

Hearts Talk

The official journal of Romance Writers of Australia

Michelle Diener talks to



Kim Hudson

*Kim Hudson grew up in the Yukon, a hero's daughter with a Cinderella complex. Life taught Kim many things she would need to write the book, *The Virgin's Promise*. She spent the first half of her career exploring her masculine side, first as a field geologist and later as a federal land claims negotiator. Exploring her feminine side became important as she raised her two daughters. This led her to study Writing for Film and Television at Vancouver Film School, and take courses on mythology, feminism and psychology including a Jungian Odyssey in Switzerland. The theory of the book, *The Virgin's Promise*, was developed by closely observing the archetypal expressions that are all around us in movies, music, television, advertisements and stories of personal growth, including her own. *The Virgin's Promise* is Kim's first book.*

Michelle: Kim, I've been a huge fan of *The Virgin's Promise* since it came out, and love how you delve into the more internal arc of character development in the book, rather than the more externally, plot-focused hero's journey. Did you realise what a need *The Virgin's Promise* would be meeting with authors and screenwriters alike before it was published, or was it a more personal project?

Kim: I started exploring the journey in film school in 2002, when the story I wanted to write just didn't work with the hero's journey. In class we had been told that all story from all time was a hero's journey. I felt this was fundamentally wrong and wanted to be able to back that idea up with an alternative structure that really spoke to me. I'd have to say it was an internally driven project, trusting my intuition and feelings of resonance as my guide. Later, when I found supporting research and repeats of the pattern in other stories it was incredibly gratifying. Every time someone writes to me and says the structure really



speaks to them I am so delighted.

Michelle: Do you find more virgin's promise journeys in romance fiction / women's fiction than other types of fiction, or are there just as many to be found in more mainstream titles and movies?

Kim: Romance fiction tends to have a very strong virgin structure. Often the protagonist's obstacle to love is her own lack of connection to her worthiness of taking up some space and making decisions that please her, which is a virgin's journey. Also, she may be asleep to her authentic nature, and

until she awakens to it, and shines, she is not recognisable to her love interest because what he is going to love is who she really is. In movies there are more hero's than virgin's journeys but someone in my webinar once noted that many of the movies that get awards these days are virgin stories (*The King's Speech*, *An Education*, *Erin Brockovich*, *Avatar* (1st half), *Slum Dog Millionaire*, and *The Artist* for example). I'm going to go on a limb and suggest we are starting to get a lot more interested in love driven stories in all forms of mainstream entertainment.

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All deadlines, entry forms and sample scoresheets are at www.romanceaustralia.com in the members only section (you will need a password), or in the Files section of the RWA Contest Alert group.

For contest entry forms via mail, send request with a stamped, self-addressed envelope to: RWA Contests, 20 Waller Crescent, Campbell ACT 2612.

To join Contest Alert, RWA's email alert for contest entrants, go to au.groups.yahoo.com/group/RWAContestAlert/ click on the "join this group" in the right hand corner and follow the instructions.

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To join ROMAUS, our online email group, go to <http://au.groups.yahoo.com/group/romanceaustralia> click on the "join this group" button and follow the instructions.

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

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INDIVIDUAL WRITERS SUPPORT SCHEME

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For unpublished 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.

RWA SOCIAL MEDIA

BLOG

<http://romanceaustralia.wordpress.com/>

TWITTER

www.twitter.com/RWAus

FACEBOOK www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=53338877477

MY SPACE

www.myspace.com/rwaustalia

FORUM

<http://www.romanceaustraliaforum.com/>

Please note that RWA is run by volunteers. Currently, the best way to make an enquiry is via email, but if you call the phone number please leave a message and someone will contact you as soon as possible.

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Hearts Talk Cover Photo: Jenn J McLeod found a dazzling sun-catcher heart.

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President's Report—January

Welcome to the Future

Happy New Year, everyone!! And welcome to the future. I'm sorry but HOW did it become 2013? I remember when 2001 was about as futuristic as any of us liked to conceive. And then we stretched a bit further for Terminator's Judgement Day which was so far off in the 'future' the post-apocalyptic Earth was overrun by robots.

And now we've surpassed even that. And me still without a jetpack... *sigh*

Still, the future sure looks bright if you're a romance writer. If 2013 is anything like 2012 we'll see new publishing options, new challenges to master, new interest in the stories that just couldn't sell a few years ago—not because of their quality but because they didn't fit some marketing department checklist. I declare 2013 the year of the 'fringe' book. Maybe hybrids. Books that not only push the envelope they burst out of it and shred it in their wake. Terrifically written stories that are new and different to everything else out there.

Long live the Fringe!!

A word about Conference

We've had a couple of questions about how RWA conferences are funded and I wanted to cover it here so that those who don't go to conferences (or can't) can rest assured that their RWA membership dollars aren't subsidising those who do go to conferences. RWA conferences are fully funded by the registrations of those who attend them, and when RWA does

top up an event (which sometimes happens) it comes from any profit a previous conference might have made. Putting conference profits back into the conference experience, in other words.

Portfolio of the Month - Corporate Services

Corporate Services is one of our newest but most important portfolios. It tackles media and PR/promotion for RWA, partnerships with publishers, festivals and libraries and sponsorships (usually related to conference). The Corporate Services team work steadily (under the leadership of Jen St George) to make sure that RWA's profile in the community is maximised and that our members can get advice when they need it re: how to best promote themselves at home and overseas. The Corporate Services team is on the hunt right now for new members so if you like dealing with publishers/industry and/or if you have media/journalism skills and are happy to give back to the organisation that has given you so much, please drop Jen a line at:

corporateservices@romanceaustralia.com

See you next month.



Nikki

VOLUNTEER OF THE MONTH

Congratulations! January's winner is Contest team member...

Kasey Rowe

who has won *Chosen for the Marriage Bed* by Anne O'Brien, *Will of Steel* by Diana Palmer and *A Mother's Love*, three stories by Ruth Wind, Janice Kay Johnson and Raeanne Thayne.



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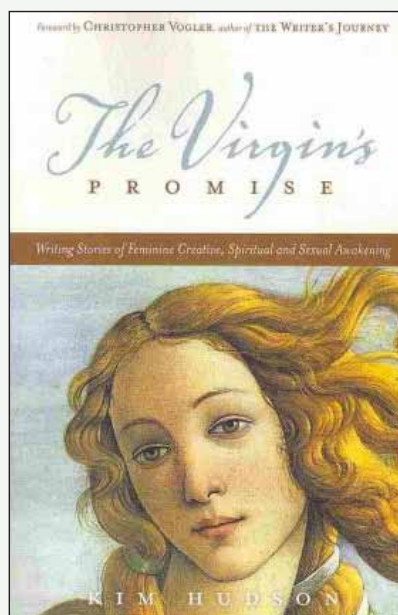
Michelle: In *The Virgin's Promise*, you discuss how the heroine has to decide whether to let the expectations of the community around her dictate her path in life, or whether to break free of those expectations and fulfil her own destiny. This seems a very feminine dilemma, one which many women can relate to—do you find more virgin's journeys relate to female characters?

Kim: I think it is ultimately human to need to attach to what you know yourself to be despite what everyone else wants, needs, or expects from you. I also think we all need to know we can be strong, rugged and brave to handle the survival challenges life throws at us (the hero's journey). These are the two halves of knowing yourself as an individual: internally and externally. Having said that, I think culturally women are encouraged to be selfless, helpful, pleasing, nurturing, and compliant more than men are. All of these qualities are externally motivated, meaning it is strongly discouraged to go on the virgin's journey if it is going to disrupt others from getting their needs met. This dynamic makes for a really interesting and relatable story with a female protagonist.

Michelle: I really love how the virgin's choice to fulfil her own destiny ultimately heals the community she lives in, or makes it better than it was. This happily-ever-after is a mainstay of romance fiction, and part of its great success, but how does this play out in other genres?

Kim: How change occurs is fascinating. It can happen through fear conquering stories which are all about the need to right a wrong, find a treasure, remove the enemy, or do what it takes to survive. Mysteries, adventures and horror fit here and usually you can identify them by something blowing up or being destroyed. Change can also happen through love which causes internal transformation. The antagonist can grow because of love for the protagonist. Themes of change through internal growth occur in many dramas, comedies,

spiritual stories, coming-of-age stories, and stories of dreams coming true.



Michelle: Can you give us a few examples of movies or books that perfectly fit the virgin's journey?

Kim: Definitely. Movies are easiest because the requirement that they be told in 90 minutes (pages) reduces them down to very strong archetypal elements. *Ever After* is a great movie for clear representation of the beats. *Wedding Crashers* is a great example of a romantic Virgin story with male leads. *While You Were Sleeping* is my favourite Christmas virgin story.

