

## How To Write An Alpha Male Without Making Him An Alpha-Hole

Jackie Ashenden



**Okay, so you want to write an alpha hero. These guys have been the backbone of romance for over thirty years and their popularity can't be underestimated. Love them or loathe them, they make readers swoon and most importantly of all they sell books.**

So how does one go about writing a powerful, sexy alpha, without making him into the dreaded alpha-hole?

First up and most important of all: if you want to write a decent alpha male you *have* to find them sexy.

It seems self-evident but if you're only writing an alpha because that's what the publisher wants or because alpha heroes sell books then stop. Because if you don't actually like alpha heroes or find them very sexy, then no one else will either.

I write alphas because I find alphas sexy. I don't think I could write a beta hero convincingly because I'd be forever trying to make him more alpha. So if you find yourself constantly trying to make your alpha more beta because that's what you prefer, then don't fight it. Write a gorgeous, funny, sexy beta and your book will sell regardless because there's still plenty of demand for a beta hero.

However, if you fancy the pants off an alpha hero but aren't sure how to write one, then by all means, keep reading.

Right, so, alphas get a lot of flak for being controlling douchebags and alpha-holes. In fact, a well written alpha MIGHT be both a douchebag and an A-hole but they will also be redeemable douchebags and A-holes. Because

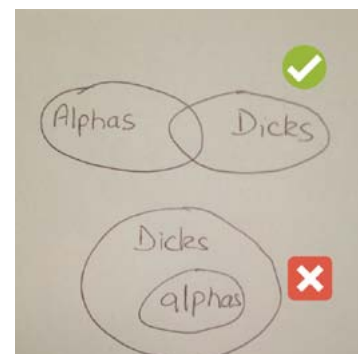
at the heart of an alpha hero—hell, of EVERY hero—is the fact that he's a good man. Remember that. He might cover up his goodness with a layer of assholishness and douchebaggery and tortured broodiness, but underneath it all, he's essentially a good guy with a huge capacity for love.

So what's the key to writing a good alpha hero? It's *character*.

An alpha hero is not a collection of 'alpha' traits. He is a whole man, a whole person. His alpha-ness is not the extent of his personality. He will have a distinct personality all of his own, a backstory, opinions, likes and dislikes. In other words he's not a cardboard cut-out with the words ALPHA stamped across him in large friendly letters. This is where alphas get a bad rap in my opinion. Many heroes are created who act like dicks merely because the writer thinks that's how alpha males act.

Wrong.

Here's a handy diagram to illustrate my point.



*continued on page 2*

*continued from page 1*

An alpha hero **may** indeed act like a dick but what stops him from being your standard, two dimensional alpha-hole, is *motivation*.

Giving the heroine a punishing kiss because he's alpha and that's what an alpha male does, does not equal motivation. That equals a lack of understanding about character by the writer. Giving the heroine a punishing kiss because she's talking and making him feel things he doesn't want to feel and he can't think of a good way to make her stop because he's not a guy who's good with words and is better with action, *is* motivation. Sure, that doesn't make him any less of a dick, but at least he's a well-motivated dick. And hey, *all* men are dicks sometimes, even beta dudes.

So, first in your list of things to remember when creating your alpha hero is to make them a person, not a cliché. They have the same fears and needs as everyone else. And that makes writing an article about how to write them difficult, because one size does not fit all.

That being said, there are some core things to keep in mind when you're creating your alpha hero:

1. Alphas are leaders and protectors. They are decisive and take action. They will not stand around wringing their hands and wondering what to do, they'll take charge of a situation, most especially if they feel strongly about it. Sometimes they won't go about in the right way (depending on their backstory) but they are always trying to do what they see as the right thing.

2. They won't be shy about sharing their opinion even if this disagrees with other people's. And they don't avoid conflict when they feel passionately about something. However, they are good listeners (and if they're not, they will know and feel bad about it—at some point) and won't argue pointlessly about something simply for the sake of argument.

3. Most of the time, they won't want to talk about their feelings. Because they're guys, remember? They just brush that sh\*t off. ;-) However, remember what I said about their capacity to love? Just because they don't talk about it and pretend they don't feel it, doesn't mean to say they don't love very deeply and very passionately. Actually, some alphas *do* talk about their feelings and have no problems sharing them. It just depends on the character and their backstory.

4. If something is wrong with someone they care about, as is usual with guys, their instinct is to find out what the problem is and fix it. Especially if it's to do with the heroine. Again, they might go about it the wrong way, but fundamentally they want to help her. Even when she doesn't want to him to.

