

Hearts Talk

The official journal of Romance Writers of Australia

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Bright Young Things

Commit the names of these Adelaide writers to memory: Liana Skrzypczak and Sarah Gates. They're young—25 and 22, respectively—and chasing their dreams with fervour. Each has recently scored mentorships with top names in fiction, and one will have a paperback published this year.

Have you always wanted to be an author? Tell us about your writing journey.

Liana Skrzypczak: I've always loved writing, but never thought seriously about making it a career until I began tertiary-level studies. Flinders University delivered some fantastic creative writing courses that got me thinking I could do this. But it was only once I'd completed my first novel-length manuscript and was offered a contract with Harlequin's Digital Series First (an imprint that's since closed down) that I really felt I had a chance at making writing a career.

My love for writing stemmed from a love for the performing arts—music,

drama and dance. Throughout my schooling years, I was involved in every play, every music concert and every form of physical creative expression. It wasn't until high school that I really began to develop an appreciation for written texts. I began enjoying the act of sitting down, internalising and creating content over interpreting and externalising that content as you do in, say, drama or dance.

Poetry came first—where I got to delve into concept and theme. Novel writing came next, where I felt I had more freedom to explore concept and theme through story, character and setting. I have been writing seriously for five years now, during which time I have focused on improving my craft and storytelling ability in order to meet the standards of commercial publication.

Sarah Gates: I've always loved writing, but I never had a clear idea what I wanted to be. When I was little, I wanted to be a singer or someone who wears high heels to work! I wrote short stories when I was young and a novel when I was 16.

While studying a double degree in Law and Arts (Creative Writing), I sought out many opportunities to write, including reviewing festivals for websites, writing articles for magazines, editing student

magazines, and joining writing groups.

In 2015, I was fortunate to win Carclew's Colin Thiele Scholarship

"I can't think of a single person in my close circle who isn't doing something extraordinary."

for Creative Writing to develop a novel with a mentor, the fantastic [Adelaide romance author] Victoria Purman. I wrote and edited *Love Elimination* in seven months and received a publication contract with Harlequin MIRA in November 2015.

Do you juggle writing with a day job or studies?

LS: This year, I made the decision to decrease my full-time work hours to spend more time writing. But even when I'm working, my mind is still chugging away at a problem with a scene or character. I listen to audiobooks in my genre on the way to and from work and keep a notebook in my car to jot down any interesting techniques the author has used. On my days off, I dedicate

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Liana Skrzypczak



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We also have a number of **specialist egroups** available focusing on specific subgenres in romance that you are welcome to join. They include **Erotic Romance, Romantic Suspense, Young Adult, Historical, Paranormal, Blaze and Steampunk**.

CRITIQUE PARTNER SCHEME – Bec Sampson, applycritpartners@romanceaustralia.com

FACE-TO-FACE GROUPS exist throughout Australia, and for queries on how to join an existing group or start one yourself: groupliaison@romanceaustralia.com

INDIVIDUAL WRITERS SUPPORT SCHEME – Nas Dean, iws@romanceaustralia.com

For aspiring and unpublished emerging members. Priority given to those challenged by distance or unable to access creative support by other means. Register for a one-off critique of either 1 or 3 chapters by a published author/advanced unpublished writer.

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

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Committee Profile: Imogene Nix

I've been a member of RWA since around 2010. Since then I've had the privilege of seeing over 20 of my titles in print/ebook. Since joining, I've been involved in the Dark Side Down Under (an offshoot of the Paranormal loop) have helped with the Clayton's Conference and now am a member of the committee.

In 2014 I became the coordinator of the Public Relations arm of the Committee, something I've had a chance to sink my teeth into.

I'm relishing the opportunity to dive into the media releases and explore Australian romance sales and gain information and statistics showing that this is an ever-expanding genre.

My background is as an Early Childhood Teacher, and later as my daughters needed more of my time, I purchased and have run an online romance bookstore. (There's a pattern there!) In 2010, I decided that I could write my own romance novel and my career has grown

from there. I've had an exciting but roller-coaster ride in the last few years, working with a range of editors and houses.

RWA has given me so many opportunities to hone my writing, learn skills and meet people. I'm proud to be able to give something back to an organisation that is committed to growing authors' careers, both in terms of offering face-to-face interaction and online workshops.

From Your Editors

What were we doing in our early twenties?

Carla - "Working as a bank teller because my sister did (and sucking at it) before finding my feet in journalism. Counting down until Saturday night every week so I could head to a dodgy superclub in the city and lust after all the wrong men."

Daniel - "Finishing university, working three jobs (most I hated) and having way too much fun partying...good days haha."

What have our cover stars, Liana Skrzypczak and Sarah Gates, been up to?

Writing top-quality fiction manuscripts and getting themselves noticed. Everyone has a different path in life, but these lasses are certainly inspiring and ones to watch. As for what's got us excited this month...

Carla Caruso

- ♥ The unveiling of the Adelaide RWA conference program (page 10).
- ♥ Green stones are gorgeous—as are the 2015 winners of RWA's Emerald Awards, interviewed on pages 20 and 21.
- ♥ Enjoying a final summer fling by collaborating on a (free!) ebook anthology, *Summer Daze*, with other local romance authors including Laura Greaves, Georgina Penney and Sarah Belle!



Daniel de Lorne

- ♥ Have to agree with Carla about the conference program (and not only because I'm delivering a workshop).
- ♥ Incorporating Rachel Bailey's character tips on page 6.
- ♥ Looking forward to the Easter break and a quick look at Tasmania.



Bright Young Things

Continued from page 1

as much time to writing as possible.

Rose [Hartley, fellow SA recipient of the Hachette mentoring program] and I catch up weekly to workshop our manuscripts and talk craft.

SG: I continue to juggle writing with university, two casual jobs and freelancing.

Describe your writing style, and your book that has been picked up—whether for publication or a mentorship.

LS: I have two novels currently under separate mentorships—a speculative fiction manuscript with [publisher] Sophie Hamley from Hachette, and a YA fantasy with *New York Times* bestselling author Sean Williams.

I try to let my characters determine my voice, and my characters are marked by their unwavering resilience in the face of overwhelming adversity. In terms of style, I've been told by numerous editors that my writing oscillates between dreamlike, almost surreal, to brutal and stripped back. Think golden shafts of light filtered through fine filigree autumn leaves one minute, to bile, blood and bruises the next.

SG: I write commercial romance and young adult fiction that is entertaining, funny and has a strong voice. My novel is called *Love Elimination*, a single title contemporary romance novel, set on a reality television dating show.

Anna Hobbs is a reluctant fill-in coerced onto the show by her sister, the producer. All she wants is a quick eviction, so she can return to her new business and get away from the cameras. The show's suitor—international snowboarder Luke Westwood—is rich, adventurous, carefree and ready for love, just not with any of the women *Love Elimination* has to offer.

Except for Anna.

Tell us about the mentorships you've been granted.

LS: Both the mentorships I was granted (with Sophie Hamley and Sean Williams) are a combination of artistic and career advice.

The mentorship with Sophie Hamley had no costs associated with it as it was a competition run through the SA Writers Centre and organised directly with Hachette.

The mentorship with Sean Williams was privately sourced. I approached Sean with a proposal and mentorship plan. He expressed interest and, after I sent a sample of

“We're full of enthusiasm, we want to please, we're practically biting at the bit.”

my manuscript through, he agreed to help me edit it to publication standards. Payment for his services was calculated in accordance with the Australian Society of Authors recommended mentorship hourly rates (\$100 per hour). With Sean's written support, I then applied for a Carclew project development grant to cover the associated cost of the mentorship, which was approved this month.

SG: Victoria Purman was very generous to agree to support my Carclew scholarship application and become my mentor if I should win—which, thankfully, I did! She was someone I admired for being a successful author and respected member of the writing community. I knew she was incredibly savvy, business-minded and a wonderful person. She was recommended to me by the SA Writers Centre and I'd also met her once at a networking event.

Payment was based on Australian Society of Authors rates.

How do the mentorships work?

LS: Sophie Hamley and I agreed that our mentorship structure would be flexible, beginning with an in-depth structural report on larger picture issues associated with the manuscript, and then a back-and-forth correspondence to ensure this feedback is fed back into the manuscript to best effect.