Novels are more complex because they have more room to circle through a beat a couple of times and explore other elements. My all-time favourite is *Outlanders* where Claire is ultimately separating herself from the expectations of her community to find her true calling as a wise woman doctor and finds a passionate love.

Michelle: What novels do you like to read in your down time?

Kim: I like a huge variety of novels. Right now I'm reading *The Birth of Venus* by Sarah Dunant which I'm enjoying because I love to be taken back in time, particularly to the Renaissance and Egyptian or Minoan times. I enjoyed the *Twilight* series for its archetypal moments, and the chance to enjoy them with my daughter. I enjoy mysteries as

well because I like to follow clues and figure things out. Reginald Hill is one of my favourite writers. Ultimately, at the end of the day, which is when I read fiction, I want to enter the world of love through a novel as a nice way to set up my dream time.

Michelle: Finally, we are so delighted you're visiting us in Western Australia. Is there anything in particular you're looking forward to seeing or doing?

Kim: Coming from the Yukon the contrasts with Australia are so fascinating. I am really looking forward to seeing the different plants and wildlife, tasting different foods, meeting people, finding out what it is like to have a beach as a normal part of life, and feeling heat (will it be warm in your winter? – probably it will seem warm to me). I would like to explore Aborigines' dream time teachings through art and music as well. I'm also a geologist so I am interested in the landforms and historical mining activity. I thought about going to other places as well, since I so rarely get to your side of the planet, but there is so much to experience in Australia I am going to focus on just being there and try to get to the Coral Coast and Rottnest Island.

Kim Hudson was interviewed by Michelle Diener (www.michellediener.com).

If you'd like more information about Kim Hudson, author of *The Virgin's Promise*, her website is: <http://thevirginspromise.com>.

Kim Hudson will be presenting at the *Riding The Waves* conference in Fremantle, 16-18 August 2013, where you can learn more about *The Virgin's Promise*.

For further reading:
The hero's journey is a theory developed by Joseph Campbell and further developed and explained by Christopher Vogler in the book, *The Writer's Journey*. <http://www.thewritersjourney.com/>

They're back! Group Grants Return

Would you like a free, intimate craft workshop by a published author? How about a subsidised writing retreat for you and your writing mates?

The Group Grants Scheme was set up to support the wonderful work done by RWA groups whether online or face-to-face. Possible uses for a grant include: visiting speaker/author; fees for group members to attend conferences/online classes; texts for a group library; venue and equipment hire for workshops/retreats; or anything else that supports group members in their writing.

To be eligible for a grant, your group needs to be an Affiliated or Associated RWA Group, which is registered with RWA Group Liaison and has supplied a Group Statement. To check whether your group is registered email groupliaison@gmail.com.

Applications open 1 February and close 28 February 2013. Total amount the panel has to allocate across all applications is \$1,500.

You can find more information and download the application form in the Members Section of RWA website.

Or contact Janette Whitehead at groupprants@romanceaustralia.com.

If you're looking for what you could do with a Group Grant, page 13 has a report from the Erotic Romance Writers Retreat.

RWA Flyer

We have printed a flyer promoting the benefits of membership of Romance Writers of Australia. These are perfect for handouts at events, workshops, library talks—anywhere that potential members may congregate. If you'd like some to distribute at an upcoming event, please send an email with the number required, date required and a mailing address to:

info@romanceaustralia.com.

Are you newly published?

If you've sold a manuscript 40,000 words or over, in print or digital format, and would like to join Romance Writers of Australia's Published Authors Network, please contact our Published Authors Liaison, Robyn Grady, by email at PAL@romanceaustralia.com.

R♥BY Award

The R♥BY Award is open for books published between 1 January 2012 to 31 December 2012.

The contest opens on 7 January and closes 8 February 2013.

Details are on the RWA website. More info:

rby@romanceaustralia.com.

Ella Award

The Ella Award opens on 7 January and closes 4 February 2013.

Details are on the RWA website. More info:

ella@romanceaustralia.com.

Good News and Releases

If you have Good News to share with the RWA community, or a cover you'd like on the back page of *Hearts Talk*, on the RWA blog and website, then you need to send the information to us at

htgoodnews@romanceaustralia.com.

Hearts Talk is sent to the printer by the 22nd of each month. To allow for layout and proofing, content MUST reach us by the 8th of the month to be included.

Critique Partner Scheme

Are you looking for someone to critique your work? Someone to travel on the writing journey with? Someone who'll understand you and your writing? You could find your perfect match in RWA's



Critique Partner Scheme. Contact Bec Sampson:

Applycritpartners@romanceaustralia.com

Contest Judging

Becoming a judge in RWA contests is a great way to improve your writing skills, while helping other writers.

You don't need to be published, or experienced. If you're a bit hesitant, you can do the Judge's Training first.

If you're interested in improving your skills, send an email to Margaret:

judge-coordinator@romanceaustralia.com

Individual Writers Support Scheme

Shannon's the person to contact if you're unpublished and looking for some help with your writing. Priority is given to members challenged by distance or unable to access creative support by other means.

You can receive a one-off critique of either 1 or 3 chapters by a published author / advanced unpublished writer, by registering:

iws@romanceaustralia.com.

Looking for an RWA contact?

These and more RWA contacts are listed on page 2 of *Hearts Talk* each month.

In the fine print, you'll find the committee members and their email addresses, and contacts for most of the schemes run by RWA.

If you're not sure who to contact, send an email to info@romanceaustralia.com and it will be passed to the relevant person.

Chapter Hooks – A Myth or a Must?

by Helen Lacey

When I sold my first book and received revisions from my editor, one of the things I had to do was 'polish' my chapter endings. They were 'flat' and required some much needed oomph.

As I worked through the revisions it became clear that there were elements to my story, particularly high moments of emotional tension, that I hadn't properly executed and were not developed enough to lead towards those mini climaxes in plot—otherwise known as chapter hooks.

So, why are chapter hooks so important? Simple—they make the reader read on. When someone says—"I was just going to read a chapter but I couldn't put the book down and then suddenly it was 2 am and the book was finished."—then the reader has been compelled to keep turning the pages and the author has done her job.

Of course, every chapter hook varies in its intensity—the hooks in a series romance would have different elements to those in a crime novel or paranormal/fantasy story.

In a romance we need to feel the emotional journey develop and strong chapter hooks are a way of creating reader investment in the characters—so they can feel the uncertainty and vulnerability of the hero when he comes to his realisation of love moment. Or share in the heroine's happiness when she acknowledges she is falling for the man of her dreams, or her despair when she thinks she has been betrayed.

In a thriller, working up to a climactic chapter hook can stir emotions—it can create fear and assault the senses and have the reader turning to the next page with shaking fingers because they can't bear *not* knowing what befalls the villain, even though they really might want to hide under the covers.

Harlequin Editor Susan Litman says: "Your objective as a writer is to propel the reader through your story, and some of your best tools are characterisation, dialogue, and story structure. In that regard, I generally look for well-structured chapters that build tension smoothly from one to the next, and each chapter ending should almost be a sort of cliffhanger. Obviously I'm not looking for the hero or heroine to rush into a burning building or leap from a train every fifteen pages ☺ but it helps to think of those closing moments as mini-cliffhangers, moments of intense emotion that will leave the reader hanging on such a rush of emotion—be it action, romance, passion (or all of the above!)—that they are compelled to turn the page. A strong, vivid chapter ending will never fail to have me thinking, "well, just one more page!" no matter what phone call I have to make or what pot I have boiling over on the stove. That is the power of a great story and, just as importantly, great storytelling."

There are a few ways you can create compelling chapter hooks:

The adversity—leave the chapter with your character being challenged by some adversity and the reader is drawn to discover if they overcome it, or even survive it—this is useful in crime or quest stories.

The problem—here, your character has to work out a problem. Minimising his/her choices can build tension and really compel the reader to find out what choice they made by turning the page to the next chapter—this can create wonderful emotional tension in a romance.

The result—this is where your character has made his/her choice and the reader must turn the page to see the outcome of this decision. This technique can also be helpful in creating another goal for your character.

Literary Agent Scott Eagan says: "Along with a great beginning of a book that sucks me into a story, I personally love those stories that make me sad we hit THE END. Great chapter endings should make the reader want to stay friends with the characters. At the same time, we want to know that the characters are still going on even after we have closed the book. As far as secondary characters, if they have been integral to the first storyline, we should be wanting to see their story being told later on."