5. They will never physically harm the heroine in any way (unless she specifically asks him to—looking at *you*, BDSM). Nor will they be needlessly cruel. Alpha

males aren't bullies. They won't put other people down to make themselves feel bigger, mainly because they don't need to prove themselves to anyone. They're the biggest, baddest mofos in the room and they don't care what anyone thinks of them—except the heroine of course. Which usually comes as a terrible shock to them, the poor dears.

6. They take responsibility for themselves, fight for those they care about, and never hesitate to defend someone weaker than themselves. For example, if anyone tries to harm the heroine or put her down in any way, the alpha male will defend her. He won't stand aside and let her take it. This will be annoying if she happens to be Superwoman, but it will also be the chance for the heroine to teach said alpha about letting her defend herself. (He WILL argue).

And of course, the last thing to bear in mind is that if you have a strong alpha hero, you also need a strong heroine who can call him on his bullsh\*t. But creating strong heroines is a whole other post ...

*“So, first in your list of things to remember when creating your alpha hero is to make them a person, not a cliché.”*

The most important thing though, is to write the hero you like. Not everyone will like him like you do but there will always be people who will.

Now go forth and alpha! :-)

*Jackie Ashenden loves to write dark, emotional stories with alpha heroes who've just got the world to their liking only to have it blown wide apart by their kick-ass heroines. When she's not torturing alpha males and their stropky heroines, Jackie can be found drinking chocolate martinis, reading anything she can lay her hands on, posting random crap on her blog, or being forced to go mountain biking with her husband. Jackie can be found at [jackieashenden.com](http://jackieashenden.com)*

*“Before you write, sit down and close your eyes and then picture yourself writing.”*

— Neal Martin



# Strip Jack Naked: Revealing The Romantic Hero

Gracie O'Neil



**In a romance, what is the ultimate function of a hero? There are so many things a hero is supposed to be and do, but in a romance there is really only one absolute requirement. He has to be the kind of man that the heroine and the reader can**

**fall in love with.**

As writers we spend a lot of time getting our hero to be the man that our *heroine* will fall for. But how much time do we spend thinking about and crafting the **reader's** experience of the hero?

So here are a few ideas.

## **JACK IS FINANCIALLY INDEPENDENT.**

In the real world, it's hard to prioritize sexy lingerie when you're juggling grocery money and bill payments so you and the kids can both eat and stay warm.

But as writers we create a dreamscape with words. In our dreams, we can afford the Parisienne bustier or, more practically, a bra that doesn't look as if a mouse nibbled it and then scuttled off with the underwire. In our dreams, we work because we want to, not because we'll lose the house if we don't.

The feeling you're trying to elicit in your reader here is the same sense of hopeful anticipation you get when you buy a Lotto ticket. *OMG! What would I do with thirty million dollars? If I had thirty million I could ... and I wouldn't have to ...*

Financial independence—from "I have enough to do what I want" through to "I own half the known universe"—gives a nice big tick in your reader's fantasy box because it speaks to two very basic needs: those of survival and security. Of the five levels on *Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs*, the need for shelter, clothing, food, and water (all things that are a lot easier to get if you're rolling in moolah) are level one. The need for security is level two.

Jack doesn't have to be a billionaire or a rock star, but he has to be good at his job, be able to contribute financially to the relationship, and be willing to look after the woman he loves. I'm not saying the heroine can't or shouldn't

provide financially for herself. I'm saying Jack is the kind of man who *isn't* a selfish dollop of bat guano.

## **JACK HAS A SENSE OF HUMOUR.**

After close to forty years with my husband, I can tell you that a man with a sense of humor is a man worth keeping. Time brings many changes—some of them not so great. But the ability to see the funny side of the everyday is absolute gold.

Humor is a vital trait in a romance hero because so much in life isn't funny. It's emotional and annoying and frightening and sometimes just plain sad.

Humor lifts our spirits—I'm talking about clever humor here, not the dark, cold sarcasm that masquerades as "funny" and isn't. It helps us manage conflict, diffuse tension, put things into perspective. It's also a sign of intelligence.

Give your reader a man like this. A sense of humor also indicates he isn't afraid to be playful and do crazy fun things. A man with a sense of humor tends to be more creative. If you then combine playful, crazy, and creative, you have a man who will bring his heroine a great deal of pleasure.

Which segues nicely into...

## **JACK KNOWS HOW TO MAKE LOVE.**

Of course, you say. We're talking about the hero of a romance here. It's a given that he's going to know how to make love.

Well, no. Not always. There are a lot of "romantic" novels out there that read more like a sex manual (*Insert Tab M into Slot F until function ends*) than anything remotely romantic.

Romance is about love. Love is about caring. Caring implies a certain amount of selflessness, and—when it comes to making love not just scratching a sexual itch—selflessness is the name of the game.