My mentorship with Sean Williams will begin in much the same way. Sean will provide me with feedback on my manuscript, which I will integrate into a new draft. Sean will also offer me career advice and guide my writing choices to give me the best chance of sustaining a long-term career in the industry.

SG: Victoria and I met in person and discussed all aspects of writing. In the first few months, the mentorship focused on discussing my plot and character development. Victoria was always asking 'what if?' and pushing me to be more creative and ambitious. It was enormously helpful to have that support in pushing past blocks, uncertainty and insecurity.

As the book progressed, I sent chapters to Victoria and she provided invaluable feedback. She also advised me on pitching, how to navigate submissions to multiple publishers, negotiating a contract and filling out Harlequin's questionnaires. I've been incredibly lucky to work with such a talented, knowledgeable and kind mentor.

How have you had the confidence and know-how to tackle fiction-writing in your twenties? Do you think the era of self-publishing and e-publishing has made fiction feel more accessible?

LS: Total and complete naivety. Only joking! In part, it was due to a good dose of optimism and determination—two things I've

always possessed in abundance. But also, it's largely thanks to the people I surround myself with.

My family and friends are highly motivated individuals with unwavering work ethics. I can't think of a single person in my close circle who isn't doing something extraordinary. Enthusiasm breeds enthusiasm, I think. As does success. It helps that I went to a brilliant school with teachers that nurtured my love of words, literature and the creative arts.

Accessible, yes. Tangible... maybe not. I feel that self-publishing has opened up many opportunities for writers and many platforms to distribute and share stories, but it has also blurred the pathways to publication, making the journey and the destination less tangible, more slippery—like trying to cup water in your hands.

Also, there's still something to be said for the magic of the printed word, the tangibility of it, to be able to feel and smell the pages of a hard copy book. I mean, what would we read if our country went black (as happens in my novel)? It's the paper and pen that would survive.

SG: It was a slow process of building confidence. I started volunteering at the SA Writers Centre in 2012 and took every opportunity to learn about writing. I now work at the SA Writers Centre, which means I'm constantly surrounded by great writing advice and support. The biggest factor has, of course, been winning the Carclew grant and the mentorship with Victoria Purman. I wouldn't have really knuckled down in 2015 without it.

People can easily dismiss young writers as not having enough life experience. But then F. Scott Fitzgerald was first published at age 23, *Frankenstein's* Mary Shelley at 20, and *Divergent's* Veronica Roth at 23. Can youth, in fact, be of benefit as a writer?

LS: I don't think it makes a difference. I believe a five-year-old's

story about his first day at school is just as important as a ninety-year-old's reflections on World War II. All stories have a place. All writers have a place.

Having said that, young writers and early-career writers are extremely exciting to be around. We're full of enthusiasm, we want to please, we're practically biting at the bit to learn everything we can about the industry and our craft, we're adaptable, coachable and haven't yet become resistant to feedback or constructive criticism.

SG: I think imagination, curiosity and a talent for storytelling are all more important than life experience. However, having years of writing experience and knowledge under your belt are useful—which often links to age.

My grants and opportunities have often come from 'under 25' categories, so in that way, youth has certainly benefited me. Other than that, I'll have to let you know in a few years!

Have you ever considered writing young adult or new adult fiction, seeing as that time of your life would still be fresh in your minds?

LS: Both my protagonists are

around my age or a bit younger. Harping back to the previous question, I guess this is, in part, a reflection of my experiences and shows the kind of headspace from which I'm comfortable writing.

SG: Absolutely! My first, self-published novel was young adult fiction. I love the genre and hope to write another in the next few years.

Who are your writing idols?

LS: The list of authors I admire expands every time I read a new book. But my writing idols are the people I've come to know over the past years, the writing friends I've made along the way who I've turned to for advice and comfort in the face of disappointment.

As we all know, this industry is full of highs and lows. Therefore, my idols include Sarah Gates (who is also included in this interview), Rose Hartley, Victoria Purman and Bronwyn Stuart (fellow South Australian Romance Authors member), Fay Patterson (critique partner), Kevin O'Brien (editor) and, of course, Sean Williams (mentor). This list goes on and keeps expanding every day.

SG: John Marsden, Meg Cabot and Rachael Johns.

Sarah Gates



Characters: Part 3

Personality, Reactions & Voice

by Rachel Bailey

Note: This article is a companion piece to Characters: Part 1—Backstory, Baggage & Behaviour (Hearts Talk December 2015) and Characters: Part 2—Goals, Dreams & Fears (Hearts Talk February 2016).

Congratulations! You've done all the heavy thinking and creating work, and now have a solid idea of the past and future of your character, so now it's time to look at them in the present. That is, during your story.

There are three important questions about your character in the present:

- ♥ Who are they?
- ♥ How do they act and react?
- ♥ How do they speak?

And, naturally, all three answers need to relate to their backstory and their thoughts on the future.

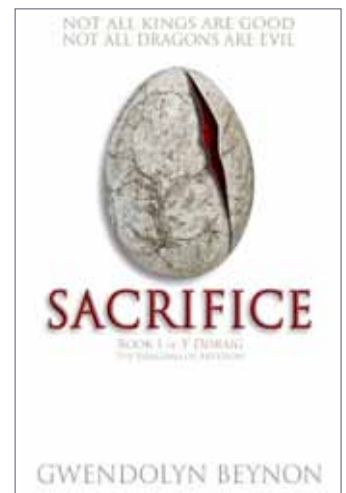
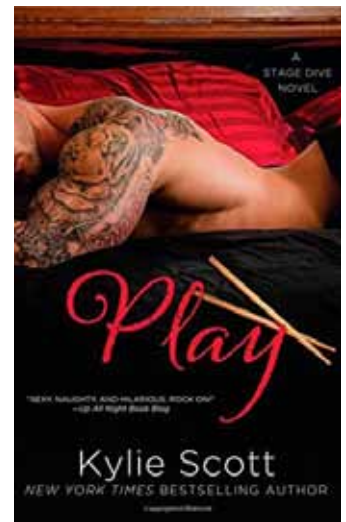
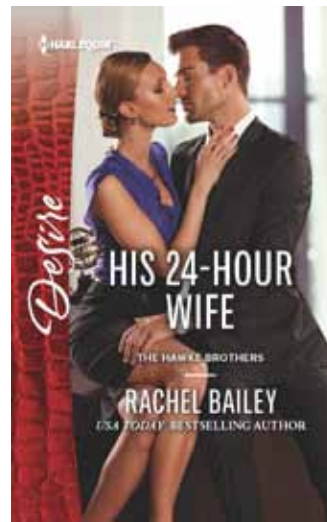
Who Are They?

This is where you'll solidify your thoughts on their physical appearance. But we don't just want to know if they have red hair and are tall. We want to know if they have a scar and how they got it, and what they think about it. Or if they have a tattoo, and if so, why they had it done. Or if they have straight hair, but we know that it's actually curly and they spend a lot of money on products that will keep it straight. And why they choose the clothes and shoes they do. How your character chooses to present themselves to the world will tell us a lot about them.

Next you might like to start thinking about traits. You already know your character well from the work you did on their past and their future, so that will feed into the process of identifying their traits. If you knew your character in real life and you were telling a friend about them, how would you describe them? Are they alert or aloof? Calm or cheerful? Sceptical or sentimental? Unforgiving or unpredictable? Or all or none of these?

To give your character even more individuality, think about events in their backstory to create quirks and tics for them. A tic is a physical action that a character repeats. For example, a pregnant character might rub her belly without even thinking about it. Be careful with tics—if you overplay them, they become annoying to the reader. Keep them subtle.

A quirk might be a big part of the character—think of Sheldon from *Big Bang Theory* where the entire character is pretty much made up of quirks, or *Doctor Who*, where



each incarnation of The Doctor is given different quirks, or it might be subtle enough to be subtext. It's better if you don't just throw one in for comedy effect; that will feel inauthentic to the reader. Instead, see if you can make it meaningful.

How Do They Act & React?

Your story starts with a premise, but from then on it moves into action and reaction. Your characters take action to achieve their scene goals. Things happen (that the character caused or externally imposed) and the characters react. Those actions and reactions will be specific to each character and informed by their backstory and goals. Story is all action and reaction and a fully rounded character will act and react in ways that are unique to them.

Adam – His 24-Hour Wife by Rachel Bailey

Backstory, Baggage & Behaviour:

When Adam's been thrown off-balance or let his guard down in the past, bad things have happened, so he tries to stay in control of himself and situations.