Author and Manuscript Assessor Louise Cusack says: "As a manuscript assessor I'm always checking for tension in a manuscript, and the more tension there is, the more likely it is that a story will be published. A great way to create tension is to end chapters with a hook. Try to think of something that will make readers turn the page and start reading the next chapter instead of putting the book down (and maybe never picking it up again). This could be a surprise for the character, a revelation the character has internally, or a plot development that readers know will impact on a character they care about—in short, anything that makes readers wonder how the characters will react."

Strong chapter hooks can drive a story and each hook should foreshadow an event. In my January release for Harlequin Special Edition, *His-And-Hers Family*, the



heroine has been reunited with the child she gave up for adoption fourteen years earlier. What she hadn't expected was her growing attraction for her daughter's adoptive uncle. By the end of chapter three I wanted them to face this attraction head-on—so I used the **problem** technique to highlight what was happening between them at the end of the chapter, forcing them to make a decision at the beginning of the following chapter.

Here's the excerpt:

"My job is to protect her. Karen trusted me with that responsibility and I'll do it the best I can."

Fiona wrapped her arms around her waist and sat forward. "I won't screw this up. And I'll be whatever she needs me to be. There's no question about me trying to replace her mother. But I can be her friend."

"Yes, you can."

She let out a breath and experienced a heady warmth way down low. There was something in his expression which heightened her awareness of him on every level.

She pushed some words out. "So, I guess considering you're her legal guardian, we should be friends, too."

Another look, longer, hotter. Hot enough to raise her temperature a degree or two.

"Logically. But I get the sense that whatever's going on here," he said and flicked a hand in the air, "it's got nothing to do with friendship."

"I don't think -"

"And everything to do with sex."

So this hook sets up that the attraction between them is mutual, even though they both realise getting involved is impossible. And then later, when the heroine discovers that the hero has kept something important a secret from her, she is faced with an adversity—she has to make a choice, to either confront him or stay silent. This is the transition for her viewpoint, to his viewpoint in the next chapter when he realises she is angry.

Fiona knew she had to start thinking with her head and not her heart.

Or I might lose everything.

And that, she thought with a resolute breath, was not an option.

Chapter Break

Wyatt sensed the distinct change in Fiona's mood the moment she walked outside. She glared at him with a kind of unholy rage as she walked across to where Cecily sat by the pool. He wished he knew her better. He followed her through the kitchen and into the front living room. She clearly knew he was behind her because her back was stiff with tension.

So, as this scene progresses the reader can see that the heroine has decided to confront the hero, which leads to a conversation and then to a dark moment where even more secrets are revealed.

For the result, the heroine has been shifting between loving and hating the hero until he unexpectedly turns up on her doorstep.

She stopped dead in her tracks.

Wyatt stood by the door, dressed in a tuxedo, and looked so gorgeous it stole her breath. His glittering gaze swept over her appreciatively as he dazzled Fiona with a smile.

And she fell in love with him all over again.

Chapter Break

"Are you ready to go, beautiful?"

She rocked backward and teetered on her ridiculously high heels. "I thought you were in the city?"

"I was. But I'm here now."

As you can see from these examples, chapter hooks don't have to be about physical action. Tension is built through characterisation and pacing. Our goal as writers should be to keep the reader turning the pages and to offer a richly satisfying read that makes them come back to our books again and again.

Helen Lacey writes for Harlequin Special Edition and her January release is called His-And-Hers Family. Visit Helen at her website www.helenlacey.com



The Ella Award 2013

Entries for The Ella, the romantic novella of the year award, will open 7 January and **close 4 February 2013**.

For entry details and guidelines please check the RWA website, or for queries contact the coordinator via email at ella@romanceaustralia.com.

Good luck to all who enter.

Raewyn Bright, Ella Coordinator

RWA History: Flashback to 1992

Are you interested in the beginnings of RWA? When I took on the *Hearts Talk* Editor job, I inherited the back issues. I've enjoyed rummaging through the history and seeing how RWA has (or hasn't) changed. I hope you'll enjoy this little look back in time, beginning with the front page of the first issue of *Hearts Talk*, in February 1992.

Romance Writers of Australia Newsletter

Hearts Talk

Sharing thoughts with others who write for the love of it

Editor : Lynne Wilding

February 1992

Asst. Editor : Dale Hoffman

A Historic Beginning...

On the last Monday in August, 1991 a historic meeting of the original romance writers of Sydney took place. The group owes its existence and growth to its two foundation members, Mary Ann Stresau and Ann Kelleher.

After discussions, the group voted to formalise itself by electing office bearers and establishing goals for the future. This meeting gave birth to the Romance Writers of Australia Association. The Office Bearers are as follows: President - Lynne Wilding, Vice President - Ann Kelleher, Minutes Secretary - Enisa Hasic, Correspondence Secretary - Margaret Morton and Treasurer - Mary Ann Stresau.

Broadly speaking, this Association's goals are to promote romance writing in Australia. To gather information on markets, publishers requirements and trends, and to process this information to Association members via regular newsletters, workshops and seminars.

The Romance Writers of Australia meets at "Woodstock", Church St., Burwood, NSW on the 2nd Tuesday of the month, at 7.30 p.m. Interested parties are welcome to attend.

WORDS FROM WILDING

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome all members/subscribers to *Hearts Talk*, Romance Writers of Australia newsletter.

When I reflect on the latter half of 1991 and how romance writing, generally, has developed in that brief time frame, it is clear that a good deal has been accomplished. Workshops and conferences were held in Sydney, Melbourne, Forster and the Gold Coast and at this moment you are reading the very first edition of a newsletter devoted specifically to romance writing.

We, at Romance Writers of Australia, hope that 1992 will be equally eventful.

Compared to the United Kingdom and the United States of America, our recently incorporated association is in its infancy. However, where we might lack editorial expertise, our editorial committee which comprises Dale Hoffman, Ann Kelleher, Margaret Morton, Enisa Hasic, Juliet McKenzie and myself, makes up for that by its enthusiasm and dedication to inform writers on all aspects of romance writing.

I think it is important to re-state our aims for 1992. They are:

- To gather and process, through *Hearts Talk*, information on international as well as domestic writing markets, and to advise on publishers requirements and market trends.

- To organise, promote and advise members of romance writing workshops and seminars held during the year.

- To apply for and (hopefully) receive a government grant which will enable us to take romance writers workshops to country areas in NSW and other states as well.

- To sponsor (providing funds are available) our own romance writers' competition annually, with the first three place getters receiving a cash prize and the winner's story being printed in *Hearts Talk*.

The above are only some of Romance Writers of Australia's goals and all are, I feel, achievable.

Hearts Talk has been designed to inform aspiring and successful romance writers - you - about romance writing. The editorial committee welcomes any constructive ideas you might have to improve future issues, and looks forward to receiving them from you.

Lynne Wilding
P. O. Box 183 Bexley NSW 2207

ROMANCE WEEKEND IN QUEENSLAND

March 13th - 15th 1992

TUTORS: Lynsey Stevens and Helen Bianchin

The ultimate romantic Binna Burra Weekend. Lynsey and Helen will lead you through the intrigue of Romance writing. Learn a short history of romance, who reads and needs romance and why.

They will develop your skills from fiction techniques to beginnings and endings, plots and subplots, heroes and heroines. Sum up with details on Royalties and Contracts.

All inclusive accommodation and workshop rate per person twin share.

	2 DAY PROG	3 DAY PROG
Acacia	\$296.00	\$429.00
Banksia	\$264.00	\$381.00
Casuarina	\$226.00	\$324.00

Bookings can be made direct with Binna Burra Lodge, Beechmont, Queensland.
Phone 075 - 33 3622 OR 008 - 07 4260

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In February 1993 the results of RWA's first contest were released. It was the 1992 Opening Chapter Romance Writing Competition.

The guidelines for the contest were: To submit "the first chapter of a contemporary romance which meets UK or US publishing guidelines. It must have a maximum of twenty typewritten double spaced pages."

Emma Darcy and Lynne Wilding wrote the article about the contest. They said:

"Holding a major writing competition just fourteen months after our association was formed might seem ambitious but it was a project we felt would give writers feedback on their work and let them know that their work is on track."

The competition attracted almost fifty entries (at the time there were about 135 members).

"It was no easy matter deciding the top eight entries." These top eight entries were passed onto the final judge—Wendy and Frank Brennan (aka) Emma Darcy.

The feedback from Emma Darcy on the top five finalists' entries was:

"The criteria we applied for choosing the prize winners came down to two key factors:

"How effectively did the author use the material she/he started with.

"How effectively did the author compel the reader to read on.

"Overall, the top five entries were at least equal to, and in some cases superior to, what is published."