By gifting your reader with a hero who knows the difference between *making love* and *having sex*, you're

*continued on page 4*

*continued from page 3*

offering her a glimpse of something she may or may not be getting in real life—a patient man who puts her physical and emotional needs ahead of his own. One who thinks she's gorgeous and isn't afraid to say so. A man who knows her—literally—inside out, and adores her ... cellulite, overbite, and all.

If she's in a good relationship, she'll love him because he reinforces the emotionally satisfying bond she already shares. If she's in no relationship, she'll love him because he confirms to her that good men who think the sun rises and sets on their women *do* exist, even if she hasn't found one yet. If she's in a bad relationship, she'll love him because he shows her that not all men are assholes—and maybe, just maybe, she'll take steps to shake the toxic guy off.

### **JACK IS HONOURABLE.**

In a lot of ways, it doesn't matter how much of a ratbag Jack is at the beginning of the book, as long as, somewhere deep inside him, the reader can see that he's redeemable. He might have a screwed sense of honour, but he has one. And by the end of the book he has proved himself to be the kind of man who not only lives what he believes but will also die for it.

Every woman wants a man who knows what he wants and will do whatever is necessary to get it. But she also wants a man who has a deep, unshakable sense of right and wrong, and the guts and heart to stand up for what he believes. In a world where everything is a swirl of indistinguishable colour, the man who sees his truth in black and white stands out.

### **JACK IS A WOUNDED WARRIOR.**

When *Fifty Shades of Grey* came out there was an outcry. Emotive words rained out of the sky like Hitchcock's birds. But, say what you like, there's one thing E. L. James did really well: she made Christian Grey both flawed and wounded.

The guy was an emotional Popsicle. A control freak, blind to his lack of true emotional connection. Sure, he could go through the motions of normality. He ran a business, had acquaintances, enjoyed hobbies that required a high level of intellectual function. He had an adopted family. He had lovers. He even believed he was happy. But his horrific childhood had scarred him so deeply he couldn't bear to be touched. It was something he'd come to accept as his version of normal—so much so that he wouldn't even acknowledge his need for wholeness. Then, along came Anastasia ... and the man was toast.

Our Jack might carry the wound on his body, but in most cases he carries his pain in his spirit. Doctors can heal a body. It's far more difficult to heal the effects of injustice or failure, of isolation or betrayal. You can't slap a sticking plaster on rejection, or swipe a bit of antibiotic ointment on neglect.

And yet these wounds have brought Jack to where he is today—about to meet the one woman in all the world whose love can make him whole, and whose own wounds are the basis for the healing she offers.

If you've ever seen an abused dog snarling and trembling at the same time, then you've probably gone through the gamut of emotions you want your reader to experience here.

You can see the poor animal's had the stuffing kicked out of him. He's so used to being beaten that he sees all raised hands as weapons. You know if you hold yours out—even with a treat in your fingers—you risk a nasty bite.

And yet. And yet.

You want to save him. You know he's hurting. You see he can't save himself. You can't leave him where he is or—one way or another—he'll die. He needs to know there's a world out there where he can be safe and loved.

You ache with sorrow. With empathy. With tenderness. With compassion. And if you're the right person, you're willing to risk a short-term negative response to ensure long-term positive behavior. These are the feelings that roil around in your gut as you watch and agonize, hope and despair.

As all of us have been hurt or rejected in some form, it makes a wounded hero someone we can identify with. He's also male, most romance readers are female, and most women are wired to heal hurts and fix pain. They want to experience their own emotional roller-coaster as the heroine fights through whatever it takes to bring the hero through his pain to healing.

A heroine needs her hero to be wounded so she can show her own heroic nature. The hero's wound, when the heroine finds it, opens the way for her to come to terms with some of his major jerk moments.

### **JACK IS FAITHFUL.**

It doesn't matter how many lovers Jack has had in the past. It only matters that the heroine is the last one.

The man might've been a rake and a womanizer. Then he discovers the one woman who's worth committing his life to. He works hard to change himself to be worthy of her. He learns true love is not about taking everything you can, but about giving everything you have. He realizes that without faithfulness, true love cannot survive. Without faithfulness he will hurt the woman he loves.

Faithfulness is a cornerstone of the foundation of love—and one that's being destroyed in millions of families around the globe all day every day.

*continued on page 5*



continued from page 4

As writers, we can give our readers positive examples of change and growth. As writers of *romance*, we can give our readers a hero worth falling in love with.



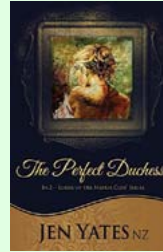
Gracie O'Neil especially loves writing strong, wounded heroines with more secrets than the CIA. While her current (first person) *SCROLL OF SHADOWS* series is romantic suspense with paranormal elements, her upcoming series—think *The Bourne* franchise meets *La Femme Nikita*—is third person and goes straight for the Rom Sus jugular without any additives at all.