Goals, Dreams & Fears: His brother will soon be marrying a princess and Adam wants to minimise any bad press because of the negative effect it will have on his brother and future sister-in-law.

Situation: He's woken up after a night of drinking in Vegas and found he's married to a woman he occasionally meets with at conferences, but who is practically a stranger.

Adam's reaction: Immediately begins creating order out of the chaos, including suggesting an annulment and that it be kept a secret.

Now think about the personality traits you identified above and how they translate into the character's actions. Again, this comes back to show versus tell. You can tell the reader what the character's traits are all you want, but if they react to situations in ways that contradict what you've told the reader, then you've undermined the character.

Adam – His 24-Hour Wife by Rachel Bailey

Character trait: Focused.

Situation: After Callie leaves him in the black moment, he is frantic and focuses all his attention on finding her. He's in his office at 2am when his brothers (whom he loves and has a good relationship with) arrive to offer advice he has no interest in hearing. He asks them to leave since they're distracting him, but instead they make jokes.

Adam's reaction: Unwilling to waste time arguing that could be spent on finding Callie, he presses the button under his desk to summon security to have his brothers thrown out.

How Do They Speak?

Your characters will all have their own voice, so be wary of making them all sound the same as each other. They're individual people with their own backstory, baggage, behaviours, goals, dreams, fears and personalities. Also be wary of letting your characters sound like you. It's easy to let them fall into 'author's voice'. Even if you've developed a voice for your character, you can slip back into author's voice or another character's voice if you don't keep an eye out for it.

Mal – Play by Kylie Scott

"And you know I'm a fucking delight to have around. People don't always get that about me. Plus, I'll open jars and lift heavy shit. I hear those are issues for women."

"I'm sensitive. I'm nothing but a big ball of mushy sensitive stuff inside. Tell her, pumpkin."

"She's insanely psycho crazy about me. Material things mean nothing in the face of such worshipful adoration."

Various factors will affect your character's voice. Their gender, age, nationality etc. Their backstory and baggage will also affect the way they speak. Do they swear when they're happy because their mother did? Maybe crack jokes because they haven't faced up to the pain of losing someone? Do they use lots of bright, perky words, or do they prefer to use as few words as possible? The whole package of the character's personality will come together for the reader in their voice.

Quinn – Road Trip With The Eligible Bachelor by Michelle Douglas

"Fun novelty songs are our favourite. If there's a doo-wop or chirpy-chirpy-cheep-cheep to be had then we love it."

"Look at how blue the sky is and the golden haze on the horizon. This is my absolute favourite time of day."

"Don't apologise. This is nice. Makes me feel like a grown-up."

We hear the character's voice in their dialogue, and for some characters, that's the only place we'll see it. But

it will also be in the narrative voice of the point-of-view character—their internal thoughts and the rhythms of how they tell their story. The deeper the POV your story is told in, the more the character's voice will shine through, because it becomes that character talking instead of an omniscient narrator.

Melangell – Sacrifice by Gwendolyn Beynon

She refused to look back lest her companions see the tears gathering in her eyes. Women in peril had always invoked the daughters of the Otherworld for strength. She would not disappoint them now.

Her whimpers broke into a sob at the pain, just once. That was all she allowed. There may be no mortals here to witness her weakness but the gods were all around her.

Over to you. Have a look at the characters in your work-in-progress. Make sure you've identified specifics about who they are. Ensure how they act and react is consistent with their character. And finally, let them speak in their own voice, both in dialogue and narration.

Rachel Bailey writes intense and sensual books for Harlequin Desire and fun, flirty books for Entangled. Her books have hit the USA Today bestseller list, are published in over 26 countries and have been translated into 16 languages. Visit www.rachelbailey.com.



Self-publishing to Success

Adelaide author **K.E. Osborn** used to write in secret until her mother discovered a printed version of her work-in-progress and encouraged her to do something with it. K.E. chose to self-publish and has since quit her job in the optical industry to write full-time, publishing everything from rock-star romance to romantic suspense. We chatted to her.

K.E., tell us about your writing journey. How many years and manuscripts before publication? And any authors that inspired you along the way?

My writing journey began on 5 October 2012. I remember it vividly. It was the day after I had a very intense dream about a three-car pile-up! That became a scene in my debut novel, *Trust Me?*, where my hero and heroine meet for the first time.

The dream was so realistic I wrote it down and then the next day I decided to type it up, and since I started writing on that day, I simply haven't stopped. That one scene turned into a novel, which turned into a trilogy. Now I'm currently in the process of writing my twelfth book and I love every second of it. It took me a year after writing *Trust Me?* before I self-published it. I'm glad I hit 'publish' and started my indie career. Since then I haven't looked back.

Authors who have inspired me along the way, even though some people will cringe at this—E.L. James first inspired me to write. After reading *Fifty Shades of Grey* and realising there was a call for erotic books, I decided to give it a go. Then reading S.C. Stephens' *Thoughtless* series, I wanted to write a rocker romance and I'm so glad that I did. I certainly have a soft spot in my heart for [K.E.'s own rock hero] Colter Slade.

Why did you decide to self-publish?

I think mainly because I wanted to test the water and see how my work would be perceived by

readers. I've never been an overly confident person, so submitting my work to a publishing house was overwhelming. Instead I decided that self-publishing was a way to get my work out there for people to read without having to deal with the major publishing houses. I'm extremely glad and grateful I chose that path because the indie community is a place where readers and authors are extremely helpful and supportive. Many people helped me out when I published my first manuscript and since then I have encouraged many more authors to take the self-publishing journey.

You have a big following. What have you found has worked in building this up? And would you ever consider working with a traditional publisher?

It has taken considerable time and effort to gain the following I have, but through hard work on social media and doing a multitude of Facebook takeovers etc., my fan-base has gradually increased. This included spending hours of time talking to fans and dealing with the readers. I believe that if you don't

“I have encouraged many more authors to take the self-publishing journey.”

spend time with the people who read your work then what are you doing it for? They are the ones who support you, so you should give back to them as much as possible. As for traditional publishing, it is



a dream of mine to have just one book traditionally published. So hopefully one day that will happen, fingers crossed.

I also have a team of fans who are behind me, helping to push my work out to the general public. This team of great people help get the word out there by word of mouth and social media. Social media has changed even in the few short years I have been indie-published. Where initially Facebook was the primary medium for promotion, now Twitter, Instagram and a number of other social media [platforms] are being used to promote my work.

Do you outsource the graphic design and editing of your work?

I'm extremely lucky where this is concerned, and unlike most other authors out there, I can source all this in-house. What I mean by that is I have a Diploma in Advertising and Graphic Design, so I design all of my own covers and my mother is a freelance editor! Together we have our own freelance editing and design business. So I'm fortunate to be able to save costs and have all my editing done through my mother and all the design work is done by myself. It's very satisfying and rewarding in the fact that I am able to say that all my ideas, even down to the graphics, are my own.

Why do you always write trilogies?

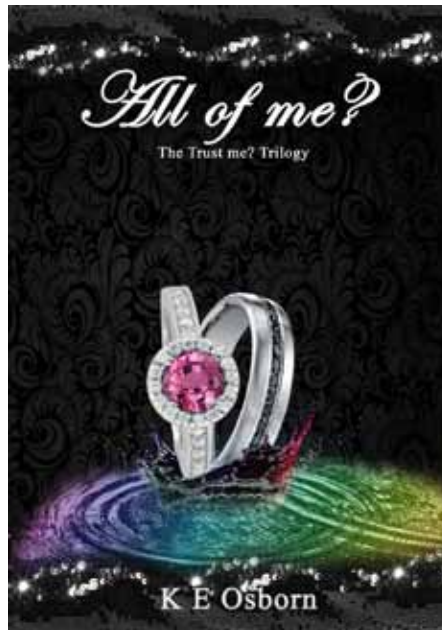
I've only written two trilogies. My debut series was a trilogy (initially a three-book series, but fan-based requests ensured I wrote the final novella, so technically it is now a four-book series) and the latest series I'm working on is a trilogy. But my other works have been a series of two books and I have one standalone novel.

Tell us more about how your mother helps out.

Well, to be honest, without my mother, Kaylene Osborn, this writing process would be so difficult. She is my go-to guru. When I'm having a plot issue or I can't think how a character would react in a certain situation, I ask Mum and she always knows the answer. So not only does she help with the editing and formatting of all of my books, but she guides the creative process, too, in her own small way. She helps me nut out the little things I get stuck on. It's nice to have someone I can run things by and who loves my characters as much as I do.