The first five entries were:

1st Helen McKerral, SA

2nd Jacinta Higgins, NSW

3rd Meredith Webber, Qld

"Because the quality of entries was so high, two extra prizes have been awarded.

The Emma Darcy Encouragement Award to Isolde Martyn, NSW

RWA Encouragement Award to Melanie Rashleigh, NSW.

You may notice some of these finalists on the New Releases page

in recent, and the current, *Hearts Talk* issues.

Some of the flaws noted in the entries, from the reader panel and the final judges were:

"The reader panel noticed many downbeat themes. Editors want realism, but remember, readers want an upbeat fantasy that is entertaining.

"Background information was a problem in many entries. It dominated the chapter. Make the character interesting, but hinting at her/his problem is usually sufficient for the first chapter. Background information can be fed in later as the need arises to inform the reader."

Other flaws included:

- ♥ Not commencing with the immediate problem of the heroine—and story—and/or not gaining immediate rapport with the heroine.
- ♥ Extreme sexism displayed by some heroes without real reason.
- ♥ More than one chapter submitted to make up the twenty pages. It's noted that "a first chapter does not need to be twenty pages long. Brief and compelling can be beautiful."
- ♥ Some entries extravagantly used the prop words, 'even', 'just', and 'really'. In most cases these words can be eliminated and the prose is better for it.
- ♥ One entry contained the word "Christ" three times. "An author who has to rely upon expletives and blasphemy for effectiveness, is not putting sufficient creativity into her/his work."
- ♥ Repetition of information, first in narrative, then in dialogue.
- ♥ Beware the flashback. "If the flashback is not meant to stand on its own two feet, but simply as a vehicle to convey information to the reader, then the author has either started at the wrong place, or has not solved the problem of how to deliver the information to the reader in a

more effective form."

"The Romance Writers of Australia developed a marking criteria which included:

- ♥ Was empathy for the main character and the reader established?
- ♥ Was the hero introduced into the story quickly?
- ♥ Was there a quick introduction of dialogue and was the dialogue 'sparky', interesting?
- ♥ Was the heroine's character interesting, involving?
- ♥ Did the writer establish conflict (internal or external) quickly?
- ♥ Was there a good balance between dialogue and narrative?
- ♥ Did the descriptive passages set the scene and/or mood?
- ♥ Was the grammar and punctuation acceptable?
- ♥ Was the reader informed, entertained, uplifted?
- ♥ Did the chapter end with a cliffhanger?"

When I read this article, I was impressed that RWA has been running contests for the past twenty years. Not only that, but RWA contests are a good indicator of success. Some of the first contest finalists are published, and still publishing today. That gives me hope.

And the flaws, they give me hope too. I make lots of those mistakes and I'm glad others have done the same before me.

When I keep flicking through, there are more finalists whose names still appear in *Hearts Talk*. Janet Woods won the 1993 Opening Chapter contest. Elizabeth Lhuede was a finalist in many contests. Noelene Jenkinson, Maxine Sullivan, and Allen Brown were all finalists.

It's great to belong to an organisation with industry ties so strong that you can learn enough to make a career of your passion. RWA has strengthened over the past twenty years, with more members, more contests, more published authors. It seems RWA had great foundations.

Riding The Waves

Writing romance in tempestuous times

16-18 August 2013, Fremantle, WA

www.romanceaustralia.com/freo/



The city of Fremantle is as beautiful as it is unique. Artsy and beachy and foodie and chilled out and super-environmental and intensely respectful of its heritage—and a bit of a dynamic party town! With such an amazing place hosting *Riding the Waves*, we've taken inspiration from Fremantle and will be introducing new and exciting ideas to our annual RWA conference.



Photographer: jstuppy (Creative Commons Licence)

Published Authors now catered for during the conference

- ♥ To help keep the cost of *Riding the Waves* manageable we've merged sessions for published authors (formerly part of A-Day, Author Day, on the Thursday prior to conference) back into the Saturday/Sunday conference. This saves published

delegates the extra night's accommodation (you can arrive on the Thursday, ready to start on Friday) and the cost of A-Day registration itself.

- ♥ Each breakout session will have at least one workshop aimed at published authors. To cater for this we'll be having five concurrent breakout sessions as opposed to four (so no one misses out!).
- ♥ We acknowledge that some elements of A-Day are strictly for published authors, such as the popular round tables. Don't worry—this event will still be on, and only published authors will be able to attend.

No need to register for workshops

- ♥ Fremantle is known for its chilled-out atmosphere, and our conference will be no different. At *Riding the Waves* there will be no need to register for workshops, just go to what interests you on the day.
- ♥ Most sessions will be open to all delegates (although we'll still let you know what experience-level each workshop is best suited for). Our workshop line-up has sessions suitable for everyone from first-timers through to the multi-published, and a great balance of craft, writing life, industry and research.
- ♥ Don't worry about missing out—the Esplanade Hotel Fremantle is the second biggest conference venue in Perth and we have the luxury of plenary-sized breakout rooms.

We're going green

- ♥ Fremantle is known for "being green", so pack your laptop, smartphone or tablet because all of our session notes will be electronic this year.
- ♥ Don't worry if you forget to download your notes ahead of time or if you change your mind as to which workshop to attend, as we'll be offering free WiFi on the conference floor.
- ♥ If you do prefer your notes printed out, of course you can bring them with you—you'll have heaps of time ahead of conference to do so, as we'll have the notes up on our web site. And because



you'll only be printing out the notes you need (rather than having all workshop notes printed for all delegates as has been provided at previous conferences) you'll still be saving trees.

- ♥ Plus, many of the goodies in your conference swag bag will be eco-friendly, too.

An all new awards evening!

- ♥ RWA has responded to member feedback that the awards dinner is becoming prohibitively expensive for many of our delegates. As we want as many members as possible to help RWA celebrate our fabulous premier awards, this year we will be presenting a glamorous awards evening with champagne on arrival and dessert, followed by a fantastic *after-party* where the focus will be on celebrating (and dancing the night away—which is very Fremantle!).
- ♥ This new format will significantly reduce the cost of the night for delegates, and also allow for delegates to choose to have their own main meal with friends at the many, many trendy restaurants and cafes within walking distance of the conference hotel prior to the event.
- ♥ But don't worry—this is still our night of nights! Our finalists and winners will be celebrated in style as they so richly deserve. The after-party will start as soon as the last award is presented and it will roll on until midnight (and the after-party is free).



Fremantle South Terrace

So, when can I register?

Registration will be opening a little earlier this year, in February. Keep an eye out for February *Hearts Talk* for all the registration details.

Venue update

Have you booked your accommodation yet? The Esplanade Hotel has let us know that bookings at our special conference rate of \$240/night are still flowing in. There are two easy ways to book your accommodation: online, via the web site (full payment is required at point of booking) or by telephone (full payment is not required).

To book by phone, call (08) 9432 4000 and ensure you mention our client user name: RWA2013. This way you will receive the special rate and will be included in conference room drops and other promotions.

To book online, visit www.romanceaustralia.com/freo/ for step by step instructions.

Don't forget about our Riding the Waves mailing list (for non-RWA members)

Do you have a friend who isn't an RWA member who would like to know more about *Riding the Waves*? *Riding the Waves* email newsletters are sent to all RWA members (excluding those who unsubscribe) and anyone who signs up to our new mailing list. If you know someone who would like to receive these newsletters, please point them in the direction of our mailing list at romanceaustralia.com/freo/. If you haven't received the first three newsletters, please check your spam folder and ensure freo2013@romanceaustralia.com is marked as "not spam".

Leah Ashton is expecting an addition to the family early in the New Year. We wish Leah and her husband all the very best for a safe delivery and an easy transition to parenthood.

A Little More History

RWA member, Frances Burke, has been browsing old issues of *Hearts Talk*. In Issue 10, she found this quote that is not attributed.

"Every author fears that arch foe, the rejection slip. In China, one economic journal has reportedly come up with a 'Thanks, but no thanks' note that has real style.

'We have read your manuscript with boundless delight. If we were to publish your paper, it would be impossible for us to publish any work of a lower standard. And as it is unthinkable that, in the next thousand years, we shall see its equal, we are, to our regret, compelled to return your divine composition, and to beg you a thousand times to overlook our short sight and timidity.'"

Introducing... Random Romance

Introducing...another fantastic opportunity for Australian writers. We're excited to bring you the scoop on a new digital publisher keen for submissions from our members. On 1 February 2013, Random House Australia will launch Random Romance, their digital line, with RWA members featuring in the launch lineup.