*“We have to continually be jumping off cliffs and developing our wings on the way down.”*

*— Kurt Vonnegut*

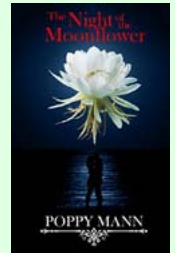


## Woos & Hoos!



Jenny Yates has published *THE PERFECT DUCHESS*, book two of her *Lords of the Matrix Club* series, available now.

**DEBUT NOVEL:** Helen Macfarlane w/a Poppy Mann, has released *THE NIGHT OF THE MOONFLOWER*. Congratulations, Helen!



Lizzie Tremayne released *THE HILLS OF GOLD UNCHANGING* on February 18.

Iona Jones, w/a Elizabeth King, has finaled in the Historical category of the North Texas RWA's Great Expectations contest.



### Contacts

**Bronwen Evans:** [president@romancewriters.co.nz](mailto:president@romancewriters.co.nz)  
**Catherine Robertson:** [vicepresident@romancewriters.co.nz](mailto:vicepresident@romancewriters.co.nz)  
**Tania Roberts:** [treasurer@romancewriters.co.nz](mailto:treasurer@romancewriters.co.nz)  
**Kendra Delugar:** [secretary@romancewriters.co.nz](mailto:secretary@romancewriters.co.nz)  
**Rachel Collins:** [publicity@romancewriters.co.nz](mailto:publicity@romancewriters.co.nz)  
**Gracie O'Neil:** [membership@romancewriters.co.nz](mailto:membership@romancewriters.co.nz)

*Heart to Heart* will be published in the first week of each month except January.

The deadline for every issue is the 20th of the month prior (e.g. 20th August for September issue). Please have all articles, news, reports, and advertising to Gracie at [heart2hearteditor@romancewriters.co.nz](mailto:heart2hearteditor@romancewriters.co.nz) on or before the deadline.

# From The Editor



This month, H2H has a guest editorial written by Rachel Collins.

As Gracie mentions in her *Strip Jack Naked* article this month, hero Jack often has bad life experiences. His heroine may also be having a rough ride—as we all do at times in our own lives. As authors, our reason for writing is to take the reader away from their reality and into their happy place.

But as writers we also need our readers to enjoy our books, feel emotionally satisfied at the end, and go pre-order the next one in the series.

How do we know we're doing it right? It used to be that one of the obvious ways was to read the reviews. With the freedom and speed the internet gives us, readers can buy our book, read it within hours, and post a review online.

But what is a review? It's a reader's personal opinion. That's right, people. it's only their *opinion*. So please don't despair when you get a less than stellar one.

Recently I was chatting with an author whose book had received four star and five star reviews. Then along came a one star. "It's not even accurate," she moaned. "Did they even read it?"

And here's your lightbulb moment, folks.

Did they read it? Probably not.

One star reviews (which—in honor of the American political climate—we'll rebrand as *Alternative Reviews*) are most often posted by anonymous trolls who may not have read your book, probably have an axe of some sort to grind, and get a thrill out of being nasty.

Don't sweat them. Keep writing the next book, and take honest feedback from those around you, your beta readers, and your critique partners.

Have a great month everyone.

Rachel

*"A writer must have all the confidence in the world when writing the first draft and none whatsoever when editing subsequent drafts."— T. Davis Bunn*



# These Little Things...

Daphne Clair de Jong



**So your spelling is good, your punctuation is fine, you know you should use lots of verbs in your writing and cut down on overused adverbs and adjectives; you can even spot a dangling participle hanging about at the beginning of one of your sentences.**

If you are not one of those lucky folk above, employ a good editor or if you can't afford one, at least buy some good grammar books aimed at beginners. The less work a publisher's editor or copy-editor has to do, the greater chance she will accept your book. But there are things you can do yourself if you can recognise them.

Small things can hold up your story and make the reader restless. Certain words and phrases insinuate themselves into sentences where they have no business – words like *was* and *that* (*that was*, *he was*, *it was*), *just*, *very*, *almost* and other qualifiers.

Description is necessary to set a scene or characterise a person, but go easy on lengthy details and watch for unnecessary or repetitive phrases.

*He wore a battered Stetson on his head.*

Where else would he wear his hat? Cut that bit.

*Oh, I can't bear this, she thought, agonising.*

If she can't bear it, she *is* agonising.

Some writers avoid "she thought" by simply italicising thoughts, so as not to break into the reader's "dream."

Don't tell the same thing twice. Repeating the same idea in different words is one of the most difficult things to spot.