You've headed to book signings interstate. Why do you find appearances beneficial?

In the indie author world, there are book signings all the time and all over the world. I've been fortunate to attend two so far, both in Queensland. Mainly you are invited



to attend, and I have been invited to many all over the world. As my reader base is primarily in the US and the UK, I am desperate to travel over there and meet my readers.

I find [appearances] are beneficial because you're able to meet your fans face-to-face where you normally wouldn't be able to do this. Book signings are a lot of fun, not only from the experience of meeting your readers but also from the interaction with other authors at the event. I have made many lifelong author friends and look forward to attending many more signings. I will be attending the Readers and Writers Down Under event on the Gold Coast this month, where I will be lucky to meet more of my fantastic fan-base here in Australia.

I am hopeful that this year I will be attending a few signings overseas, more likely within the UK and the US where my main fan-base lies. I am hopeful to arrange these signings so they can be grouped into one trip rather than multiple trips.

www.keosbornauthor.com

K.E. designed all of her covers except for the romantic suspense *Shattered Heart* series, which were created by Soxsational Cover Art.

Member News and Events

Kate Loveday has signed her second Escape Publishing contract with the title, *Black Mountain*, releasing in April.

What Women Want: Writing Contemporary Women's Fiction

with *Dianne Blacklock, Ber Carroll and Anna Valdiger* at the NSW Writers' Centre

6 x Wednesday evenings: 30 March; 6, 13, 20, 27 April; 4 May, 6:30 pm-9:30 pm

Explore the vast genre of women's

fiction, what draws readers to it and what makes it commercial. Suitable for intermediate writers. Opportunity will be provided to workshop current works-in-progress and receive feedback and editorial direction. Speakers include successful published authors of commercial women's fiction and industry specialists.

More: www.nswwc.org.au/products-page/courses/page/2/

Intensive Manuscript Clinic

with author *Valerie Parv* and her agent,

Linda Tate, at the ACT Writers' Centre Saturday 2 April and Sunday 3 April (10 am-4 pm)

Valerie will appraise each participant's two-page synopsis and their first two manuscript pages ahead of the workshop. Across the two days in April, Valerie and Linda will help students work on their writing strengths and teach them how to pitch their work to an agent.

More: actwriters.org.au/events/upcoming-workshops-events.shtml#valerieparvlindatate



RWA's 25th Anniversary Conference



18-21 August 2016 Stamford Grand Hotel Glenelg, SA

Celebrating 25 Years!

Registration for Ain't Love Grand, RWA's 25th Anniversary Conference, opens on 5 March 2016!

Please read the following information carefully before you register. Any changes of mind or last minute amendments will attract a \$50 administration fee and in some cases, cancellation costs.

Follow the links from the Conference tab at www.romanceaustralia.com.

Registration Deadlines

Registration: 5 March – 21 July
Early Bird: 5 March – 30 April
Cut-off for registrations will be midnight 21 July.

Registration Fees

Friday Full Day Workshop Michael Hauge – Story Mastery

Member – Early Bird: \$185
Member – Post-Early Bird: \$250
Non-Member – Early Bird: \$250
Non-Member – Post-Early Bird: \$275

Friday Night Harlequin Cocktail Party

Early Bird Member Rate: \$75
Post-Early Bird or Non-Member: \$100

*This cost is only if you are **not** attending the core conference or if you wish to bring a guest. If you are registered for the core Saturday/Sunday conference, the cocktail party is included.

Core Conference Saturday/Sunday (which includes access to the Academic stream)

Member – Early Bird: \$495
Member – Post-Early Bird: \$550
Non-Member – Early Bird: \$550
Non-Member – Post-Early Bird: \$590

Gala Awards Night

Early Bird Member Rate: \$110
Post-Early Bird or Non-Member: \$130

These tickets are not included in the Friday Workshop, Core Conference or the Academic Conference costs and must be purchased by each delegate if they wish to attend. It is also possible to buy a ticket for a guest. Numbers will be capped due to space constraints at the venue.

Academic Conference ONLY Saturday/Sunday

Saturday:
Early Bird: \$120
Post-Early Bird: \$150
Sunday:
Early Bird: \$120
Post-Early Bird: \$150



Plenary sessions on Saturday/Sunday are included but not the Core Conference Sessions or the Cocktail Party. Tickets for the Cocktail Party will have to be purchased individually.

**There is a .30c fee associated with all Trybookings so we have rounded up on this page for your eye's convenience.

Rooms will be assigned as per the number of registered delegates. If you change your mind and attend a session you have not registered for, please bear in mind that it may be standing room only.

Information on pitching with agents and editors will follow at a later date. Delegates will be able to pitch on Friday and Saturday only.

Each delegate will be given a lanyard and name tag which will indicate which tickets they have purchased. If you are unsure of which days/sessions to attend, please don't hesitate to enquire via the Romance Writers of Australia Facebook page or at conference_registrar@romanceaustralia.com.

Please be sure you have double checked your registration options before finalising your booking including the name which will appear on your lanyard and if you would like your publisher's name included beneath.

Some of Our **Special Guests**



Catherine Roach
(w/a Catherine LaRoche)



Jim and Nikoo McGoldrick
(w/a May McGoldrick and Jan Coffey)



Fiona McIntosh



Heather Graham



Sarah Younger (Nancy
Yost Literary Agency)



Esi Sogah
(Kensington Books)



Joanne Grant
(Harlequin UK)

Friday **Workshop**

Story Mastery with **Michael Hauge**



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 romantic comedy, Michael will help you master the principles of story concept, plot structure, love stories, character arc and theme.

Topics covered include: the primary goal of all story, 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.
(All)

RWA Adelaide 2016 Conference Program

Saturday Session 1	<p>The Pleasures and Perils of Writing About Dead People and Bygone Eras: Historical with Jim and Nikoo McGoldrick – Napoleon was once attacked by a pack of wild rabbits. Lord Byron kept a pet bear in his college dorm room. Despite destroying at least 13,500 houses, the 1666 Great Fire of London killed only eight people. Ancient Egyptians used slabs of stones as pillows. Oliver Cromwell’s brother-in-law explored the possibility of ‘flying chariots’ to carry men to the moon, publishing his results in two books. In 1929, Princeton researchers successfully turned a live cat into a functioning telephone. Get these details wrong, and you WILL hear from your readers. Hear how to make those historical characters breathe, bleed, and breed accurately! (All)</p>	<p>I am Woman, Hear Me Roar: Building Your Heroine’s Inner Strength with Jay Forde and Isolde Martyn – There is no story without conflict and when the going gets tough, a heroine has to dig deep – and the author needs to make sure she has what it takes to reach for her goals. When she fights to survive, risks everything, keeps going when all hope seems lost, the reader must believe it. This workshop looks at how to build the inner strength of a heroine, while offering fun examples of heroines that don’t work. We will discuss creating the right psychology for the end game, laying the clues for what she will find within herself, using backstory to develop her depth and motivation and showing-not-telling the strength she may not know she has. Whether limited by petticoats or facing a gun, their characters need mental resilience, determination and courage to face their greatest challenge. (A/E)</p>	<p>Write with Presence with Vanessa Carnevale – This workshop is ideal for aspiring and emerging writers who feel the pull towards wanting to write, but feel like something is holding them back. If writers are struggling with creative expression, or feel they’ve got a book or similar creative project in them but don’t quite know where to start, this workshop could be for them. We’ll cover the mindset aspect of writing, where attendees are given tools to help them work with some of the main hurdles writers face: creative blocks, fear and resistance. This workshop covers coaching and techniques to help you work with fear and writing resistance, working with mindfulness, letting go of the need for perfection, learning to “write with presence”, and the kind of writing exercises that help you warm up your writing muscles. (A/E)</p>	<p>Tips & Tools for Authors Using Microsoft Word with Cheryl Adnams – Do you use Microsoft Word to create your masterpieces of fiction? This session will provide you with the MS Word tools to help you plot your story and then edit it effectively (e.g. learn tips to replace those pesky words you always seem to overuse). This can be a hands-on workshop so please feel free to bring your laptop or tablet with you or just come along and watch. (All)</p>	<p>Is Your Bad Boy A Psychopath or A Dude With ‘Tude? with Dr John Barletta & Dr Sandra Antonelli – Personality is the unique and relatively stable pattern of behaviours, thoughts, and emotions of individuals. Personality can be defined as a consistency in a person’s way of being, that is, long-term uniformity in their particular ways of perceiving, thinking, and reacting. Writers are challenged to present characters in a realistic manner that reflects these patterns of human behaviour. Understanding personality and its development will be additive to a writer developing their craft. This workshop explores the inner psychological characteristics that both determine and reflect how a person responds to their environment. (All)</p>	<p>Popular Romance Studies - Academic Stream (All) – Peer reviewed academic papers will be finalised early April 2016 and members notified about the Academic stream content. (All)</p>
Saturday Session 2			<p>Sustaining Your Practice: The Australian Cultural Fund and Alternative Revenue Streams for Writers with James Boyd – James will address the challenges faced by many independent artists on how to financially sustain their practice and will share examples of how independent artists have successfully tapped into private sector revenue streams. Reflecting on best practice fundraising theory, he will explore how new crowd-funding platforms and the Australian Cultural Fund (australianculturalfund.org.au) may be able to assist you achieve your writing goals. (All)</p>	<p>Self-publishing for Beginners with Cathleen Ross – This self-publishing course aims to demystify self-publishing and make it accessible for all writers. The course covers how to upload, step by step, for Smashwords, Draft 2 Digital and Amazon. It also covers how to write blurbs, where to go for covers designers, the necessity for front and back matter and how to market indie published books. Cathleen will also break down the costs involved for marketing, designers and editors. (A)</p>		

