Black Opal Books



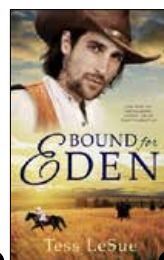
*An Improper Governess*  
**Amy Rose Bennett**  
Indie Published



*Black Mountain*  
**Kate Loveday**  
Escape Publishing



*Boot Camp*  
**Lisa Knight**  
Beachwalk Press



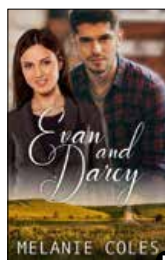
*Bound for Eden*  
**Tess LeSue**  
Harlequin MIRA



*Change of Heart*  
**Claire Boston**  
Bantilly Publishing



*Collecting Scars*  
**Tee Smith**  
Indie Published



*Evan and Darcy*  
**Melanie Coles**  
Escape Publishing



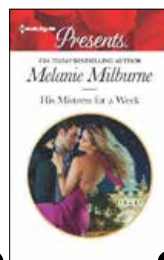
*Every Breath You Take*  
**Christina Phillips**  
Tule Publishing



*Flame*  
**Victoria Purman**  
Tule Publishing



*Girl on a Plane*  
**Cassandra O'Leary**  
HarperCollinsUK



*His Mistress for a Week*  
**Melanie Milburne**  
Harlequin Presents



*Homeworld: Beacon 3*  
**Valerie Parv**  
Momentum



*Joanie's Dilemma*  
**Marianne Theresa**  
Indie Published



*Knight Templar*  
**Josephine Allen**  
Indie Published



*Lord of the Forest*  
**Josephine Allen**  
Indie Published



*Love Elimination*  
**Sarah Gates**  
Harlequin MIRA



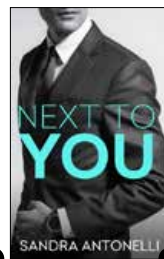
*Love Gone Wrong*  
**Darcy Delany**  
Amazon Australia



*Madeline House*  
**Maggie Christensen**  
Indie Published



*Murder, Mayhem & Men On Pause*  
**Sandy Curtis**  
Ormiston Press



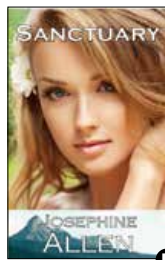
*Next to You*  
**Sandra Antonelli**  
Escape Publishing



*Playing by her Rules*  
**Amy Andrews**  
Entangled Publishing



*Quest For Earth*  
**S. E. Gilchrist**  
Escape Publishing



*Sanctuary*  
**Josephine Allen**  
Indie Published



*Sold!*  
**Josephine Allen**  
Indie Published



*Starline*  
**Imogene Nix**  
Beachwalk Press



*Suddenly More*  
**JA Low**  
JALow Books



*The Cedar Cutter*  
**Tea Cooper**  
Harlequin MIRA



*The Farm Sitter*  
**Suzanne Brandy**  
Indie Published



*The Star of Ishtar*  
**Imogene Nix**  
Beachwalk Press



*The Summer Bride*  
**Anne Gracie**  
Berkley USA/  
Penguin Australia



*The Watchmaker's Daughter*  
**C.J. Archer**  
Indie Published



*Two*  
**Jane Blythe**  
Bear Spots Publications



*Winter Heat*  
**Sarah Belle, Carla Caruso, Laura Greaves, Vanessa Stubbs & Belinda Williams**  
Indie Published

**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*. You will need to login to the website first. You can also include a URL to link to a book page or author website. Covers and information must be received by the 8th of the month prior to publication.