*She didn't know what to say. Her brain was in a whirl, going round and round in circles. How could she find words to tell him what she knew?*

Pick one of those four, or find a better one.

Accidental repetition is probably the hardest thing to spot. The writing may be fine, the characters interesting,

the story intriguing, yet it seems to be slow-moving and the reader gets bored.

Every sentence may be beautifully written and say something about the characters or the plot, but if they don't convey some new emotion, action or information, or deepen the reader's understanding, they are not furthering the story.

*"Repeating the same idea in different words is one of the most difficult things to spot."*

How to Write books often quote the old saw: "Murder your darlings". (credited to various famous writers). The premise is that if you are especially proud of a sentence you should delete it. Drastic advice, but do examine every sentence, every clause,

and be sure you need it. Lazy sentences that are not placing the reader in the setting or creating a mood or furthering the action, do not belong, no matter how pretty they are.

Watch for clichés and eliminate them; also words that habitually cling together, like *tasteful décor*, *sky blue*, *rolling waves*, *a sigh of relief*.

That said, if you can't think of a better phrase, try acknowledging the cliché and perhaps put a twist on it. Instead of *He clammed up*, I once used, *He would give an oyster a run for its money*.

You're a writer. Use your imagination.



Daphne Clair has written over seventy-five romance novels for Harlequin lines. As Daphne de Jong she has published many short stories and a historical novel, both critically acclaimed in her homeland. She has won the prestigious Katherine Mansfield Short Story Award, has been a Rita finalist and has either finished or won in other contests in several writing fields. To learn more about Daphne visit <http://www.harlequin.com/author.html?authorid=920>

# The First Turning Point In A Suspense

Gracie O'Neil

**Fair warning:** Because I write romantic suspense I structure the Turning Points slightly differently to the accepted “romance” format. If you have a process that works for you, go for it. I will still be your friend. :-)

**While the Inciting Incident happens around the ten percent mark, the First Turning Point comes about twenty-five percent of the way into the story at the end of Act One. As with all Turning Points, it's in two parts: a Problem and a Decision.**

The role of this particular **Problem/Decision** is to catapult the hero out of the everyday by forcing her to make a decision that will burn any bridge back to her normal life. There's already been lots of action up to this point—building from the Inciting Incident—but this First Turning Point is the first major pivotal moment on which the *direction* of the story balances. It screws normal, and is the catalyst for tossing the hero out of his comfort zone and into the first half of the Second Act.

## **It's the hero's point-of-no-return.**

Up to the First Turning Point, the hero can—at any point—decide what the hell and just continue on with his normal life. However, the problem of the First Turning Point is something so out of left field that it tosses the hero into the equivalent of an emotional blender. He's faced with a life-changing **problem**. He has to make a life-altering decision. Even if his decision is to ignore the life-changing problem—which must *never* happen in genre fiction—he ain't ever getting “normal” back, baby.

In DEADLY REUNION, the First Turning Point for my hero Jake Granville is when he discovers the child in danger is his daughter. Up to this point, Jake had excellent reasons for keeping his distance from Ellie Holt, the heroine. But learning he's a father and that there's a hit out on his four-month-old turns Jake's life-plan timeline to custard. He decides to get involved with Ellie again in order to protect her and his child. He's not committing to the relationship/romance yet. That comes later. He's committing to the action/suspense.

## **It's an obstacle to the hero's goal.**

In HEART OF SHADOWS, my heroine is an ex-assassin now in hiding for the protection of her two psychic daughters. Her goal is to keep them all under the radar until the girls have grown up and can look after themselves. Then she'll hunt down the group who targeted them in the first place.

The First Turning Point's life-changing **problem** comes when she learns that the man who trained her as an assassin is heading her way. She can't ignore the danger he presents. Her choices are to take the girls and run again, or to stand her ground and face him. Her resulting **decision** - to face him - put her on a collision course with her goal of staying out of sight.

## **It's the place by which the villain should have been introduced to the story.**

Generally, the First Act comprises the first quarter of the book, introduces the characters, establishes the setting, and defines what's at stake as a result of the conflict. This means the villain has to have been introduced to the *reader* (if not in person to the hero) by the end of the First Turning Point. The villain, his machinations, the potential disasters the reader can see being foreshadowed ... all these things are the hooks you're setting up in the first twenty-five percent of the book. If the villain is still unknown to the reader as you're going into the Second Act then you're dragging the story out unnecessarily and setting yourself up for the dreaded “sagging middle” in your second and third quarters.