RWA Adelaide 2016 Conference Program

Saturday Session 3	<p>Anatomy of a Love Story with Michael Hauge – Michael Hauge will use the blockbuster film Hitch to illustrate the principles of successful story concepts, plot structure, identity, essence, character arc, love stories, romantic comedies and theme. By showing selected clips from the film, Michael will reveal his unique approach to uniting a hero's inner and outer journeys in order to create powerful, three-dimensional characters and stories that will maximise readers' emotional involvement in your novels. (All)</p>	<p>10 Steps to Building an Author Brand with Natasha Lester & Tess Woods – Having a strong author brand can help you get published, forge connections with readers and keep your name top of mind before or in between book releases. This session breaks down the process of building an author brand into 10 simple steps. It covers what an author brand is, how to develop your marketing voice, the importance of a website hub, plus the various online and offline activities (Facebook, newsletters, events, social media etc) you can use to build your brand. (E/Est)</p>	<p>Panel – Romantic Elements: When the Love Story is a Supporting Character (moderated by Carla Caruso) – A panel session featuring authors who are 'outside the box' of traditional romance and don't always 'colour between the lines'. Participants will learn how a 'romantic elements' novel is distinct from other romance fiction, who is currently being published in the subgenre in Australia, and what publishers are looking for in 'romantic elements' right now. Participants will also learn the difficulties of crafting a multilayered story, how such novels are being categorised on book shelves, and how the subgenre came to be. (All)</p>	<p>Harlequin Showcase – To celebrate 25 years of RWA, our conference Major Partner Harlequin will showcase some of its most popular Australian authors – and RWA members – in a Q+A style session. (All)</p>	<p>Plotting for Pantsers with Anne Gracie – 'Pantsing' – writing by the seat of your pants – can be fun, creative and spontaneous – and also frustrating and inefficient at times. This workshop presents some techniques and approaches aimed at helping pantsers get the best of both worlds. (A/E)</p>	<p>Popular Romance Studies - Academic Stream (All) – Peer reviewed academic papers will be finalised early April 2016 and members notified about the Academic stream content. (All)</p>
Saturday Session 4		<p>In Praise of 'Difficult Women': Assertiveness Skills for Authors with Laura Greaves – As romance writers, we're known for creating feisty, forthright and unapologetic fictional heroines. Away from the page, however, a fear of being perceived as pushy or 'difficult' means many women authors lack confidence and are overly accommodating in our professional writerly dealings. This is almost always to our detriment, especially in this age of DIY marketing and promotion and fast-paced contract negotiations. Using lessons gleaned from some of romantic fiction's most beloved 'difficult women' – from Jane Eyre to Bridget Jones – this session will equip both published and unpublished authors with the skills to take a leaf out of our own books and be as assertive in our careers as we are in our writing. (All)</p>	<p>The Black Moment: When All is Lost with Rachel Bailey – The workshop will focus on the black moment, where all is lost. The elements of a powerful black moment will be examined, as well as variations in the type of black moments – such as when the external conflict explodes, or a false goal is achieved – along with more advanced black moments, such as the double-genre black moment (when there's more than one plot thread, e.g. romance and suspense). Examples will be analysed from books and movies, and broken into elements that will be easy to apply in participants' own work. (A/E)</p>	<p>Tops, Bottoms and Everyone In Between: Everything you wanted to know about gay men but were too afraid to ask with Daniel de Lorne – Male/male romance is a growing sub-genre but it's not always easy for writers to ask the questions they need to ask about 'the love that dare not speak its name.' Covering terminology, the ins and outs of gay sex, what it's like being a modern gay man, the politics of coming out and more, this presentation is also your opportunity to ask those questions you've always been too afraid to ask. WARNING: contains strong language and content. (All)</p>	<p>The (Believable) Spy Who Loves Me with Sue Simon – The world of espionage has moved on since James Bond and Moneypenny. Learn what spies really get up to nowadays in both government and private industry from this counterintelligence and counterespionage expert who's worked with Top Secret clearances in cryptographics and intelligence, along with working on sensitive projects in security hotspots around the world. (All)</p>	<p>Popular Romance Studies - Academic Stream (All) – Peer reviewed academic papers will be finalised early April 2016 and members notified about the Academic stream content. (All)</p>

RWA Adelaide 2016 Conference Program

Sunday Session 1	<p>Of Honour and Honourable Quarrels: Duelling in the Ages of Romance with Nic Harrison & Shay McAuley – Drawing on historical accounts and anecdotes, the workshop will cover basic duelling etiquette and form, spanning the 15th through the 19th centuries. We will look at a number of recorded or reported duels that actually took place and will include practical demonstrations of the common weapons of honour, including the medieval Longsword, the renaissance Sidesword and Rapier with their companion weapons, as well as the 18th/19th century Sabre and Smallsword. This workshop allows for some weapons handling and basic instruction in their application. (All)</p>	<p>Three Things about Writing the Novel (that you only THINK you know): How to Structure a Story, How to Write Great Dialogue, and How to Murder Clichés with Jim and Nikoo McGoldrick – Structure? Hero's Journey. Check. Three-Act Structure. Check. Save the Cat. Check. Dialogue? Move the story forward and increase the tension. Check. Check. Murder Clichés? Don't rewrite Twilight. Or Hunger Games. Or Divergent. And revise that 'it's all a dream' ending. Check. It's all good. So why isn't my damn story working? After his tenth Spenser detective story, Robert S. Parker never plotted another novel, and Charles Dickens couldn't plot his way out of a paper bag. A contemporary writer once considered having a two-headed protagonist so that all the character's internal dialogue could be external. And when it comes to murdering clichés, we're all just moths to the flame and need to take that bull by the horns. Scott Fitzgerald said, "All good writing is swimming underwater and holding your breath." Join the McGoldricks in an intensive workshop on learning to hold your breath and swim with your keyboard under your arm. (All)</p>	<p>Author Wrangling with Sarah Younger – Agent Sarah Younger of the Nancy Yost Agency will share what she looks for in a potential client from query to first chapters and more about the agent author relationship and why it's so important to be on the same page. (All)</p>	<p>Write like the world's best selling author with Kathryn Fox – The secrets to pace and writing stories that will keep readers up all night turning the pages –Kathryn Fox brings her experience co-writing with James Patterson, the world's biggest selling author. Their collaboration, Private Sydney, was an instant best seller. Kathryn takes attendees through what makes a gripping and compelling story, how to grab the reader's attention and keep it with compelling characters. She also shows ways to keep the story racing and eliminate the dreaded mid-story slump that will have readers staying up all night to find out what happens next. Attendees will also learn how collaborations work. (A/E)</p>	<p>Representations of Love - Academic Stream (All) – Peer reviewed academic papers will be finalised early April 2016 and members notified about the Academic stream content. (All)</p>
Sunday Session 2			<p>Panel: The Care and Feeding of A Writing Career – Four multi-published authors discuss their publication journeys, adapting to the changing market and finding new markets for their work, both in Australia and overseas. We will look at challenges we have faced along the way, things we did well, things we could have handled better. A positive, uplifting look at a crazy business in which success is largely out of our control. Participants: Rachael Johns, Cathryn Hein, Helene Young and Christine Wells. (E/Est)</p>		