Jaye Ford, author of *Beyond Fear* and *Scared Yet?*, writing as **Janette Paul**, releases a funny contemporary romance, *Just Breathe*. This story was a finalist in the 2009 First Kiss contest.

RWA member **Loretta Hill**, author of *The Girl in Steel-Capped Boots*, has a hilarious romantic novella, *One Little White Lie*.

RWA contest winner **Melissa Smith** pitched her rural romance at the Gold Coast conference to Beverley Cousins. Her debut novel, *Beneath Outback Skies*, is the result of that pitch and she'll be writing as **Alissa Callen**.

Two erotic novellas by debut author and RWA member **Kate Belle** will also be released, *Breaking the Rules* and *Bloom*.

This selection of five stories of varying lengths (novellas to full length novels) is an example of what Random Romance is interested in publishing. Novellas, something rarely considered in print, definitely suit digital press. Romantic comedy, rural romance, erotic romance, paranormal, historical and suspense are all genres they are keen to find.

With a few digital romance lines being launched in the past year, *Hearts Talk* asked Beverley Cousins, Fiction Publisher at Random House, why they had introduced their digital line. "Women's fiction is a strong seller and romance writers write female characters well. Added to this, romance readers have the strongest take up of digital fiction. It seemed logical to launch a digital romance line." Beverley said that in terms of the world market, Australia was lagging in the uptake of digital reading. As Australia becomes more digital-reading savvy, she wants there to be a lot of good books available to meet demand.

Random Romance expects to release about ten books a year, probably with multi-book-releases, like the launch. The quick turnaround from submission to release means that a digital publisher can change quickly to suit the marketplace.

What are they looking for? Random Romance is looking for well-told love stories that captivate the reader. Female led stories are well-suited to the market place. Blurring the line between women's fiction and romance reads really well. Random Romance have no "rules" and are open to different ways of writing romance, however, the stories need to be those that would fit into a commercial fiction line (i.e. not category romances).

Random Romance, although a digital line, will have submissions subjected to the same rigorous scrutiny

of any print submission. Each book has to have merit and be of high quality.



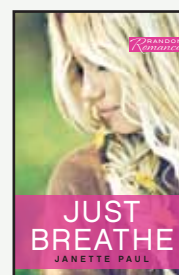
The opening of a digital line, in practical terms, means that publishers have more slots that can be filled in a year. This gives more opportunity for new authors to be picked up. It's not only an exciting time for publishers but also for authors and would-be authors.

If you'd like to submit to Random Romance, email a synopsis and the first three chapters (or 30-50 pp) to randomromance@randomhouse.com.au.

Random Romance Releases

Just Breathe by Janette Paul

Janette Paul is actually bestselling crime writer and RWA member, Jaye Ford. This is a deliciously funny full-length novel in which opposites most definitely attract – on one side is hippie, yoga teacher Dee and on the other millionaire businessman Ethan, who turns her calm world upside down...

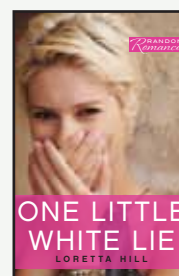


Beneath Outback Skies by Alissa Callen

A captivating full-length rural romance featuring an indomitable young woman battling to save her drought-stricken family farm. Into the mix comes Tait Cavanaugh, a surprise farm-stay guest who is not all he seems ...

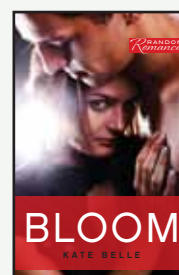
One Little White Lie by Loretta Hill

This is a hilarious romantic novella from Loretta Hill (author of bestselling *The Girl in Steel-Capped Boots*). It's the story of Kate Dreson and the little untruth she tells to get her match-making friend off her back. Except, to Kate's surprise, the little white lie suddenly becomes a red-blooded reality!



Breaking the Rules and *Bloom* by Kate Belle

These are Kate Belle's first publications, and books one and two in a series of erotic novellas, each featuring Ramon Mendez, a handsome, charismatic lover who enters women's lives and changes them for ever...



Report from Erotic Romance Authors Group Grant

Our Group Grant was used to assist with funding a weekend retreat for the RWA Erotic Romance Authors loop. We received our Group Grant in April 2012 and were stoked. We promptly put a deposit in for the Montville Mountain Lodge, which we'd decided would be our retreat location. Then we started tallying up definite attendees. Our e-loop has over 40 members but we were looking at 15 or so for the retreat. We ended up with 12 people attending the retreat and 1 person attending as a day-pass visitor.

Some of the group would like to share their experience.

Mel Teshco

Thanks so much to RWA for helping out the erotic loop girls to make the Montville retreat much more affordable. Many of us were on a tight budget, and that extra bit of help (lot of help!) really made all the difference.

For myself, I learned a whole lot of stuff about other publishers from the authors there and met a great group of people with like-minded interests I could easily call mates for life. I think just being able to chat about writing in general as well as the erotic markets we all aim for and being able to share information et cetera was worth its weight in gold. ☺



Cate Ellink

On the loop, we first spoke about a retreat eighteen months ago. So much has happened since—we applied for and received a grant; we began an anthology which has since turned into 14 short stories appearing for Momentum as part of a new line *Hot Down Under*; and we went on a retreat. Eighteen months

ago, I would have been surprised if anything came of our dreaming—but it did. It all happened. How often does that occur? I'm sure the RWA grant turned our luck around.

For me, the weekend was a chance to see if I really could fit into a published author world, to see if erotic romance was where I fitted, and to work out if I was up to the business side of things. My head swirled all weekend with knowledge, information, discussions, questions and answers. I came away inspired, comfortable and pushing forwards into the world of erotic writing.

Cathleen Ross

I recently attended an erotic writer's retreat in Montville, Queensland. Some people went to rest and network, I went to work. The scene that was troubling me was a spanking scene. Mainly because I'd never written one before and I wasn't sure how to go about it. Fortunately we had a few experts with us. One of the writers, Kalliana Cole, read over my feeble effort and explained the importance of visceral response. I read her spanking scene over and over again, breaking it down in my mind from both a psychological and physical framework. Rhian Cahill practised the position on Kalliana to demonstrate because I couldn't understand how anyone could manage it without falling on her head. Suzi Love was too slow with her camera, which was lucky, though she did make up for it the



rest of the weekend. I found the feedback very useful and enjoyed spending more time with a group of people I only see at the RWA conference. I would love to go again. I also finished my work in progress with a fabulous spanking scene.

Rhian Cahill

Receiving the RWA grant allowed a number of us to attend the erotic romance retreat in October. Without that reduction in cost a lot of us wouldn't have been able to go. Getting to spend days with fellow erotic romance writers was fun, educating (yes there was a spanking position demonstration) and inspiring. Some of us wrote, some plotted, some edited. We shared meals, drinks and conversation. It was great getting to spend time with authors I only see at conference each year but the highlight had to be friendships formed between those that barely knew each other before the four days. A big thank you to the grant committee for giving us all the opportunity to get away from family and talk sex. :)

Photos courtesy of the resident photographer, Suzi Love.



Why I Write



After a year of writing this column, I'm hanging up my quill and passing the baton on to someone else. As this is my sign-off post, I

thought it might be appropriate to talk about why I write. Hopefully my list will include some things that fire you up for your next project or get you re-enthused about your current one. And maybe it's also a good time to remind myself, too, why I do what I do as writing gets shunted to one side by competing pressures like house renovations, Christmas and other work.

Because reading a good book has given me some of the most magical moments of my life

I have been swept away by books, swallowed whole by stories, brought to wrenching tears, made to laugh, made to fan myself and blush and squirm in my seat by a tale well told. I have moments and scenes in my memory from my favourite books, and those memories are inextricably entwined with who I was when I read the book and where and what was happening in my life. The notion that I might provide readers with the same sorts of experiences is one of the things that keeps me at my keyboard day after day.

Because I see and hear stories all around me that I want to share with the world

Once I switched on the story part of my brain, I couldn't switch it off. No matter what I am doing, a part of me is always on the scout for story seeds and ideas. An overheard conversation on the bus. A flight of fantasy while waiting in line at the bakery. An old letter discovered at the back of my desk. A letter in the newspaper. Once a story seed takes hold in my mind and starts sprouting, I get excited about bringing it to fruition. It's almost like getting a taste in my mouth for

how this story will feel and grow. And it's damned addictive and compelling!

Because I have invested years in improving and refining my craft

I did a BA in Professional Writing, but before that I wrote reams of stories at high school. Even in kindergarten I was writing and illustrating books. I have attended craft seminars, read countless craft books, sat through sessions at conferences, spent hours and hours talking to fellow writers about how and when and why and how all over again. I've read my favourite authors over and over to try to discern and understand the structure and craft beneath the magic of their work. In short, I have a skill-set, and I hope to keep honing it as the years go by. The day when I am not challenged by a story or scene or character is the day I hang up my keyboard and pen—because (to misquote Malcolm Fraser) writing wasn't meant to be easy.