## **Conclusion**

The function of the First Turning Point in a suspense is to initiate a **Problem/Decision** that produces a point-of-no-return for the hero. It forces her into a journey she would not willingly take if left to her own devices. The **Problem** is an obstacle to her story goal. Her **Decision** how to deal with the problem ratchets up the tension and potential conflict. That increase in tension and conflict kicks the story into high gear as the reader starts to imagine everything that's going to rip her life apart. This anticipation means the reader is hooked for the next three hundred pages until the hero gets her happy ending.



*Gracie O'Neil especially loves writing strong, wounded heroines with more secrets than the CIA. While her current (first person) SCROLL OF SHADOWS series is romantic suspense with paranormal elements, her upcoming series —think The Bourne franchise meets La Femme Nikita—is third person and goes straight for the Rom Sus jugular without any additives at all.*

*“Don't think about making art, just get it done”. — Andy Warhol*



# From the President

We have a [new, stable and functioning website!](https://www.romancewriters.co.nz/) (<https://www.romancewriters.co.nz/>) It's not complete yet, but at least we have individual logins, the [Pacific Hearts contest forms](https://www.romancewriters.co.nz/shop/contests/pacific-hearts-award-2017/) (<https://www.romancewriters.co.nz/shop/contests/pacific-hearts-award-2017/>) and payment options work and the [RWNZ Conference Registration](https://www.romancewriters.co.nz/event/conference-info/) (<https://www.romancewriters.co.nz/event/conference-info/>) is active and working. Phew! Our old platform was running on a dirty, rotting bandage and we can finally rip it off!

I have to acknowledge the Executive Team and their hard work. Gracie came to stay with me in the Hawkes Bay, and Kendra who lives here too, joined us. It took us over three days to load the content that Catherine and Gracie had pulled together.

Please feel free to [send me feedback](#) on what works and what doesn't. The RWNZ website is an evolving beast and like the movie Shrek we want to turn it into a beauty.

I've been a busy girl over the past few months. A book deadline 31 January and another on 31 March, two new releases in February, plus the RWNZ website and other non-writing tasks. I suspect the rest of you have extremely busy lives too. It's such a challenge finding time to write, do marketing, take care of family, and work another job if you have one. Only non-writers think this business is easy.

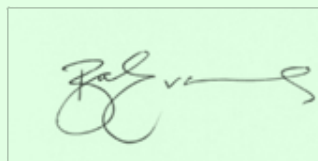
I'm excited that these issues are being discussed at conference in several amazing workshops. In fact, I suspect anything you need help with is on the fabulous conference programme the Wellington girls have put together. Registration has opened and I have to say we are spoiled for choice. Check out the programme.

If that's not enough to pique your interest in our 24th conference in Rotorua in August, go and read this post on [Kristen Lamb's blog](#) – Why All Writers Should Attend A Writers Conference. Kristen is presenting a Full Day Friday Workshop [Rise of the Machines](#) (author branding). I fully endorse her advice in this blog piece.

One more thing before I sign off. The Strategic Plan draft will be distributed this month. It's not finished quite yet but we had to put it aside while we dealt with the more pressing problem of our website platform. I also haven't yet heard back from the IRD regarding the liability we have on our tax returns. I'll keep you posted.

If you have any concerns regarding RWNZ, please feel free to email me [president@romancewriters.co.nz](mailto:president@romancewriters.co.nz)

Take care and productive writing everyone!



Bronwen Evans  
RWNZ President



## RWNZ Contests Updates

We're in the busy time of year for contests. **The Daphne Clair de Jong First Kiss Award** is closed and entries are with the first round judges. **The Great Beginnings Award** has been judged and you can expect to hear the results any day, and the **Pacific Hearts Award** is open now (1 March to 31 March).

**Pacific Hearts** is for completed, unpublished romance manuscripts of between 45,000 and 110,000 words. See the website for more details.

Coming up in April, we have the **Chapter Short Story Contest**, and the **Koru Award** will be open all May. So there are lots of opportunities.

If you are not entering a contest, please consider putting your name forward to be a judge. Just email [contests@romancewriters.co.nz](mailto:contests@romancewriters.co.nz), saying which contest you wish to judge, and our contest coordinator will pass your name on to the correct contest manager.

# Get To Know Our Authors

## Karina Bliss

[www.karinabliss.com](http://www.karinabliss.com)

Auckland member Karina Bliss is a hybrid author who writes contemporary romances. She has eleven novels published through Harlequin Super Romance and is working on the fourth self-published title in her Rock Solid series, which digs into the private and family lives of rock stars.



## Trudi Jaye

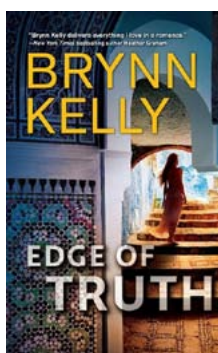
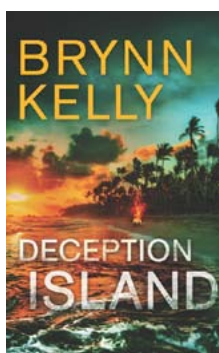
[www.trudijayewrites.com](http://www.trudijayewrites.com)

Trudi is a self-published writer of paranormal romance, urban fantasy and young adult fiction. She's a member of the Auckland Chapter.

