

HEART TO HEART

Hunt Zing

Feed Your Desire to Write. With John Brown



Even after you choose a genre, you still need to develop ideas for character, setting, problem, plot, and text. What do you do? How do you develop those ideas?

The first thing you do is hunt zing.

Feeding the beast



Zing is any idea that turns you on, sparks your imagination, or stokes your desire. Zing tingles your cool metre. Dude, yes, ah, oh baby, man-o-man, great oogily boogily—these are all common responses when you come across these types of ideas.

Most zings are small tingles. Sometimes they're zaps. Rarer still are the freaking gigawatt monsters that shake you about and leave you breathless. But I've found I can't wait for those. Or maybe I should say that they often come only after I've

caught smaller prey.

Your imagination is a beast. Feed it and it will get up and terrorise the neighbourhood on its own accord. Starve it and it will lie there like a gigantic dust mop and gather flies. Nothing in, nothing out.

YOU MUST FEED YOUR IMAGINATION!

Some of us might feel we don't have much to feed our imagination. Most of us are not Ann Franks or CIA agents or little old ladies caught in terrorist plots. But we don't have to be.

I once taught a teen writers' workshop where we met one day each week for three weeks. During the first class I introduced zing and told the students they were to hunt for 10 zings each day.

They were dismayed. They groaned. Ten? Was that possible?

The next week all of the students came back bubbling about all the things they'd found. One of them said it had changed things for her: her world which had been relatively hum-drum was suddenly filled with the cool. The other students agreed.

We all are limited by what we can perceive and focus on. Our working memories are so small. And so it's easy to focus on so many mundane business-of-life things and miss the wonderful show of lights that goes on around us.

This is what hunting for zing does for you. It quite literally changes your world.

**Be a hunter.
Capture the zing.**



This is the first step. You have to gather interesting material. Lots of it. Which means **you must turn your zing sensors on.**

What do I mean by this?

Open your eyes and ears and heart.

Be on the look out. When something cool comes along, capture it. Use scratch paper, the back of a receipt, get a notebook, a folder file, a camera, a sketchbook. Just capture it when it comes. And it will come.

Most of the ideas are never used, but unless you capture them, you won't get the ones that do develop into something special. I promise you: these little scraps and snippets have a way of combining at the oddest moments, and suddenly you have more than an itty-bitty old zing, you have a freaking power plant!

The Drag Net

Having your sensors on is like deploying a drag net—it catches whatever swims into it. One of the benefits of this is that you get ideas you'd never in a million years come up with on your own. **Here are some random things I**

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Editors' Desk



Welcome home to Heart to Heart. Hope you've recharged your creative batteries over the summer break and you're ready to make 2012 the year you "Write Your Romance from Go to WOW.

Whether you are a newbie writer starting from scratch who's aiming to write to the end of the first draft, an in-between-ie polishing beyond the first draft with the Clendon in your sights, or even a multi published author seeking to amp up your WOW, H2H is committed to supporting you to achieve your writing goals.

Each month we'll continue to offer quality articles, covering: writing craft, empowering creativity, industry news, and professional development. And we'll happily reach beyond our Romance genre to our wider community of fellow story tellers to source this material.

Because WOW builds from hot 'what ifs,' in this first issue we hunt killer ideas with the master of 'ZING,' epic fantasy author, John Brown.

You're already zinged? Or thought you were, but now you're not sure? Either way, great! Harlequin/Silhouette author, Susan Meier, (contracted for 50 books!!) discusses how misrepresenting plot points is a sure fire way to dull brilliant ideas, and to help us rediscover their shine, she offers her Magic Formula of Plotting. This article is part 4 of her March online workshop, Can This Manuscript Be Saved. If WOW is on your radar this year (why put off living your dream any longer?) SIGN UP NOW.

Let's face it. Writing towards publication is WORK. And if we're passionate about crafting stories readers will enjoy so much they'll demand we write more, we'll agree with Maggie Toussaint, and Marg McAlister that we MUST set goals and prioritise our writing sessions. To make this even easier Marg offers everyone a free copy of her PDF, "Kick Start Your Romance Novel."

Click the link and get underway with Marg's do-at-home course now, and you'll get so much more out of every article we have up our sleeves to WOW you with all year. Maybe you'll feel inspired to enter RWNZ's contests. Our comps are your opportunity to SHOW, GROW and GLOW. To tempt you, we have the Chapter Short Story contest, closing March 23 and the CLENDON closing March 30.

And if you want to share some love, energy, and time with RWNZ, Vonnie Hughes encourages you to Judge Contests. You'll celebrate members' progress by offering feedback, and their success by giving awards, while reaping the reward of increasing your knowledge. Win/win for sure.

Winning writers abound in RWNZ. Meet some in Kris Pearson's introduction to the exciting new world of Indie Publishing. Love their covers—and in a click fall into their stories. Read to feed your muse, and keep her butt on that seat. and write. Until next time. Cheers from, *Viv, Ellie, and, Chris.*



Please remember, the deadline for content for Heart to Heart is the 15th of each month.

WELCOME

TO OUR NEWEST MEMBERS:

Lee Burgess	Newcastle, Australia
Sandy Curtis	Innes Park, Australia
Cornelia Luethi	North Shore City
Lianne Melekhina	Auckland
Sharon Sherle	Hamilton
Toni Stephens	Christchurch
Victoria Parker....	New Castle Upon Tyne, U.K.
Judy Tregurtha	Nelson
Heather Walden	Pukekohe
Katherine Woods	Auckland

There is nothing to writing. All you do is sit down at a typewriter and bleed.
- Ernest Hemingway

From The Pres.



What's happening in RWNZ?

President Iona Jones brings us up-to-date with the news.