Because there is nothing quite so intoxicating as holding your book in your hands

I can still remember the bone-deep thrill I felt when I received the shipment of my first book for Harlequin. I practically ripped the box open with my teeth, I was so keen to get inside the damned thing, and there they all were, lined up like shiny red lollies. My book. The book I'd spent six months writing and more than a year waiting to hear back on. The book I'd revised four times. The book I'd invested so much hope and energy and dreaming in. I can still remember the pungent smell of ink and paper and cardboard. I can still remember the sheen on the glossy cover. I can still remember seeing my name on the spine and understanding that at that moment my lifelong dream had been achieved. And I still get an echo of that feeling when each shipment of books arrives on my doorstep.

Because letters from readers let me know that my words and ideas and feelings can touch people

I have had letters from women

whose husbands have died from Alzheimer's, letters from women who are cancer survivors, letters from readers who have survived abuse, and from women who work in tough, demanding fields who relish and crave and need the escapism and buoyant optimism contained within the pages of a romance novel. Knowing that I have moved people with my words and thoughts moves me. It keeps me going. Knowing that I connect, that the emotion I pour into the page is conveyed to them and turned, through some magical alchemy, into their emotion and their experience... well, there aren't many jobs that can compare with that, are there?

Because I am in love with love and always have been.

Even when I was a young girl I was always interested in romance. Never mind the mystery element in Trixie Belden—when were she and Jim going to get it on? My Barbie was never fussed about getting married and having kids, she was more interested in dating hot guys like Ken and exchanging witty banter over the latest cocktail. When I discovered my maternal and paternal grandmothers' stashes of romance novels, I was in heaven and have never looked back. I think writing about love - the noblest, most generous, most confusing, most crazy-making of human emotions - is important and soul-nourishing and life-affirming. And I hope I get to do it till my dying day.

Happy writing, everyone.

Sarah

Ed Note: It has been my pleasure to work with Sarah for the last year. She'll be greatly missed not only for her column but for her contribution to our team. Thank you, Sarah.





Please send in questions. All questions are answered anonymously. Joan can give you a fun name, if you need one.

Dear Joan,

Lately I've been getting pains in my hip when standing up after a long session at the computer. Do you know what could be causing this?

Signed, Crippled in Corowa

Dear Crippled in Corowa,

Writers and couch potatoes—beware of the dangers of sitting for long periods! First, a disclaimer—I'm not a medical professional and you should consult your doctor or physiotherapist about any ongoing pain. However, if you feel pain where the thigh meets the hip, especially after sitting for a long period, it could be due to tightness or inflammation of your hip flexor muscles.

Hip flexors allow you to raise your knee when climbing stairs or running or walking. They are a group of three muscles that run from the spine and the pelvis and attach to the femur at the top of the thigh. When you sit for long periods the hip flexors can shorten and tighten, causing pain when you go to move again. And if your exercise regime includes lots of hamstring stretches this results in an imbalance that contributes to the problem.

You can ice the region and take anti-inflammatories to bring the pain down and reduce damage to the surrounding tissues. In the long term you need to strengthen and stretch the hip flexors. Take the advice of your doctor or physiotherapist to do this.

Sometimes the pain manifests as lower back pain and hip flexor strain isn't always easy to diagnose. Again, see your doctor or physiotherapist for a proper diagnosis and treatment. Then, stretch and strengthen those muscles. Don't sit for too long. Get up and move around every thirty minutes or so. Make a cup of tea, fold some laundry, take the dog for a short walk, or do a few brief exercises.

Wishing you, happy -- and healthy -- writing!

Joan xx

Dear Joan,

I've been hearing about troll attacks on writers on Goodreads and other review sites. I'm concerned this will spread to Facebook. What can I do to protect myself from internet abuse?

Signed, Worried in Woolloomooloo

Dear Worried in Woolloomooloo,

Trolls post abusive rants under the cowardly cover of anonymity, hunting in packs to attack writers, reviewers or ordinary people, often over the smallest thing.

I haven't heard of a writer, published or unpublished, being attacked on Facebook but that doesn't mean it hasn't happened, or that it couldn't happen. It might not be as likely as on a review site which is open to comments from all comers. Anyone posting on your wall would have to be someone you accepted as a friend. But we all have 'friends' we don't really know. All it would take would be for some disgruntled 'friend' to take exception to a status update or a comment and the abuse could start.

Facebook has rules and procedures in place to help prevent abuse. The first step would be to unfriend and block the person who is abusing you. You should report abusive content and fake timelines. Instructions and links for doing this are on FB's help page under 'Tools for Addressing Abuse'. You can delete a post which will take the comments with it. Although that won't stop the trolls from coming back.

Facebook's advice is not to respond, period. Bullies want a rise out of their victim and a response, even calm and reasoned, will inflame them further. Don't keep it a secret. Use FB's Trusted Friend tool to send a copy of abusive content to someone you know and trust to help you deal with the abuse. This will also generate a report for FB. Document the abuse by saving a screen shot of the page. (Instructions on how to do that are on the help page.) If the abuse continues you will want it documented so you can report the activity to your internet service provider. Unfortunately there's not much the police can do to help.

Sometimes reviewers feel the need to protect themselves from writers who attack them for critical reviews. Kat Kennedy blogged about this at <http://cuddlebuggery.com/2012/05/how-to-respond-to-an-author-or-troll-attack/>. Much of her advice applies to writers, too.

I hope this never happens to you because it's dreadful. However, following these suggestions will minimise the damage and eventually, the trolls will go away. Happy writing!

Joan xx



Louise Reynolds

Welcome to Louise Reynolds. Thank you for agreeing to share your journey with us. Please will you tell us a little about yourself.

I joined RWA in 2006 after doing a romance-writing course with Anne Gracie. By day I work full-time managing a lighting company so writing needs to slot in around that at night. I'm a craft and workshop junkie, a hopelessly repetitive self-editor and it's sickening how slow I write. I've completed three manuscripts with quite a few partials kicking around and had three stories accepted into Little Gems. In April I took on the role of coordinator of the Melbourne Romance Writers Guild.

You've recently moved from targeting Harlequin Mills & Boon to writing Single Title. Please could you tell us why you decided to make this change and the benefits or pitfalls, if there are any, you've found with this change.

I'd been wrestling with category for a while until a critique partner commented that the Super Romance I was writing was more like a Single Title. Some of the secondary characters and themes were more up front than they should be and it wasn't purely a romance. I decided to take a punt on Single Title and this immediately freed me from the get-them-together-on-the-first-page type strictures of category and gave me a broader canvas with more freedom to just tell the story. I wanted some romance, I wanted a HEA but I wanted to play with all these other characters and themes as well. Not really a pitfall but since it's a small town Australia story it won't have appeal to overseas publishers.

You have been very active in RWAustralia as a volunteer. Please could you tell us a little about the roles you've had and how you feel these have impacted on your development as a writer?

I served on RWA committee in 2009, 2010 and 2011, the last two as Vice President. I've also been the R♥BY coordinator since 2009 and in 2011

I was co-coordinator of the 20th Anniversary Conference together with Bronwyn Jameson. Through all these roles I've met some amazing writers and friends.

I'd like to write that all this has taken up vast amounts of time and kept me away from my writing but truthfully, only I can stop me writing. On committee, I've seen first-hand how busy published authors juggle not only their writing commitments but also family, primary employment and demanding RWA volunteer roles. In other words, successful authors are organised! I've had the opportunity for late night chats at conference and face-to-face meetings that have led to a-ha moments. I've been privileged to have these women as friends.

Coordinating the R♥BY is a job I love and I've learned that no matter how successful the author, knowing readers love their book is still a genuine thrill.

In respect of your writing journey so far, has it gone as you'd hoped, is there anything which has taken you by surprise?

As I'd hoped? No, I'd hoped to be a NYT bestseller by now ☺. Seriously, I've been surprised by how hard writing is and by how very hard successful writers work. I've been surprised by how little the majority earn for the amount of labour they put into writing, although I'm not surprised that they love doing it.

I've been surprised by the landscape of publishing, by the fact that it's not enough now to just write the book. You need to be thinking of your brand, doing social media and promotion, et cetera.

If you had your time over, is there anything you would do differently?