## Frances Housden

[www.franceshousden.com](http://www.franceshousden.com)

A long-time member of the Auckland Chapter, Frances Housden has just released her 13th book. Now writing for Escape Publishing she brings to life tales of Highland Heroes, full of romance, suspense and excitement.



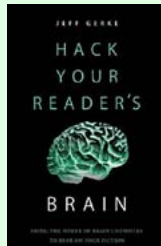
## Brynn Kelly

[www.brynnkelly.com](http://www.brynnkelly.com)

Bronwyn McEvoy (w/a Brynn Kelly) writes romantic suspense. She's a member of the Auckland Chapter. She is working on a third novel and a novella in the Legionnaires series.

To be featured on this free page, please email **EITHER** one cover **OR** three, **PLUS** bio, **PLUS** buy links to: [heart2hearteditor@romancewriters.co.nz](mailto:heart2hearteditor@romancewriters.co.nz) by the 20<sup>th</sup> of the month deadline.

# The Bookshelf

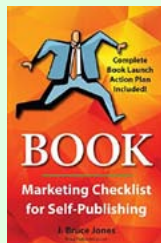


## **Hack Your Reader's Brain** Jeff Gerke

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01MYV2CK0/>

Hack Your Reader's Brain brings the power of cutting-edge research to bear on your fiction. Now you can:

Know your opening will catch the reader's attention  
Know your reader will become emotionally engaged with your hero  
Know how to keep your reader engaged and when to give him a break  
Know exactly what to do in the climactic moment  
Know what your reader's brain absolutely must have at the end



## **Book Marketing Checklist for Self-Publishers** J. Bruce Jones

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01CJ9K4F0/>

Book Marketing Checklist for Self-Publishers is about how to market and launch your book on Amazon.com. It includes many of the tasks that you will need to do to launch and have a successfully selling book—including three levels of book launching action plans



## **The Story Equation: How to Plot and Write a Brilliant Story from One Powerful Question** Susan May Warren

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01LWXKLZV/>

You can build an entire book by asking one powerful question, and then plugging it into an “equation” that makes your plot and characters come to life. You'll learn how to build the external and internal journey of your characters, create a theme, build story and scene tension, create the character change journey and even pitch and market your story. All with one amazing question.

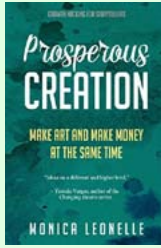


## **The Writer's Guide to Training Your Dragon: Using Speech Recognition Software to Dictate Your Book and Supercharge Your Writing Workflow** Scott Baker

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01BYFVCLK/>

As writers, we all know what an incredible tool dictation software can be. But many of us give up on dictating when we find we can't get the accuracy we need to be truly productive.

This book changes all of that. With almost two decades of using Dragon software under his belt and a wealth of insider knowledge from within the dictation industry, Scott Baker reveals how to supercharge your writing and achieve sky-high recognition accuracy from the moment you start using the software.



**Prosperous Creation: Make Art and Make Money at the Same Time**  
Monica Leonelle

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01NAIAROM/>

This book is for authors who feel overwhelmed and overworked while trying to reach their dreams of writing full-time. You can end the confusion of what marketing tactics to implement, how to make it in this industry on a budget, and answer the age-old question of, "Why isn't my book selling?" at any point in the process.



**Write Characters Your Readers Won't Forget: A Toolkit for Emerging Writers**  
Stant Litore

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B00VLR8SFU/>

Packed with thirty exercises, abundant examples, and practical strategies, this guidebook will help you write unforgettable characters who "come alive" on the page, create compelling dialogue, and chart more breathtaking emotional journeys for your characters.

## The Welcome Mat

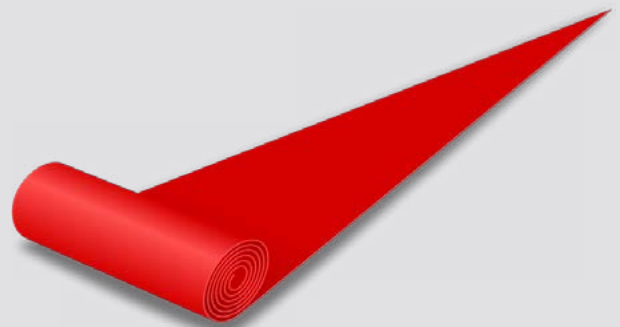
Roll out the red carpet! A huge welcome to our new and returning members! It's lovely to have you with us.