Hello everyone and a very happy (if somewhat belated) New Year. I hope you all had a wonderful Christmas and enjoyed a relaxing holiday period with family and friends.

I also hope that after all that relaxation you are now ready and raring to go. We have a lot of exciting things coming up this year, none of which you'll want to miss!

First, the year's contests kick off this month with the opening of The Chapter Short Story contest on 23 February. Entries don't close until 23 March though, so you have plenty of time to polish those words. Of course, if short stories aren't really your thing (or, indeed, even if they are), the next contest on our schedule is probably as far from them as you can get. The Clendon, our full manuscript contest, has a closing date of 31 March this year, so a little later than usual. Good news for those of you rushing to "finish the damn book!" And if that isn't enough for you, our Harlequin Mills & Boon Great Beginnings contest also opens for entries in March. See details in this issue and on our website.

While you're busy writing, editing and polishing those words for our contests, don't forget to register for our fabulous online course with the wonderful Susan Meier, Harlequin Romance author. "Can this manuscript be saved?" is a highly requested workshop and we are very lucky to have Susan presenting it for us – particularly at the reduced price of \$10 for RWNZ members! Registrations are open now and the course gets underway on 5 March. Details are included in this issue and on our website.

It might seem far away now, but RWNZ's "Love is in the Air" 2012 Conference is shaping up to be an event not to be missed. I'm very pleased to announce that New York Times best-selling author, Eloisa James, will be our Keynote Speaker for the weekend. And, of course, as previously announced, the Friday Workshop speaker this year will be Randy Ingermanson. Make sure you've got the 24th-26th of August blocked off in your diary now!

On the conference front, there is also some exciting news for 2013 – the conference is on the move! Yes, your Executive has decided to hold the 2013 Conference in Wellington. The InterContinental Wellington will be the venue for RWNZ's 2013 Conference from Friday 23rd to Sunday 25th August 2013. Further details will follow in due course, but the Executive wanted to let everyone know of this exciting decision.

Just a couple more things from me before I sign off for this month. Unfortunately, we are still looking for someone to take on the Publicity Officer's role for RWNZ. If you're concerned about what the role entails, worry no longer. Kate Gordon, RWNZ member and former Publicity Officer, has very kindly offered to mentor anyone taking on the role. A 15-year PR professional, Kate can assist you with developing a media plan, teach you about writing a newsworthy media release and more. If you think you might be able to help out your organisation in this role and learn some really useful skills at the same time, please drop me an email at iona.jones@extra.co.nz.

And, finally, for those of you in the Auckland area, if you're looking for something to do on Valentine's Day head out to Howick Library. Our very own Yvonne Lindsay will be there talking romance at 10.30am on February 14.

Well, that's it from me for now. Good luck to everyone entering any of our contests, particularly those of you scrambling to "finish the damn book". Have a great month and may the words flow.

(Continued from page 1)

caught in my drag net.

Some people actually raise chickens in their apartment (from a book I happened to pick up while browsing a section of the library).

Hum, what if my character's neighbour does that? What if it's his kooky sister? Maybe his wife decides they need to be more self-sufficient. Or maybe she's told a neighbour she'd take care of her chickens.

A girl was sold to cover her father's debts (found while reading an article about ancient history)

Could that happen today? How would that work? What if it was someone else kidnapping a girl to pay off debts?

The monkey, which costs \$15,000, is what Truelove envisions as the ultimate SWAT reconnaissance tool. (From an online newspaper that's sent to me each week.) Since 1979, capuchin monkeys have been trained to be companions for people who are quadriplegics by performing daily tasks, such as serving food, opening and closing doors, turning lights on and off, retrieving objects and brushing hair. Truelove hopes the same training could prepare a monkey for special-ops intelligence."

A SWAT monkey? Come on! Could this primate be put to nefarious purposes? What if he stole something incredibly valuable? What if a major thief uses them? What if it's a boy in the neighbourhood?

There's a guy who lets his toenails grow to horrible lengths; they look like claws. It's incredibly disgusting (Something a friend said about one of his friends in an email)

Does your main character have a partner? Someone they work with in the office? A mate in their medieval army squad?

An Albertson's supermarket on Harbour Boulevard was evacuated Monday after a burglary suspect fell through the ceiling to the ground near a cash register.— GARDEN GROVE (CBS)

What if that's your main character? What was he doing stealing copper? Maybe he was forced to?

Headline in Daily Mail Reporter: Ghurka kills 30 Taliban. 'I thought I was going to die... so I tried to kill as many as I could': Hero Gurkha receives bravery medal from the Queen. Corporal Dipprasad Pun defeated more than 30 Taliban fighters single-handedly. Used the tripod of his machine gun to beat away a militant after running out of ammunition.

Could this be used as a scene in the story? What about the tripod business?



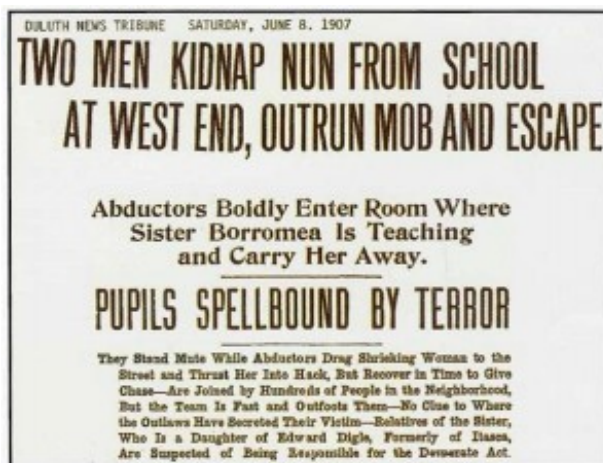
In this May 2011 security camera frame grab provided by the Stevens County Sheriff's Office, dogs are seen at the home of a resident near Deer Park, Wash. A pack of dogs has killed about 100 animals in the past three months while eluding law enforcement and volunteers in north-eastern Washington state. The killings are happening in a wide area of mountains and valleys west of Deer Park, a small town about 40 miles north of Spokane, authorities said. (AP Photo/Courtesy of the Stevens County Sheriff's Office) What if these guys are roaming the neighbourhood where your character lives? What if it's a fantasy story and these are not just dogs? Are they bewitched? Trolls? Something come in from the woods?