RWA Adelaide 2016 Conference Program

Sunday Session 3	<p>Before You Sign: 10 Tricks and Traps of Publishing Contracts with Alex Adsett – Ten important things you need to consider before you sign on the dotted line of a publishing contract. What rights are you actually giving away? Are you getting a fair royalty? Will you ever get your rights back? What does a normal publishing contract look like anyway? (All)</p>	<p>The Editor-Author Hook-up with Kate Cuthbert & Ainslie Paton – A panel discussion between Kate Cuthbert, Managing Editor of Harlequin Escape, and several successful authors to examine the author-editor relationship and establish what makes a good hook-up. What Editors want, what editors do and how they do it, the editorial process, what editors need from authors, what not to do, what defines a good editor/author relationship, and about covers, shout-lines and blurbs. What authors need to do, how to make your editor fall in love with you, what to expect from your editor, how to approach an editorial critique/letter, what happens if you don't get it, how to disagree productively, and being a professional in a creative field. (A/E)</p>	<p>Harlequin UK Editor, Joanne Grant will lead a romance panel discussion Harlequin Category authors. (All)</p>	<p>The Things We Do With Words with Heather Graham – A down-to-the-fingers workshop in which each participant will walk away with a story. It's amazing what a little suggestion can do...this workshop helps the writer become creative, and avoid the terrible, horrible, evil blank page. Participants will be asked to sit back, give the minds and hands a shake and then get going on creation. Listener feedback helps take an author further with their own works in progress-or may start them off on something new. We're all different, our work is all different – and our minds can take us where we never thought we could go! (All)</p>	<p>Panel: Aussie New Adult: Writing the 'In Between' New Adult – It's just sexed up YA ... right? Wrong. Lilliana Anderson, CJ Duggan and Lauren K. McKellar discuss the fine line between these two age groups, social responsibilities involved in writing NA, and why this definitely has a place in the Aussie market. (A/E)</p>	<p>Representations of Love - Academic Stream (All) – Peer reviewed academic papers will be finalised early April 2016 and members notified about the Academic stream content. (All)</p>
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(A=Aspiring E=Emerging Est=Established)

The Workshop Program is subject to change. Full and final program details will be available at the RWA website and on the TryBooking registration site. Workshop rooms will be designated and set up to cater for participants using your registration options so some rooms may be standing room only if delegates change their minds and swap rooms often. Please be considerate of the presenter and other participants if this happens. As always, our conference is perfume free.

Financial support available

Are you keen to attend *Ain't Love Grand* 2016 Conference in Adelaide but worried about the cost? Good news: RWA's Members' Assistance Fund 2016 is now open for applications.

The MAF assists selected members in furthering their writing careers by contributing to the costs associated with their attendance at conference or other RWA events. Applications are welcome from members, whether Established, Emerging or Aspiring, who would not be able to attend without financial assistance. This need should be demonstrated in your application, along with how you intend to use attendance at this event to further your career.

Information on how to apply can be found on the MAF page at www.romanceaustralia.com in the members-only section (login required). Successful applicants may receive a grant to cover part or all of their costs. Your application should state how much is required to enable you to attend the event. Applications close 31 March 2016.

The fund is limited by the RWA budget and the sum of member contributions. If you would like to help other members in need, then consider contributing to the fund. Donations can be made via PayPal, by adding your contribution to your membership renewal or by cheque. For more info contact maf@romanceaustralia.com.

BUMPS ALONG THE ROAD

This month, author **Madeline Ash** is in the hot-seat to talk about past failures on her publishing journey.



"I started writing category romance while at uni, armed with delusions of grandeur and what I believed to be a relevant degree. Little did I know, majoring in professional writing taught me very little about actual writing (nothing on plotting, voice, or goal/conflict/motivation—I learned craft from RWA years later).

I received 12 rejections from Mills & Boon in six years. At first, because I didn't know what the heck I was doing, but eventually because my stories weren't the right 'fit'. I got closer: they requested a full manuscript, they asked for a rewrite or revisions, and then they rejected it. They asked to see something else, requested the full—then rejected it. The rollercoaster of anticipation and dejection was draining, but, in hindsight, important for my development as a writer.

By 2010, my writing was stronger and one of my critique buddies suggested I submit to a new UK-based ebook press called Embrace Books. I did and heard back very quickly with an

offer of publication. Unfortunately, the ensuing excitement was short-lived: Embrace Books fell under two weeks before my release date.

After a brief but thorough wallow in self-pity, I turned my attention back to Mills & Boon. I took my time and wrote what is still one of my favourite stories and sent it off with crossed fingers—and got a new rejection for my collection. (No, really, I kept all my rejections in a folder, hoping desperately as it filled that I wouldn't need to buy a second folder.)

But I believed in this story. I didn't think it was too tragic as the otherwise encouraging rejection claimed. So I submitted it to [Penguin Australia's digital imprint] Destiny Romance and had an offer for publication within the week. That book, *Uncovered by Love*, ended up being a 2012 Ruby finalist, which was seriously gratifying.

Not that my rejections quite ended there. Destiny Romance turned

down the second book I submitted (admittedly, the style was very different from my debut), which shattered my confidence. It took another year after that before I had a second book published.

Now, I've just had my sixth book released by [US publisher] Tule Publishing and am finally feeling more stable. I know the road to publication isn't always easy, so to those struggling, I say be tenacious. Stay determined. Pick yourself back up. Believe in your writing. You will get there."

Want to share your bumpy road to success? Drop a line to Laura Greaves, column guru and author of *The Ex-Factor* (Destiny Romance), at laura-greaves@hotmail.com.

Failure quote of the month:

"Giving up is the only sure way to fail." – *Gena Showalter*

Change to New Releases Submissions for **HMB Authors**

Starting with the **April new releases**, all members who have a new release, whether they are a HMB/Escape author or not, will need to submit their own covers using the RWA website. Until now this has been handled by the HMB office.

The reason for the change is for better efficiency in *Hearts*

Talk production and to treat all authors equally and fairly.

To submit a new release cover, please visit **www.romanceaustralia.com/newreleases** (you must be logged in to the RWA website first) and fill in the form.

Covers must be received by the 8th of the month before publication (i.e. 8th March for the April edition).

Marketing Questions Answered

with Sara Hood

Q: I know how important reviews are but asking for them from my readers makes me feel so sleazy. Can you help? – Kate from Sydney.

A: Many of the questions I get are ones that so many others are asking. And this one's no different. So many writers feel reluctant to ask for reviews and come up with all sorts of creative reasons for why they don't need to ask for them. With my life coaching hat on, can I say they are classic avoidance strategies!

The problems are really quite different. It's about confidence and fear. So let's start with putting it out there. If you ask for a review, what's the worst that can happen? Does anyone die? Seriously, if no one dies, how scary can this be? If Taylor Swift can shake it off, so can you!

The reality is many readers love your books and would love to write a review, but don't know that they can or how. Yes, really. Many don't know the value of a good review to you, their favourite author. Many readers mean to, but...squirrel!

And to be honest, if you aren't confident in how and when you ask, it can feel really uncomfortable and, well, sleazy. Once you ask and ask the right way, be prepared to be surprised by how lovely your readers will be.

There are three cardinal rules for asking for reviews from readers:

1. Make it fun.
2. Make it personal.
3. Make it easy.

Make it fun!

Some writers put the guilt trip on their readers. Do you realise how hard it is to write a book? That I have 27 children and a leaky old roof and I can't pay the bills unless

you give me a review. Erk. Who feels good about that? Make it fun! Why not create some amusing graphics that you can post in your social media? The graphics ask for a review but in an entertaining, guilt-free way. I've posted some examples to my website at **www.marketing4writers.net**. Please don't steal them. Use them as inspiration to make your own.

Make it personal!

This is not about you. Well, it is a bit, but it's really about your readers. Ask if they can help. Who wouldn't want to help when they've just read your lovely book? On Amazon you can thank your reviewers. Why not do that? Of course, never berate anyone for a bad review, but how do you feel when you get a heartfelt thank-you note from someone you gave a gift to? Why are your readers any different?