I'd think a lot more about what I like to read, the types of books I wish I'd written and the stories that really impacted on me. Then I'd go out and write that kind of story. I fell into targeting HMB because... well, just because. Maybe it was all the hoopla of mega online competitions and fast tracks. Or



just that I was starry-eyed meeting so many successful HMB authors. Eventually I realized that whilst I enjoyed reading some HMB lines, they weren't the stories I wanted to write.

I'd ignore all the advice about what publishers aren't buying and write for the pleasure of telling a story rather than selling a story.

Another thing I've learned, and this might seem self-evident to some, is that when I'm not writing I don't think about my story. I think about work, cooking, entertaining. Anything but my WIP. 'Thinking' became an excuse not to write: "Oh, I just need to stop (danger!) and think about what Scarlett's going to do now that Ashley has married Melanie before I write more" et cetera. But the ideas wouldn't come that way and I've found it's the opposite. If I keep writing, the ideas come in a lovely rolling wave. Keep writing and save the thinking for later.

Thank you so much, Louise, for sharing your journey with us.

Ed. Since being interviewed, Louise has sold her first book to Destiny Romance. *Her Italian Aristocrat* is out now. Congratulations, Louise.



HARLEQUIN® High Five Winners

Congratulations to our High Five Winners:

1st Kerrie Starbuck
2nd Cara Gabriel
3rd Victoria Purman



Thanks to Brenda Chin, Senior Editor of HM&B, for quick judging and to Kasey Rowe for managing the contest.

Judging status

With so many of our members selling lately and changing their status to Published Author (yay to all of you!) it's difficult to keep our volunteer judging lists up to date. It won't be the first thing to cross your mind when you get The Call of course, but our Judge Coordinator Margaret would really appreciate it, if at some stage, you could fire off an email letting her know of your change in status.

Similarly please, anyone with a change of email address and contact details should contact Margaret.

Judge-coordinator@
romanceaustralia.com

We'd hate you to miss out on judging the up and coming stars!

First Kiss Tips

The First Kiss is timed to coincide with Valentine's Day each year and is generously sponsored by Michael and Desley Ahern.

These are some of the comments from last year's judges. They pinpoint the main areas to work on in your entry:

- ♥ Entries that needed help showed deficits in a number of areas—punctuation, point of view, and having a believable,

sustainable conflict to keep the plot going. What was gratifying is that entries concentrated on the kiss as the central event of the contest.

- ♥ I was a little disappointed at the lack of emotion and reaction. I was also disappointed with the set ups. Not one of the entries outlined both the hero and heroine's past conflicts.
- ♥ Some did the usual 'the kiss came too late in the scene' thing.
- ♥ I found most entries had the hero and heroine sparring and then lunging at each in an animalistic way. There was no romance just duelling tongues.
- ♥ Some entries were let down by not understanding writing techniques fully—telling rather than showing.
- ♥ The entries in general were very clean of grammar and spelling mistakes.
- ♥ Most did not so much do a setup but provided a synopsis. Only a few actually wrote a setup that told me what led up to the kiss and stopped there.

It's clear from this feedback that the set-up needs to take the judge to the point in the story where the first kiss happens. To do this you need a brief rundown of each character, their goal and how the other person might interfere with this. We need to understand why a kiss might be a disaster or throw the characters into a new headspace. Where the story goes after the kiss is irrelevant for this contest.

For First Kiss entries, when the scene starts it should lead directly to the kiss, not be one or two scenes back. The scene should not only describe the kiss but also tell us by their reactions why and maybe how this kiss changes things for the couple.

Remember you don't need to use the whole word allotment. 1500 is the maximum word count and will be strictly adhered to.

It's really good to see that spelling and grammar have improved

CONTEST DATES

Little Gems

Opens 11 Jan 2013
Closes 1 Feb 2013

First Kiss

Opens 20 Jan 2013
Closes 15 Feb 2013

Valerie Parv Award

Opens early April 2013
limited entries

For Published Authors

Ella Award

Opens 7 Jan 2013
Closes 4 Feb 2013

RBV Award

Opens 7 Jan 2013
Closes 8 Feb 2013

across all our contests to the point where judges are commenting favourably, but watch the punctuation. Commas are always a tricky area.

The First Kiss opens on 20 January and closes on 15 February. At the time of going to press the Final Judge is yet to be announced but check the website to see who will be rating the final smooches.

Deb Cox is manager. Thank you Deb. Contact details are on the website.

The Emerald Award

Round 1 judges are due to complete their scoresheets and return them by 11 January. Many have already done so. If all goes to plan we hope to have our Round 2 placegetters by 18 January or thereabouts. Any late returns by judges will, of course, set this timetable back.

Make sure you have your full manuscripts polished and ready to go because the successful Round 2 writers will only have 5 working days to get their 3 printed ARC copies back to the Managers.

May we see many new Call Stories in 2013!

Sources: Cyndi Myers Market News, Publishers Lunch, Dear Author, publishers' websites, Publishers Weekly.

Just in case you missed it in the article, you can submit to **Random Romance**. Email a synopsis and the first three chapters (or 30-50 pp) to randomromance@randomhouse.com.au.

Harlequin Escape is still open to submissions <http://www.escapepublishing.com.au/submission>

Destiny Romance is still open for submissions <http://www.destinyromance.com/writers-centre>

Harlequin has a new digital first line, **Shivers**, the new gothic. They're looking for moody, atmospheric, lush gothic-inspired stories of 30 000 to 50 000 words, longer or shorter are possible. For more information: <http://www.harlequin.com/articlepage.html?articleId=1785&chapter=0>

Amazon's Breakthrough Novel Award will include a number of changes, the most notable being that rather than the winners being published by Penguin, they will now be published by Amazon Publishing. The number of categories has also been expanded and, starting 14 January, authors can enter the contest in one of five categories—general fiction, mystery/thriller, romance, science fiction/fantasy/horror, and young adult fiction. Up to 10,000 eligible entries will be accepted for the ABNA contest this year.

Ellora's Cave have the following themed submissions for 2013:

Curve Appeal: for Rubenesque heroines, size must be a theme of the story.

Boys Will Do Boys: no heroines allowed. All-male stories.

Cotillion Christmas Tradition: sweet, Christmas-themed Regencies for Blush and non-erotic lines.

For more information: <http://www.jasminejade.com/t-writerscircle.aspx>

Intermix is the digital-first imprint of Berkley and NAL books. Intermix focuses on genre fiction—

romance, mystery, science fiction, fantasy and cross-genre fiction. They welcome all lengths, from novellas to very long fantasy novels. Every submission to Intermix is considered for the Berkley and NAL print lines as well. The editors decide if the work is best suited to print or to digital. Claire Zion is editorial director for Intermix, but all Berkley and NAL editors consider submissions for the imprint. They will read unsolicited and unagented manuscripts, though agented submissions have priority. Currently, they're publishing a mix of reprints and new material, but they're looking to add new authors. PENGUIN GROUP (USA) Inc. 375 Hudson Street, New York, NY 10014-3657.

Adventure Publications is a Minnesota-based small press that has been in business for over 24 years as a publisher of nonfiction outdoor books. In 2013 they're going to launch a series of outdoor/wilderness mysteries and they're actively seeking manuscripts. They're looking for series similar to those by authors Nevada Barr, C.J. Box and Beth Groundwater. Submit a query, first chapter and synopsis, as well as information about series potential. Books will be produced in both print and ebook formats. They accept both agented and unagented authors. <http://www.adventurepublications.net/author-guidelines>

NEWS

News Corp is in preliminary talks with CBS about buying its Simon & Schuster subsidiary, according to the News Corp-owned *Wall Street Journal*. Although it is far from certain that a deal will be made, a combination of HarperCollins and Simon & Schuster would form the second largest trade house after the merger of Penguin and Random House.

Simon & Schuster is getting into the self-publishing business. Through a partnership with Author Solutions Inc., Simon & Schuster has formed Archway Publishing, a unit that will offer self-publishing services in fiction, non-fiction, business and children's categories with the back

end powered by ASI, the self-publishing provider acquired by Pearson/Penguin earlier this year.

Random House moved to expand its digital publishing program by announcing plans to launch three new digital-only imprints: **Alibi**, a mystery-thriller line, **Flirt**, a YA/New Adult list and **Hydra**, a new digital-only science fiction line. This is in addition to expanding the reach of their **Loveswept** digital romance imprint. The digital-only imprints will be directed by Allison Dodson, vice president, digital publishing director, Scott Shannon, senior vice president, publisher, digital content, and Matt Schwartz, vice president, director of digital strategy.