As far as pictures go. How

about this gal? Would she fit in a romantic comedy? A murder mystery? What if she went missing? What if someone kidnapped her son?



What about this newspaper clipping?



All you have to do is start asking questions of these zings and they can't help but produce character, setting, problem, and plot.

Deploy your drag net.

Do it now.

Hunting With A Purpose

Even though your drag net is out, you cannot rely on it to deliver all the ideas you need. Very often you need to go hunting with a purpose. In fact, whenever you have development objectives, you'll be on the lookout for that thing you need to develop.

Let's say you want a funny and new fight scene in your story. Look at the stuff above.

- A fight including that gal in the wedding dress?
- One in the space the copper thief fell from?
- How about one in a chicken apartment?

Maybe you need a new love interest.

- What if she's the copper thief?
- What if she's out hunting the wild dogs?
- Maybe he's the guy who kidnapped the nun?

Do you see? When you have a purpose, you look at the things you come across with a different lens.

But you might need to be a bit more active in your hunt. You might need to do some things to find what you're

looking for. I'm talking about directed research.

An Example

I attended Orson Card's literary boot camp. He had us take a day and develop five story ideas (or seeds) which we were to write down on ONE side of a 3x5 card (hum, sounds a bit like the story setup we talked about in the previous blog).

2 of the cards were for story ideas we developed from research conducted at Barnes & Noble or in a library

2 were for ideas developed from a drag net of events or curious things I saw that day

1 card was for an idea developed from an interview with someone.

The assignment was to look at things as a writer, to exploit what I see as a writer. On the card we were to tell a story. The fundamental idea—what happens and why. Just the idea and some events. The space limit on a 3x5 card forces you to think of story and NOT the writing.

Oh, and the research was supposed to be for something we didn't find interesting, which meant we didn't know squat about it.

I researched Iroquois Indians, women who did crazy things like going over Niagara Falls in a barrel, and some other crap I can't remember. I also read a bit about an American Indian in 1614 who was stolen as a slave, taken to Spain, got his freedom, went to England and then back home.

I interviewed two women in a music box shop and worker in a Thomas Kindcade art gallery. The gallery gal was blonde and rode Harleys. Had tattoos. What in the world was she doing in a THOMAS KINCADE gallery?

I used the Elizabeth Smart poster (abducted girl) and an empty music box as my curious things.

I worked from 5PM until 9PM on the ideas and never really got anything. Went up on a hike up Rock Canyon still thinking about it. Saw a cave; evening came; the canyon was beautiful. Marvellous. Almost stepped in a snake. Worked and worked on the music box idea and the kidnapping idea. More on the music box.

No ideas really pulled me.

Next morning I woke at 6 AM and started thinking. Decided I had no time AND I WOULD HAVE TO FOLLOW NELLIE'S [my wife] ADVICE and simply go with what I had. I made a decision and go with it even though I didn't really feel it inside.

During class, someone else talked about bone magic. It was cool! I stole the bone magic idea and crossed it with the Iroquois stuff I'd looked at and suddenly started liking my story a

whole lot more. Decided the tribe that lost their only bone breaker (that's how the magic was obtained) in a raid (he was sold to the French as a slave) and sent out a woman who knew French and a warrior to retrieve him.

The next day I was supposed to write the story. I found I didn't really want to write that one. Spent all day at the library reading juveniles and encyclopaedias on Iroquois and Eastern Indians. Read for 5 hours then began to try to write.

Now, let me stop here.

Through my directed research I had collected gobs of zing. There were Indian names like "Handsome Lake" and "He Who Keeps Them Awake," the fact that the Iroquois had a peace sachem (leader) and a war leader. The peace leader was a woman and chose the male war leader. I had stories about abducted Whites and Indians being sold into slavery and escaping. I read about men purchasing Indian wives. I added tidbits I knew from the Netherlands and Bible. It went on and on and on.

I had TONS of cool material to work with because I'd actively gone on the hunt for it.

If you look back as the example I shared about the golem story in the previous post, you'll see I researched golems and Croatia and found TONS of cool material. I added to that other tidbits I already had. And the result was massive zing.

So what happened with that Iroquois story? Well, I finished it, and it went on to sell multiple times. It's called "Bright Waters". Here's how it starts. But the thing to remember is that it all started with the directed hunting for zing.

Bright Waters

In the spring of 1718 Jan van Doorn returned to his log house with a load of molasses, flour, and a fine green dress for his new wife. He found she had run out on him and taken half of his goods with her.

She was the second wife he'd bought. And the second one to run away before a season was out.

Her name was Woman With Turtle Eyes, an older Huron of 23 years. He had thought an older woman would be more stable than the girl he purchased the first time. Besides, she said she wanted him to buy her.

Jan didn't understand how the men in the settlements courted and kept their women. And it couldn't be because he was ugly. He'd seen plenty of ugly men marry. The only ones that seemed to have any interest in him were the whores at Fort Montreal, and when he'd given in to his urges that one cursed time, they took far more from him than his money.

There was nothing to do about Woman With Turtle Eyes. If he hunted her down, she'd just run away again. He could beat her, but she'd run nevertheless. Besides, her theft meant he'd have to start working his old claim, and there were precious few weeks before the beavers began to shed their winter coats. No, there was nothing to do but fold up the dress and put it in the cedar chest.