Don't cut and paste the same thank you to everyone. Create a note for each. It only has to be one sentence. If you're Nora Roberts, this would take you months to do, but we're not all Nora Roberts. So if you can, it's a very personal thing to do.

Make it easy!

Who has time to fiddle around to find the right version of Amazon (for them) and then the right page for you and then the right page for the actual book? Make it simple. Take the reader directly to exactly the right place. There are so many places for a review that's not always easy (which English language Amazon, for example?).

Why not put a dedicated page in your website with all the links to Goodreads and the various options

of Amazon, so you can send your readers directly to the review page in one more click? If you think there are other sites you'd like to encourage them to post reviews on, then add those links, too.

Does any of that sound sleazy?

Remember: your readers love your books. You've just given them a few hours of joy and entertainment. Why wouldn't they want to give something back?

There's so much more to say about asking for reviews, and not just from readers, so I've put it on my blog at **www.marketing4writers.net**. There are examples there of how other writers have asked for reviews. Feel free to go over there and check it out.

So, Kate, I hope that helped and next time you get into review-requesting mode, you'll feel more confident and less like you're being a secondhand car salesman. Let me know!

Send your questions to sara@marketing4writers.net. Sara has more than 30 years' experience in marketing and marketing communications. Find her at www.marketing4writers.net.





A Writer's Life with Anne Gracie

Anne Gracie here, introducing the first of our guests for the 2016 *Writer's Life* column, former prez of RWA, **Nikki Logan**. Nikki's written about an important but rarely discussed aspect of writing life—writing full-time at home, and whether it's all it's cracked up to be.

Giving Back the Holy Grail

For a long time, being published was the author's Holy Grail, but then times and the market changed and authors began discovering that:

- you can be *un*-published just as unexpectedly,
- there were new and more direct paths to readers, and
- being published didn't necessarily make you any money.

Thus, publication became just another flagstone in the path and we needed a new Holy Grail to strive for.

We found it in the beautifully seductive dream of *writing for a living*. You know the one... Writing in comfy clothes all day, no commute, no boss, chores between chapters, rolling with your muse at 3am on a weeknight, writing your way around Australia in a caravan...

So... authorly.

Yet, like all dreams, the shiny parts are not the *only* parts. They're just the prettiest.

Writing for a living might also bring with it anything from financial insecurity to outright debt, family pressure and expectation, even rampant guilt. It's hard to let yourself enjoy your writing when you know that it's not paying for itself. Put simply, there is a big difference between *writing for a living* and *writing for your life*.

Boy, is it hard, though, to give up that dream when you discover that writing for a living isn't as sustainable as you had imagined. You judge yourself and you fear judgement in the faces of others. Because you *wanted it for so long*, right? And because everyone else is *doing so well*...

Right?

I'm here to squeeze your shoulder in solidarity and acknowledge that there *are* some perfectly sound career reasons you might give back the Holy Grail once achieved:

1. Productivity. When your time is shorter, you are forced to be more efficient with that time and sometimes that might work better for you. Despite everything I expected in becoming a full-time writer, my productivity did not increase when my time to do it in doubled. If anything, I went backwards.

2. Fear. Writing is an unpredictable occupation and nothing kills creativity faster than fear that the money will dry up. You can't write engaging, evocative fiction when you're *writing for your life*.

3. Financial freedom = creative freedom. Having a day job to cover the basics lets you take creative risks, like changing genres, writing the book of your heart or striving to get ahead of the trend rather than follow it. Burning to write squid-shifter time-slips? Go right ahead.

4. Shut-in syndrome. Writing can be an isolating task and you might find yourself becoming like some wizened old hermit living in a cave, getting everything delivered and growing increasingly disconnected with the world. Having a day job ensures that you get dressed and out of your cave from time to time to mingle with real people in the real world.

5. Industry change. Fact: The average discretionary dollar of readers has not changed, but the market is now flooded with product, diluting and (in some

cases) decimating the income of the average commercial fiction author. Market forces reward writers happy to chase trends, but having a separate source of income lets everyone else stay committed to their Muse and brand.

6. Standards. We all have an idea of what kind of writer we want to be and 'wildly promotional', 'system-gaming' or 'opportunistic' is probably not high on everyone's list. Yet as a traditionally and self-published author, I've felt the pressure to be all of those things at one stage or another, and it's the kind of cumulative thing that creeps up on you one compromise at a time until you wonder what *happened* to the fabulous writer you were going to be.

This experience is absolutely not everyone's. Some writers are energised by financial uncertainty and motivated by pressure. Others don't have families, mortgages and debt to support so their cost of living is much more achievable. But if you're not either of those writers, it is okay to return to a more sustainable model that delivers creative and financial freedom.

Giving back the Holy Grail is not failure; in fact, it could be part of your success.

Nikki Logan writes contemporary series romance, and historical fantasy as Gwendolyn Beynon. She recently returned to part-time work to give herself the creative freedom that was an important part of her process. Visit www.nikkilogan.com.au and www.yDdraig.com.au.

Contests

with **Erica Hayes**

Emerald and Emerald Pro second round

Congratulations to our second-round entrants:

Emerald

- ♥ Laura Boon
- ♥ Jan Bridges
- ♥ Suzanne Cass (x2)
- ♥ Frances Dall'Alba
- ♥ Yanicke Forfang
- ♥ Anna Rae Frost
- ♥ Georgia Henry
- ♥ Emma Hoole

- ♥ Amanda Knight
- ♥ A.T. Morgan
- ♥ Katerina Simms
- ♥ C. Temple-Slack

Emerald Pro

- ♥ Alexandra Grace
- ♥ Euphrasia Holmes
- ♥ Katy Scott

The full manuscripts of these entries will now be read by our reader judges in order to decide which stories progress to the final round. Well done to everyone who entered—we hope you get good use from your judging feedback.

Coming up in April: The Valerie Parv Award, plus the member-judged Cover Contest for published books. Check the website for details.



Hoot! Hoot! April 2016 OWL

Sexual Tension: The Undertow of Romance with Rachel Bailey

The sexual tension between your hero and heroine is the delicious sizzle on your page. But how do you create it? Using examples from romance novels and movies, we'll explore the techniques authors use and apply them to your own work.

This course breaks the concepts down into small, understandable chunks that are both explained and then illustrated using romance novel examples. By breaking the content into bite-sized chunks, the participants are able to apply the principles into their own work.

(Note: this workshop is not about writing love scenes, or sex itself—it's about the sexual tension between the main characters that gives the story its sizzle.)

Course dates: 4–30 April 2016

Cost: RWA Member – \$30, Non-RWA Member – \$40

Register at **www.romanceaustralia.com/owl/19**

Rachel Bailey developed a serious book addiction at a young age (via *Peter Rabbit* and *Jemima Puddle-Duck*) and has never recovered. Just how she likes it. She went on to gain degrees in psychology and social work, but is now living her dream—writing both category romance and romantic comedy. Her books have hit the *USA Today* bestseller list, are published in over 26 countries, and have been translated into more than 16 languages. She lives on a piece of paradise on Australia's east coast with her hero and their dog pack.

Connect with Rachel at **www.rachelbailey.com**.



2015 Emerald Award Winners

The second round finalists in RWA's 2016 Emerald Award were announced just last month. Here's who was triumphant last year...

Melbourne mum **Heidi Catherine** landed the inaugural Emerald Pro Award—for the best unpublished manuscript by a published author—with a young adult novel.

Heidi, have you won an RWA award before? What does winning the inaugural Emerald Pro award mean to you?

This is my first RWA award as well as it being an inaugural award. Lots of firsts all round! Writing *The Soulweaver* was an emotional process and it profoundly affected the way I look at life.

It meant so much to see it connect with the judges and I was heartened to receive such positive feedback. I've been living on cloud nine since the awards were announced.

Can you sum up *The Soulweaver* for us? And what manuscript number is it for you?

Although this isn't the first manuscript I've written (it's my fifth), *The Soulweaver* is my first young adult novel.

It's the first book in a trilogy I've recently completed and is the story of a teenager who's haunted by memories of having lived before.

As these memories sharpen, she finds herself torn between the man she loved in her past life and the man she loves now.

Tell us more about your other book, *Train Jotting*, too.