Harlequin is partnering with the US women's magazine *Cosmopolitan* to publish a series of co-branded romance novels. The new line is called Cosmo Red Hot Reads from Harlequin, and will feature e-originals by Harlequin authors that will be roughly 30,000 words long. The length, which is shorter than e-originals usually issued by Harlequin, will, it's hoped, appeal to readers consuming romance fiction on a variety of devices.

Through the deal, two e-books will be released every month, starting in May 2013. The titles will bear both the Harlequin and *Cosmopolitan* logos. Harlequin says the books will feature "narratives centering on modern young women living the free-spirited and outgoing lifestyle espoused by the international magazine."

On 22 November **Bryce Courtenay** died after a battle with terminal gastric cancer. His final novel, *Jack of Diamonds*, was released a couple of months prior to his death.

Have you set your writing goals for 2013? If not, here are some tips.

- ♥ Make sure they're specific and realistic.
- ♥ Repeating your goal out loud can make it stick.
- ♥ Pleasing other people doesn't work.
- ♥ Roadblocks don't mean failure.
- ♥ Check goal setting and achievement progress regularly.
- ♥ Reward yourself and celebrate.

THE SALES

Caroline Carter's debut contemporary YA romance, *Surge*, sold to Crimson Romance, for release in February 2013.

Eleni Konstantine has had her flash fiction story, *Minion*, accepted by Antipodean SF to be published in January 2013.

Havva Murat has sold her short story, *Harmony Thicket and the Persian Shoes*, to Ticonderoga Publications for inclusion in the *Dreaming of Djinn's* Anthology due for release in April 2013.

Janet Woods has been offered a contract by Manga UK for the large print rights to *Benedict's Bride*.

Juliet Madison sold her debut romantic comedy novel, *Fast Forward*, to Escape Publishing.

Maggie Mundy has sold her debut novella, *Blood Scent*, to Rogue Phoenix.

Margaret Mason (w/a Maggie Nash) has sold a novella, *Kinky Bet*, to Total e-Bound for release in April 2013.

Melissa Smith (w/a Alissa Callen) has sold a rural fiction novel, *Beneath Outback Skies*, to Random House's new digital first Romance list for a February release. She has also sold a short rural story, *What Love Sounds Like*, to Escape Publishing for a January release.

Nicola Pitt (w/a Imogene Nix) has sold *Starburst*, to Secret Cravings Publishing. Due for release 4 February.

Paula Roe has signed a new two-book contract with Harlequin Desire, with mid-to-late 2013 release dates.

Suzanne Hamilton (w/a S E Gilchrist) has sold a sci-fi/futuristic hot single title, *Legend Beyond the Stars*, to Escape Publishing.

Isolde Martyn has sold a historical, *Mistress To The Crown*, to Mira, out February.

Events

IN PERSON EVENTS

(Costings Code: M=Member, MC=Member Concession, MP= Member of Partner Organisation, NM=Non-members, C=Concession) FMI=for more information

Tuesday 15 January

The Editing Process: For writers and editors ~ Liz Steele

When: 10.00 am - 4.00 pm

Where: The Wheeler Centre, 176 Little Lonsdale Street, Melbourne

Cost: \$130 M, \$120 MC, \$180.00 NM

FMI + Booking: <http://writersvictoria.org.au/what-s-on/event/the-editing-process-for-writers-and-editors/>

Friday 18 January

Digital Makeover for Writers ~ Euan Mitchell

When: 10.00 am - 4.00 pm

Where: The Wheeler Centre, 176 Little Lonsdale Street, Melbourne

Cost: \$130 M, \$120 MC, \$180.00 NM

FMI + Booking: <http://writersvictoria.org.au/what-s-on/event/digital-makeover-for-writers/>

Thursday 24 January

So, you want to write a chick lit novel? ~ Anita Heiss

When: 10.00 am - 4.00 pm

Where: The Wheeler Centre, 176 Little Lonsdale Street,

Melbourne

Cost: \$130 M, \$120 MC, \$180.00 NM

FMI + Booking: <http://writersvictoria.org.au/what-s-on/event/so-you-want-to-write-a-chick-lit-novel/>

Saturday 2 February

Taking the Mystery Out of History: Writing Historical Fiction ~ Diane Armstrong

When: 10.00 am - 4.00 pm

Where: NSW Writers Centre

Cost: \$115 M; \$100 MC, \$165 NM

FMI + Booking: <http://www.nswwc.org.au/products-page/courses/taking-the-mystery-out-of-history-writing-historical-fiction1/>

Saturday 2 February

Short Story Masterclass ~ Jessica Adams

When: 10.00 am - 4.00 pm

Where: SA Writers Centre

Cost: \$100 M; \$150 NM

FMI + Booking: http://www.sawc.org.au/whats-on/workshops-and-seminars?task=view_event&event_id=91

NEW RELEASES JANUARY 2013

with Helen Katsinis



The Italian Surgeon Claims His Bride
Alison Roberts
in HMB Date with a Doctor collection

What Love Sounds Like
Alissa Callen
Harlequin Escape

The Secret Wedding Dress
Ally Blake
HMB Sexy Duo

Driving Her Crazy
Amy Andrews
HMB Sexy Duo

Captive Surrender: Beast Planet I
Angela Castle
Amazon Digital Services

The Night That Started It All
Anna Cleary
HMB Sexy

A Place of Hope
Anna Jacobs
Severn House

Red Hot
Ann B Harrison
Amazon Digital Services

The Summer Of The Moon Flower
Annie Seaton
Self published



Saving Grace: Hot Down Under **Beverley Oakley** Momentum
No Strings Attached **Bridget Gray** Escape Publishing
The Danger Game **Caitlyn Nicholas** Escape Publishing
Beholden To The Throne **Carol Marinelli** HMB Sexy
Daman's Angel **Charmaine Ross** Crimson Romance
Asher's Dilemma **Coleen Kwan** Carina Press
Short Soup **Coleen Kwan** Escape Publishing
The Man Plan **Elise K Ackers** Destiny Romance
Unforgettable **Elise K Ackers** Escape Publishing



Breaking The Playboy's Rules **Emily Forbes** HMB Medical Duo
The Incorrigible Playboy **Emma Darcy** HMB Sexy
'Twas The Night Before Christmas **Eva Scott** Musa Publishing
O'Halloran's Lady **Fiona Brand** HMB Romantic Suspense Duo
The Marriage Deal & The Husband Assignment **Helen Bianchin** HMB Sexy Bestseller
His-and-Hers Family **Helen Lacey** HMB Special Edition
Mistaken Engagement **Jenny Schwartz** Escape Publishing
Drawing Closer **Jenny Schwartz** Escape Publishing
The Trouble With Valentine's **Kelly Hunter** HMB Special Release



Business With Pleasure: Hot Down Under **Keziah Hill** Momentum
Kiss Me At Midnight: New Skies **Liliana Rose** Less Than Three Press
Muscle For Hire **Lexie Couper** Samhain Publishing
Powerplay: Hot Down Under **Lexie Couper** Momentum
The Desert Prince's Convenient Bride **Liz Fielding** in HMB 100 Arabian Nights
The Girl In The Hard Hat **Loretta Hill** Random House
City Surgeon, Outback Bride **Lucy Clark** in HMB Date with a Doctor
Dare She Dream Of Forever? **Lucy Clarke** HMB Medical
Hidden Passions: Hot Down Under **Marianne Theresa** Momentum



Her Outback Rescuer **Marion Lennox** HMB Sweet
The Surgeon's Doorstep Baby **Marion Lennox** HMB Medical
A Surgeon Worth Waiting For **Melanie Milburne** in HMB Date with a Doctor
Lusting The Enemy **Mel Teshco** Ellora's Cave
Chosen As The Sheikh's Wife **Meredith Webber** in HMB 100 Arabian Nights
Christmas Where She Belongs **Meredith Webber** HMB Medical Duo
Lucky Love **Nicola Marsh** Indie Published
Man Drought **Rachael Johns** Harlequin Australia
Stand-In Star **Rachael Johns** Carina Press



New Year's Kisses **Rhian Cahill** Harlequin Escape
The Soldier's Sweetheart **Soraya Lane** HMB Sweet Duo
Legend Beyond The Stars **SE Gilchrist** Escape Publishing
For The Love Of A Goblin Warrior **Shona Husk** Sourcebooks
Midsummer's Eve: Hot Down Under **Shona Husk** Momentum
An Elemental Tail **Shona Husk** Self published
The Viscount's Pleasure House **Suzi Love** Crimson Romance
Banished: Daughters Of The Gods - Book 1 **Tamara Gill** Amazon Digital Services
Claiming His Runaway Bride & Defiant Mistress, Ruthless Millionaire **Yvonne Lindsay** in HMB Desire Bestseller

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