He looked down upon the dress for a few

moments admiring the fine, shimmering cloth. Then he closed the lid.

That night Jan cooked himself a meal of kale and old potatoes. When he finished, he rubbed deer urine onto his traps to prepare them for the morrow. Then he went to bed.

Remember: zings are almost always small. Don't be looking for the ONE killer idea. Usually the killer story is made up of a bunch of smaller zings.

"What generally happens is that I'll be reading up on some topic just for entertainment — spies, pirates, the Romantic poets, mountain-climbing — and I'll notice a few indications that the situation might do as the basis for a novel. At that point I declare that this isn't recreation anymore, it's research. So I start reading lots of books and articles on the subject, even if they're not entertaining. And I follow any side-paths that show up — for one book, Tarot led to Poker which led to Las Vegas which led to famous gangsters. And while I'm reading all this, I'm looking for bits that are "too cool not to use." When I've got a dozen or so things that are too cool not to use, then I've got — obviously — a dozen elements of the eventual novel." ~ Tim Powers

Your Zing, Not Mine

Again, you don't want any old idea. You want good ones. **So how do you recognize a good idea? YOU FEEL IT!**

Good ideas carry current, they spark your interest, they tug your heart strings, they turn you on. This is what I've learned: a good idea is like an electric jolt. Sometimes it's very small, sometimes it's overpowering. It's the feeling of "cool," "whoa," or "oh, boy, this has possibilities."

But notice I said they spark your interest.

You're not looking for what turns me on. For you to write a story, you have to follow your zing, not mine or your friend's or your mentor's.

The trick is finding your zing and then sharing your zing with people who have similar tastes.

Where to find zing

There are a few places where I seem to find TONS of zing. Maybe they'll be productive for you.

Source 1: Other stories

I get an unlimited supply of ideas from other stories. Here are a number of sources.

- The news
- History
- Friends and acquaintances
- My past
- Strangers
- Scripture

- Gossip
 - Fairy tales
 - Poems
 - Movies
 - TV programmes (fiction and non-fiction)
 - Summaries of actual court cases
 - Novels
 - Magazines
 - Biography
- Interviewing a relative or friend for their life story

Source 2: Snippets of life

Every week I run across interesting conversations, lines, facts, events, images, and people. These things aren't stories but they can be used to enhance or generate one. In fact, part of the joy of writing is finding ways to incorporate the cool things I encounter into the current story. There are many places where I find these snippets of life:

- People I know or talk to
- Science
- History
- Poetry
- The Discovery Channel and its many cousins
- How-to books, videos, tapes
- Current or historical issues
- Books on how people used to live
- Photographs of other lands and cultures
- People I see (The hero of my *Writer's of the Future* story was based on a transient I picked up one night who lived in a storage space at the town's used bicycle shop)

- Learning about other people's professions
- Trying new things

Source 3: Research



This is just another way of coming across stories, facts, events, people, and trying new things, but it's more directed.

- Do it
- Visit it
- Talk to those who have done it or been there
- Watch movies about it

Read about it, starting with Juveniles & Encyclopaedias and then moving to thicker texts

When I moved up into the hinterlands of Utah, I found out they had an annual local testical festival. As a regular joe I might have gagged and moved on. As a zing hunter, I couldn't afford to do that. No, they do not taste like chicken. They do taste like something many people find delicious. But I'll let you identify what that is with a little research of your own.

When you get a chance to try something new—try it. You get marvellous details, wonderful ideas. And you just might find you enjoy life a little bit more. Or at least be grateful you're not trapped in a coffin.

"I was writing a scene for one of my books, where a secondary character accidentally locks himself in a casket. Not having experienced such a tragedy, I began winging that thread on imagination alone. But the scene simply wouldn't jell. When I finally finished the first draft and read it, it felt two-dimensional. So I wrote it again. It still stank. By the third draft my frustration level had peaked, and I shoved my chair away from the computer, knowing there was only one solution to this two-dimensional problem. I would have to experience it. Now you would think a logical person would take into consideration that the number of readers who'd actually been trapped in a casket was minimal enough to make the whole issue moot. Then again, we're talking about a rational person...I'll tell you, I've pulled some crazy stunts before, all in the name of research, but this one ranks in the top three." ~

Deborah LeBlanc

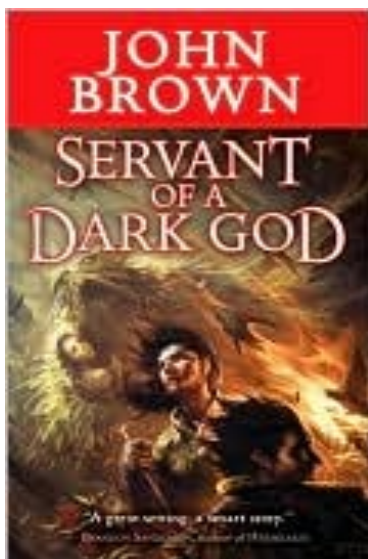
Nobody can copyright an idea or technique

Don't worry about stealing ideas from someone else or using a technique you find in another story. Don't worry that something's already been done. What you want to avoid is copying the writing. But take any idea or technique and run with it—in your own direction. Remember: *The Terminator* & *Back to the Future* have the same premise but are two totally different stories. So go wild.

Be a hunter.

Capture the zing.

Start gathering your writing material today.



In March's H2H John will talk about "the six core parts" to "building a story from scratch: Genre, Character, Setting, Problem and Plot, and Text." So bring along your Zing and John will help you start turning it into a Best Seller...