Train Jotting is an ebook that I published online, based on my

“Choose to write in the genre that you most like to read.”

blog, about the unspoken rules of catching public transport.

It covers important issues such as not answering your phone, not making eye contact with strangers and not picking your nose.

It's just a bit of silly fun and couldn't be more different to *The Soulweaver*.

What do you think is the winning formula for a page-turner?

I don't think there is a formula, but if the writer is genuinely engaged and enjoying their work then that will show in their writing. The moment a writer gets bored then the reader will, too.

This all comes back to the golden rule of choosing to write in the genre that you most like to read, which is precisely why I decided to write a young adult series.

You've also had two stories final in RWA's *Little Gems* anthology contest. What do you think can help a short story stand out from the crowd?

I love the *Little Gems*. It's such a great opportunity for writers, particularly those who are unpublished. Short stories have to work harder than full-length manuscripts as every sentence must count.

For me, the ones that stand out drop the reader straight into the action and don't try to get too clever with a complex plot.

What keeps you busy when you're not writing?

I have a degree in marketing

and worked for many years as a proofreader and copywriter, but left this career recently to concentrate on my personal writing projects full-time. I also have two sons, a husband and a dog who manage to keep me busy when I'm not writing.

Finally, what's next on the horizon for you? Will you be sending out *The Soulweaver* all over the place?

I'm currently in the process of trying to find the right publisher for *The Soulweaver*. The wonderful pitching program at the RWA conference was very helpful with this.

In the meantime, I'm editing my other two manuscripts in *The Soulweaver* trilogy as well as writing my first crime novel. It's quite possible that I have the best life ever!



PJ Vye won the 2015 Emerald award for her unpublished manuscript, *The Hermit Next Door*, which she recently indie published.

Hi PJ. Have you won an RWA award before? If so, when and what for? What does winning an Emerald award in 2015 mean to you?

I've been entering RWA contests for four years. In 2014 I made it to the finals with a third place in the Valerie Parv Award and a story published in the *Little Gems* 'Moonstone' edition. But this is my first win. What does it mean to me? Most of all, it's a boost in confidence. Does a confident writer write better? I think they do. It's like a singer on the stage—regardless of the voice, if she performs like a superstar (whether she is one or not) she's far more interesting to watch than the singer who can't take her eyes off the floor. That's me. I was doing a fair bit of floor-staring. Since this award, my head is up and I'm smiling.

Can you sum up *The Hermit Next Door* for us? What manuscript number is it for you?

The Hermit story is manuscript number two out of four. And in case you're wondering...the story really is about a hermit...I mean really, there just aren't enough romance stories about hermits, right?

Fame is the last thing Willa Jones needs. She's shunned society for a reason. But she's been thrust into the limelight, quite by accident, because of her extraordinary talent to make people feel something special when she sings. Jack Gilmore is the CEO of EP Records. And he's struggling with alcohol addiction. It's been a long time since he's had to persuade a client to sign a music contract with little more than his charm and charisma. Those tools of the trade were packed away long ago. But she's rejected everyone else, the usual leverage—money,

fame, prestige—not having the slightest effect. She only wants to be left alone, live an anonymous life.

Somewhere amongst the cameras, the confessions and the music she discovers a life worth living and a man who makes sense to her when little else does. This is a story about fame and how sometimes, despite everything, it chooses its own champion.

Describe your writing style.

I would describe my writing style as witty, succinct, unconventional. Then again, it might be none of those things. If it's not, then I wish it was...

Will you be sending *The Hermit Next Door* out all over the place now, mentioning it's an award winner?

I've self-published. It's been available on my website since October. Can I mention that here? Oops, I just did...www.pjvye.com.

What do you think are the key essentials for a winning manuscript?

“Since this award, my head is up and I'm smiling.”

I have absolutely no idea. No one was more surprised than me. All I know is that entering RWA contests have been essential to my development as a writer—for my professional learning, motivation, and confidence. The first feedback I got from a contest was 'show, don't tell'. I didn't even know what that meant. So I looked it up. And



I learned. Every contest was a stepping stone to developing a new skill, and gradually, I began to make a few finals. Key essentials for me personally? Don't overthink it. Just do the work. Send it out. Move on.

One more thing—find yourself a support group of people to encourage and keep you positive. For me, it's the Melbourne Romance Writers Guild. They share the highs and lows and you can't put a price on that kind of support. The members are treasures, every one of them.

What keeps you busy when you're not writing?

My fascination with fame stems from my day job—teaching music to teenagers in high school. With every second student bitten by the fame bug, it's little wonder I love to delve into what makes fame tick, what the allure is, why the obsession. I also have a six-acre garden I'm transforming into a writer's sanctuary. Spare time is a tug-of-war between writing novels and digging up weeds. My muse is in my garden, so it's a vicious cycle.

Finally, what's next on the horizon for you?

Write more, learn more—repeat forever.

NEW RELEASES MARCH 2016



A Case For Trust
Gracie Macgregor
Escape Publishing



A Sheik To Capture Her Heart
Meredith Webber
Mills & Boon Medical



A Vow To Secure His Legacy
Annie West
Mills & Boon Sexy



Acceptable Lies
CM Corett
Dreamspinner Press



April's Rainbow
Cathryn Hein
Indie Published



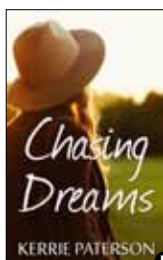
Because of Cam
Wanika Fazekas
Indie Published



Breaking All Their Rules
Sue Mackay
Mills & Boon Medical



Caught By Air: The Watchtower Chronicles 4
Delwyn Jenkins
Momentum



Chasing Dreams
Kerrie Paterson
Indie Published



Crown Prince's Chosen Bride
Kandy Shepherd
Mills & Boon Forever Romance



Dark Child: Bloodsworn, The Omnibus Edition
Adina West
Momentum



Fixed Up
Maddie Jane
Escape Publishing



Heartbreak Homestead (Hearts of the Outback, Book 2)
Susanne Bellamy
Indie Published



Honey Hill House
Lisa Ireland
Escape Publishing



Husband Sit
Louise Cusack
Flirt Press



I Surrender - I Surrender Series, Book 1
Monica James
Indie Published



Imagining Amy
Jenny Ren
Smashwords



Loving the Odds
Stefanie London
Entangled Publishing



One More Day
Linda Charles
Indie Published



Outback Doctors
Meredith Webber
Harlequin MIRA



Outback Sisters
Rachael Johns
Harlequin MIRA



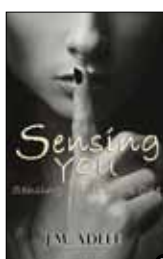
Overboard for Love
Michael Barker
Indie Published



Passions in the Dust
Faye Hall
Red Sage Publishing



Saving Maddie's Baby
Marion Lennox
Mills & Boon Medical



Sensing You
J.M. Adele
Book Flare Publishers



Summer Daze
Sarah Belle, Carla Caruso, Laura Greaves, Georgina Penney & Vanessa Stubbs
Indie Published



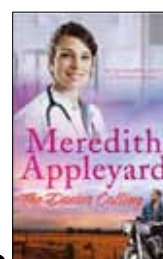
Surrender to Me - I Surrender Series, Book 2
Monica James
Indie Published



Surrendered - I Surrender Series, Book 3
Monica James
Indie Published



The Dead Don't Lie
Camille Taylor
Limitless Publishing



The Doctor Calling
Meredith Appleyard
Penguin Random House Australia



The Healing Season
Catherine Evans
Escape Publishing



The Italians: Cristiano, Vittorio & Dario
Annie West
Mills & Boon Special Releases



The Italian's Ruthless Seduction
Miranda Lee
Mills & Boon Sexy



The Master Vintners
Yvonne Lindsay
Mills & Boon Special Releases



The Reluctant Lover
Justine Lewis
Destiny Romance



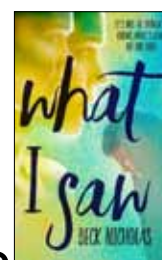
Tiny Dancer: Dance of Love - Book 2
Diane Demetre
Luminosity Publishing



Undercover Highlander
Kalysta Rose
Indie Published



Unexpectedly Yours
Coleen Kwan
Entangled Publishing



What I Saw
Beck Nicholas
Harlequin Teen Australia



White - I Surrender Series, Book 4
Monica James
Indie Published

E Title available as ebook

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

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