Firstly, a warm welcome to our new members:

Wendy Cooper - Turangi  
Ingrid Turpin - Auckland

And a huge welcome back to our returning members:

Emma Cameron - Wellington  
Tee Govender - Auckland  
Cindy Hargreaves - Whangarei  
Heather Ramsay - Papamoa  
Tania Sparks - Auckland



*"You know how writers are ... they create themselves as they create their work. Or perhaps they create their work in order to create themselves."*

— Orson Scott Card





# Regional Round-Up Reports

## Auckland

Convenor: Pamela Gervai ([pamelagervai.com](mailto:pamelagervai.com))

Twenty-three attended our meeting on 4 February. Many thanks to Daphne Clair de Jong for her critique of the cold reads, and also to those attending who gave very helpful suggestions.

Our next meeting is on Saturday 4 March. USA Today bestselling author Tessa Radley will be our speaker on Goal, Motivation, and Conflict—the big GMC that drives a novel forwards. Tessa writes for Harlequin Desire. She loves writing books with a little edge and a lot of emotion—the kind she loves to read. Her favourite kind of characters are those caught in seemingly insurmountable circumstances and Tessa wrestles (and procrastinates!!) all day long with how to get them in and out of those impossible situations.

As usual our meeting will be at the Three Kings Tennis Pavilion from 12.30 until 3.00 p.m. Please bring a gold coin donation, change for the raffles, and a plate to share. Afterwards if you have time, come for a social follow-up at the pub up the path—was the Thirsty Whale, now called the Copper Thief.

## Coast to Coast

Convenor: Vivienne Matthews  
([vivienнемatthewswriter@gmail.com](mailto:vivienнемatthewswriter@gmail.com))

At the February meeting we looked at our goals for 2017. Starting off with our overarching yearly goal, we SMARTified it, broke it down into small, achievable SMART goals, and then figured out the baby-steps needed to achieve those mini-goals.

Our March meeting will be at Jill's place in Te Puke on Saturday 11th March. Deryn plans to run us through some fun writing exercises—with handouts. It'll be a fun day with lots of laughs. Look forward to seeing you there.

## Hawkes Bay

Convenor: Kendra Delugar  
([kendraonthemove@hotmail.com](mailto:kendraonthemove@hotmail.com))

Our first meeting of the year took place at Kate's, where it was fabulous to be able to welcome Sally back to The Bay. We discussed what we wanted out of our group for 2017, caught up on where we're all at with our writing, and got a first-hand look at Sally's latest release.

We meet on the first Saturday of the month at 1pm, and new members are always welcome. The March meeting will be held at Bron's, where we'll be talking about the

latest changes in the industry, and will bring along a synopsis of our work in progress (if we have one).

## Wellington

Convenor: Kris Pearson ([kris.p@paradise.net.nz](mailto:kris.p@paradise.net.nz))

Our first meeting of 2017 was delayed a week but was well worth waiting for. A select group of eight met at Kris's, and it was one of our better efforts. It was nice having three members (Jeanette, Holly and Christy) right on the point of publishing and hungry for information that the more experienced members could provide. We discussed quite a lot about editing, and prices/services that people had come across. Then on to cover design and ISBNs. You don't know how much you've learned until you find you can provide lots of answers.

We watched Kris's Dragon voice-recognition software in action, and checked out newsletters. We all decided we needed better discipline. Therefore Mrs P will bring a whip to the next meeting, 1 pm, Saturday March 4th. An email will be sent as to venue.

## Nelson

Convenor: Annika Ohlson-Smith  
([nelsonromancewriters@xtra.co.nz](mailto:nelsonromancewriters@xtra.co.nz))

Our February meeting was very busy polishing off the final details of our workshop with Yvonne Lindsay, such as who's making what for the morning and afternoon teas, and the lunch. A few more posters were dished out, but the promotion—including an interview with Annika and Yvonne in the local paper—is basically done.

Our speakers, Swedish bestseller young adult writer Arne Norlin and his wife editor and translator Lena Kamhed, then entertained us with writing tips and anecdotes from their writing/publishing lives. A big hug to them and to the few, but hardworking members who came to the meeting. Next meeting: Saturday 11 March. All welcome.

Otago - Contact: Samantha Charlton ([samanthacharlton@hotmail.com](mailto:samanthacharlton@hotmail.com))

Christchurch - Contact: Jane Madison-Jones ([mad-diejane@xtra.co.nz](mailto:mad-diejane@xtra.co.nz))

Blenheim - Contact: Iona Jones ([ionajones@xtra.co.nz](mailto:ionajones@xtra.co.nz))