Go confidently In the direction of your Dreams. Live the life you've imagined.
- Unknown

John Brown is an award-winning novelist and short story writer. *Servant of a Dark God* is the first in his epic fantasy series published by Tor Books. The series is set in a world where humans are enslaved by creatures of immense power. Other forthcoming novels in the series include *Curse of a Dark God* and *Dark God's Glory*. Brown currently lives with his wife and four daughters in the hinterlands of Utah where one encounters much fresh air, many good-hearted ranchers, and an occasional wolf. His agent is Caitlin Blasdel of

<http://www.lizadawsonassociates.com/>
Find a transcript of Brown's remarks at the American Librarian Association (ALA) conference in Chicago here: <http://www.SpeculativeFiction.GatewayDrugs.&Literacy>.
Get press releases, high-quality images, and links to interviews in the [Newsroom](#).

Magic Formula for Plotting

With Susan Meier



Hi! I'm Susan Meier, author of **almost 50 books for Harlequin and Silhouette* (I'm under contract for all 50 and should write book 50 this summer.)

I'm giving a workshop called *Can This Manuscript Be Saved in March for your chapter*. So when Viv contacted me for an article on the "magic" formula for plotting, I thought it would be fun to give you both the "magic" formula and a taste of the workshop coming up!

So here's Lesson 4 of *Can This Manuscript Be Saved AND a magic formula for plotting!*

Enjoy...susan

Lesson 4 Scene Problems - Action, Reaction, Decision, The Magic Formula for Plotting

The purpose of a scene is to illustrate a plot point or journey step.

Plot points, as described by some pundits, are the major points of the story, sometimes called turning points.

Journey steps (which are what I prefer to work with) are ALL the steps it takes (the "this happened then this happened then this happened") to take hero and heroine from who they are in chapter one, the introduction of terrible trouble, to who they are in the happy ending.

That definition is structured as it is to help you keep in mind that your characters must grow because of the journey!

Jack Bickham and Dwight Swain give us a magic formula for coming up with both plot points and journey steps by telling us that every action breeds a reaction and every reaction breeds a decision and every decision should spur the characters into taking an action.

So the magic formula for figuring out "what comes next" is:

action
reaction
decision
action
reaction
decision.

That is why you start your book with an inciting incident or ACTION. That starts the chain reaction that literally becomes your book.

Like this:

There's a fire in the barn (action). The horses die (reaction -- sometimes also

called a consequence). The hero decides he's had enough (decision). He leaves town (action).

So, how does this relate to a rejection because your book is slow, boring, or paced poorly? (And how does this help you "save your manuscript"?)

Take your list of scenes for your book, write each on a post it, put the post-its on a piece of poster board (in order and separated by chapter) and you'll understand.

This is called a storyboard. If you've ever heard the term and wondered--mystery solved.

First off, every scene must have a journey step. If any of your scenes don't have a journey step (a step in the characters' journeys) then they aren't necessary! And this results in rejections from editors that say things like your book was slow, convoluted, episodic, poorly paced. (Ouch!)

Second, if all your scenes have a journey step, if they are all necessary and if they all make sense, they will show a coherent list of actions breeding reactions, which cause characters to make decisions, which lead back to actions.

If they don't, your book may read as episodic (again) convoluted (stop covering your eyes. I know this is painful but in the end you'll be glad you heard all this) and/or slow/boring.

So if you've got a sequence of events that makes sense and flows with action, reaction and decisions (taking into consideration additional steps for the character arcs of story threads) and the book was nonetheless rejected then you've either written weak scenes -- scenes that illustrate journey steps but in a frivolous, boring or downright stupid way. (Ouch! Damn it, Susan, stop hurting us!) Or you've taken too much time in each scene -- the scenes themselves ramble -- or are unfocused.

Bottom line: You've either poorly illustrated your journey steps with wishy-washy scenes. Or the length of your scenes is wrong. Or you've written something as a scene when a paragraph or a sentence would have sufficed.

If you take the example above. . . There's a fire in the barn, the horses die, the hero decides he's had enough,

he leaves town. Each of those four journey steps could be a scene. But depending on the type of book you are writing, some of them could be pages, paragraphs or even sentences.

i.e. If the book opens with a long dramatic scene wherein the hero fights the fire trying to save the horses, if he doesn't get the barn door open before the roof collapses, does he really have to take a head count to know the horses died?

Nope. And as a writer you don't need to say much more than "When the roof collapsed, Jake knew his dreams had also collapsed. There was no way even one of his prized dancing show horses had survived and no way he was getting into the circus." **Paragraph.**

Or after a long, dramatic scene, you could simply say, "Watching the roof collapse, Jake knew his horses were dead." **Sentence.**

We get in the information that the horses died. But we don't need to belabor the point. We most certainly don't want to bore readers. And we don't want to lose the "tight" feel of our story. So, we use a paragraph or a sentence and the information is in without losing momentum.

But what if you wanted the reader to feel the hero's despair? What if his despair over losing the horses was as important to the story as the loss itself?

Well, if it was germane to the story to have the readers take a walk through the charred ruins with our distraught hero, then go for it!

My point is that each journey step needs to be illustrated in the best way for your particular story. Not my story. Not even because writing sad scenes is your strong suit. Each journey step should be illustrated in the way that best suits its place and purpose in the story.

But that also works in the reverse. You **CAN'T** reduce the most important, most dramatic journey steps to one line or a quick descriptive paragraph or page! Or (as in a book I just read) you can't tell the most dramatic "steps" after the fact.

For instance, in the book I just read, the author ended a scene with the "hook" of an impending attack, promising an ensuing battle. Yet when we turned the page, everybody was back on his or her horse, having resumed their journey, without the characters who had died, all of them tired, grieving the loss of great fighters and

(Continued on page 8)

wishing the battle had turned out differently.

We **MISSED** the best part of the book because she used this format -- telling us about the battle after the fact -- leaving us feel, well, deprived. We didn't participate! Sure, the scene "appeared" to be emotional. We understood the characters' grief and felt it. But two major characters died in that battle. I would have liked to have seen that! Not that I'm a ghoulish, but I knew they were people of honor so their deaths had meaning. But I didn't get to see that honor. I got to see the surviving characters being sad afterward. But I didn't get to see the real heart of the story. These brave characters **DYING** for what they believed in.

That's where you want to be milking the dramatic potential!

believe what separates the truly great writers from the mediocre is the ability to place scenes, the ability to write dramatic scenes and the ability to know when a journey step should be a scene, a paragraph or a sentence.

I have friends who tell me. Well, typically I write six-page scenes. So if I'm writing a 100,000-word, four-hundred-page single title, I know I need 67 journey steps...67 scenes. Because $67 \times 6 = 402$. And I just smile. I know that author doesn't understand pacing or drama. A more dramatic scene might need more than six pages. or it might be it's most dramatic at fewer pages than six and some journey steps might have more impact as a well constructed sentence!

If your book has been rejected because it's slow, take a look at that storyboard I asked you to create and see if there aren't journey steps that can be combined. See if there aren't scenes that could be shortened. Or see if some scenes are being skimmed that should be dramatic! Have you made the maximum use of the potential drama of every scene?

As you're going over your scenes, you should notice a couple of things. First, if the "real" drama of a book is the change in the hero from a bad ass to a strong, caring human being then those scenes wherein he makes the discoveries that cause him to change **MUST** be well-

written. In fact, they could be some of your longest, most important scenes.

However, if you're milking **EVERY** darned journey step about his metamorphosis, you may be shortchanging the external conflict and its resolution. Worse, you may also be writing a book that seems to be hitting one note.

But... you say... those journey steps are essential! **EVERY** journey step should be essential, but some simply have more dramatic potential -- based upon their importance to the story. Trim the less powerful down to shorter scenes, or, better yet, incorporate them into other scenes.

If, for instance, if you're writing a romantic suspense and your hero must do something unexpectedly kind like pet a dog because it's the heroine's first notice that deep down inside he's a nice guy and you have an entire scene devoted to that dog, then readers may yawn...or say, "What the heck is this?"

But if the hero and heroine are on their way to the bank to confront the villain, and when they get out of their car they discover a dog chained to a parking meter and the dog is caught in his chain, and the hero not only stops to free the dog, he also comforts him with a few pats on the head and maybe accepts a wet doggie kiss, causing the heroine to see he's not so bad, then they walk into the bank and confront the villain. Well, then the book not only flows more smoothly, your scene is also doing double duty. And inserting the dog also fits. It doesn't look out of place or contrived.

You will also find this is true with backstory. If the hero needs to discover the heroine was abused and he makes the discovery sipping tea with her aunt...that might be cute. And it also might fit, depending on your story.

BUT...

If he makes the discovery when they are questioning a suspect in the murder case they are investigating together and the suspect says she didn't kill the dead guy. She's acting suspicious because she was raped by her boyfriend the night before and now here she is being questioned about something she didn't do and to calm the suspect (who probably needs counseling) our heroine admits that she

was raped once too, shocking the hero who thought the heroine's life was perfect then the dramatic potential skyrockets, and also the scene does double duty. Eliminate a suspect, learn something about heroine. Double duty.

The trick, again, is to know your story. Know what you're trying to accomplish and figure out the best way to accomplish it. The best way to write your scene!

What's your assignment? I would like you to skim-read (meaning: read really fast) your current WIP or a book that was rejected and as you're reading take post-its and mark every place that the book slows down, is boring, doesn't make sense. whatever. Don't try to change anything. Just mark places that jog you out of the world you were supposed to be creating. Or places where you yawn. Or places even where you wonder why you wrote so much narrative.

By the way, if it isn't painful to read a rejected book through, looking for slow down spots, then give yourself a mental shake, because you're probably not reading honestly. Or you're making excuses. Do not make excuses. Don't say: I know this is slow, but, if it's slow, mark it as slow!

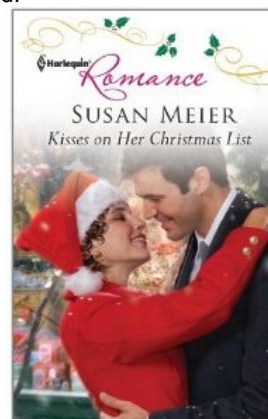
The trick to growing as an artist is truth. You must learn to read objectively. Sure, you like your book-- but, honestly, will strangers?

Use this pass through as an exercise of honesty. Is your book really good? Are those scenes really well written? Are they necessary? Could some things be combined?

As you're reading your manuscript, I also want you to go back to the post-it note storyboard I had you create before and -- in the corner of the post-it for each scene put the number of pages the scene took up. If the scene was six pages, put the number six in the lower right-hand corner. If it was two, mark down two.

If you didn't do the post-it/storyboard exercise, do it. You may be very surprised.

susan meier.



Can this manuscript be saved? is being offered to RWNZ members at the special rate of NZ\$10, and non-members can register for NZ\$25. Registration is now open on the RWNZ website (<http://www.romancewriters.co.nz/workshops-2>). DON'T WAIT ANY LONGER: SIGN UP NOW

If you really want to do something, you'll find a way. If you don't, you'll find an excuse.

- Jim Rohn

You must want to enough. Enough to take all the rejections, enough to pay the price of disappointment and discouragement while you are learning. Like any other artist, you must learn your craft-then you can add all the genius you like.

- Phyllis A. Whitney

This Year I WILL...



Maggie Toussaint invites us to set goals for 2012 and resolve to keep them.

The start of a new year is often when many writers reflect on their progress. Whether we're beginning writers or multi-published authors, goal-setting can help motivate us onward. Perhaps one of these six goals will be your new year's resolution:

I WILL FINISH THE BOOK. There is no shortcut to this basic goal. You must serve time in the chair to up your word count. Granted, writing isn't just about how many pages you can churn out, but that's a good place to start. Write the book.

I WILL LEARN HOW TO WRITE BETTER. If completing a book seems impossible, take time to learn more about the craft of writing. Chapter meetings offer excellent nuts and bolts sessions, as do writer conferences and classes. With the touch of a computer key, you can navigate across the web and find online instruction without leaving the comfort of your home. Build your skills.

I WILL ENTER A WRITING CONTEST. Contests can be helpful in identifying rookie errors. If you want to hone your work before you submit to a publisher, a writing contest can provide valuable feedback. Alternately, a critique partner or a published author mentor can also shepherd you toward your goal. No one will laugh at you. Everyone has the same fear of failure and rejection. Learn to deal with

these feelings now because they come into play for published and unpublished authors. Get feedback on your work.

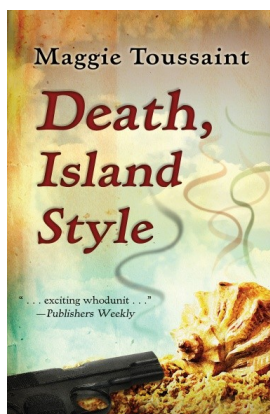
I WILL GET AN AGENT OR A BOOK CONTRACT. Put aside those excuses of last year. Target your goal and make a serious run at it. Create a spreadsheet of places and people where you can send your book. Send out a steady stream of queries and track your progress. Get busy right now.

I WILL MARKET MY BOOK. Authors today have to multi-task. They have to write the next book, edit the contracted book, and promote the released book. Send out those press releases. Schedule interviews and appearances. Arrange book signings. Those books won't sell themselves. Being an introvert is no excuse. Get up and get going.

I WILL GET A BETTER DEAL ON MY NEXT BOOK. No matter where you are on the publication ladder, you want to grow your fan base and parlay that into better contract offers. Maybe you need to switch to a more aggressive agent or a different publishing house. Don't let friendship or fear of failure hold you back. Take a serious look at your writing career and take the necessary steps to reach your goals. Be objective about business matters.

Think about where you'd like to be by this time next year. Make a plan to get there. Implement the plan. You can do it, one-step at a time.

This article first appeared in the Winter 2008 Coastal Connection, the newsletter of First Coast Romance Writers



Maggie Toussaint

Formerly an aquatic toxicologist contracted to the U.S. Army and currently a freelance reporter, Southern author Maggie Toussaint is published in mystery and romance. Her romantic suspense titles include *House of Lies*, *No Second Chance*, *Muddy Waters*, and *Seeing Red*. Her debut release, *House of Lies*, won Best Romantic Suspense in the 2007 National Readers Choice Awards. Her mysteries include *In For A Penny* and *On the Nickel*, with *Death, Island Style* and *Murder in the Buff* contracted for release in 2012. Visit her at www.maggietoussaint.com and at <http://mudpiesandmagnolias.blogspot.com/>.

Check in again with Maggie in March's H2H where she will give us seven steps to polish the sparkle into our manuscripts.

Have you ever thought about volunteering as a judge for one of RWNZ's great contests but been put off because you weren't sure about the judging process? Are you already a judge but would like a bit of a refresher? Well, we have the answer for you. RWNZ **Judge Training Scheme** is now underway. By enrolling in the scheme, not only will you receive some great guidelines on how to score, what to score, what to look for and what not to look for, but you'll also get a chance to study some pre-judged samples to see how it's done. After that, it will be your turn to have a go at judging a sample piece of writing in a non-competitive environment and you'll get feedback to let you know how you went. So, how about it? Ready to give it a go?

If so, then email the Judge Training Coordinator at - rwnzjudgetraining@gmail.com

Are You Invisible?

By Maggie Toussaint

Tired of being invisible? Here's a practical solution. Write an article for your chapter newsletter. After you finish reading this, you'll want to get started right away. Here's why:

Writing Sharpens Your Skills. Crafting articles about the writing profession forces you to focus on your subject material. It helps define and perfect your strategy for the art of story crafting. Every time you sit down to write, you flex creative muscle. Just as athletes practice to improve their skills, writers must write to reach and maintain peak performance levels. Empowered writing increases reader interest and improves the likelihood of publication.

Shared Experiences Bring Fellowship. Through sharing your writing journey with others, you lessen the sense of isolation within this solo profession and build camaraderie. Like a candle shining in the darkness, an article can bring inspiration and hope to those who struggle with similar issues. Fellow authors hunger for details from those overcoming hurdles, those just published, those building a name for themselves, and especially from those at the top of the heap.

Articles Cure What Ails You. It's admirable to write about things you do well. But, if you go one step further and write about subjects that give you fits, you might come up with

solutions to formerly insurmountable obstacles. Writing about your weaknesses helps you focus on what needs to be changed in your writing and is instrumental in devising solutions. Got a problem with integrating setting into the flow of your story? Research the problem, write about it, and before you know it, you'll be following your own advice.

Publication Reinforces the Dream. Writing is what we do. It is an affirmative response to our unrelenting urge to tell stories. Newsletter publication won't suddenly transform you into a literary guru, but it does build confidence that you can do this. Your article can be the first step to opening many doors in the publishing business. Best of all, your published article is a valuable highlight on your writing bio.

Articles Build Name Recognition. Let's face facts. Name recognition drives book sales. Your newsletter article will be in front of your chapter members, available to internet surfers who visit the chapter website, and available to every RWA newsletter editor through posting on an editor email link. These editors may choose to reprint your article or forward it to a chapter email loop. One article may seem like a small stone in a big pond, but the ripples that occur can be far reaching.

Editors Need Submissions. There is a high demand for chapter member articles. Chapter newsletter editors want to feature and promote their members. Each newsletter issue brings with it the demand for new material. The good news is that the incidence of rejection of newsletter articles is relatively low. Send that article in and chances are, you'll have a publication pending. Newsletter editors need article writers.

The Sky Is The Limit. A brief bio runs with each newsletter article. Included in this bio are titles of your upcoming or recent books, contest wins, or website contact information. You might also consider becoming a regular columnist. Several columnists from different chapters have developed niche columns (on market news, research, contest opportunities, etc.) that are in such high demand that they are published simultaneously in multiple newsletters every month. **Believe me, these folks are very visible.**

There you have it. Seven compelling reasons to craft that article you've been thinking about. Writing newsletter articles builds self-confidence and raises skill level. It gives you immediate visibility. Get your name out there and see if your fiction doesn't start attracting more attention.

This article first appeared in the October 2004 Update, newsletter of the Washington Romance Writers.



potential MARKETS with P.D.R. Lindsay-Salmon

1. Title: 'L&L Dreamspell'

Deadline: When filled. Check at the website.

Eligibility: any writer.

Seeking: 3,000 to 6,000 word stories written loosely around the anthologies' themes.

Payment: \$10 advance plus a share of 50% of the net royalty on e-book sales

Guidelines: <http://lldreamspell.com/Guidelines.htm>;

Email: Submissions@lldreamspell.com;

Website: <http://lldreamspell.com>;

2. Title: 'Women on Writing'

Deadline: none

Eligibility: any writer

Seeking: articles on women and writing

Payment: via Paypal, is US\$50, \$75 or \$150 for the feature article, for First Electronic Rights **Guidelines:** <http://wow-womenonwriting.com/contact.php>

Email: submissions@wow-womenonwriting.com;

Website: <http://wow-womenonwriting.com>;

3. Title: 'Nookie Notes'

Deadline: as the anthologies are filled.

Eligibility: any writer

Seeking: 1st POV, 1,000 to 3,000 words, heterosexual erotica, nothing too heavy or way out

Payment: US\$25 per story, although payment is negotiable

Guidelines: <http://www.nookienotes.com>; sign in to get them.

(Continued on page 16)



Writing 4 Success

"do what makes your heart sing"

Wondering How to KICK START Your ROMANCE NOVEL? Marg McAlister gives us the plan...

Over the many years that I've been mentoring writers, I've realised that one of the biggest hurdles is actually getting started. After that, the question becomes "How can I motivate myself to *keep* writing on a regular basis?"

Well, guess what? Motivation only lasts a short time. Ongoing success comes from forming new habits: finding the determination to establish a routine and then sticking to it.

Now let me ask you this: how often have you felt that you'd finally finish that book... if only you could shut yourself away from the world with nothing to do but write?

How often have you blamed your family, or your job, or your health, for not being able to write as often as you want? How often have you berated yourself about your lack of motivation, wishing you could wave a magic wand to generate more enthusiasm?

None of these outside influences are really to blame. Yes, they might be part of the story – but the truth is, success in achieving any goal is all about a single-minded focus on what you want. It's about establishing a system and sticking to it. It works for losing weight – and it works for writing a book.

This **Kick-Start Program** is all about establishing a workable system. It offers guidelines that you will need to adapt for yourself. Everyone has different circumstances; different challenges. Setting up a workable system that will help you achieve your writing goals is not easy – but it is incredibly worthwhile.

Remember, writers don't just think about writing. They don't just talk about writing. They sit down...

...and WRITE.

You can do it too!

Click the **LINK** below to download your **44-page KickStart Program for Writers**. (Click the **RIGHT** mouse button to choose a place to save it to your own computer.) **You'll find that it works wonders no matter what you're writing... including, of course, that best-selling romance!**

http://www.writing4success.com/Rom_KP_MC



Marg McAlister started up her original writing business (*Word Dynamics (NSW) Pty Ltd*) over twenty years ago, then also began trading as *Writing4Success* when she set up a website for writers in 2001.

Marg is the author of five correspondence courses now marketed by Cengage in Australia. Those courses are: *The Professional Romance Writer's Course*, *The Professional Children's Writer's Course*, *The Professional Crime and Suspense Writer's Course*, *Writing Non-Fiction That Sells* and *How To Write a Bestseller*.

Marg also uses her writing skills and background to create e-books and products in a number of different areas as part of the online business she runs with her husband Rob. She spent 2 years working part-time as an eLearning consultant and technical writer for a large multinational company.

A writer who wears many hats, Marg has written fiction and non-fiction for both adults and children. She was on the Committee of Romance Writers of Australia for four years, and has run workshops at various RWA National Conferences.

The author of more than 60 books for children, she has written short stories for school magazines and numerous short non-fiction pieces for educational publications.

Her work targets a wide age range and includes picture books, short books for children with reading difficulties and mysteries for older children. For 5 years, she was part of the Charles Sturt University (Mitchell) Enrichment Program, teaching creative writing to talented children. She has also been a regional judge for the Nestlé Write Around Australia competition.

As for advice on plotting and technique... Kathryn Fox, the Australian writer whose sales in the UK finally knocked *The Da Vinci Code* off its perch, has this to say about Marg's contribution to her writing: "Without doubt, Marg McAlister is the best writing teacher and mentor any writer could hope for. I'd recommend her courses to anyone wanting to improve their writing."

Follow Marg's Kickstart Programme, and her articles in H2H in March, April, and May, and you'll be well on your way to entering 2013's Clendon. Watch this space:...surprise coming...lips sealed 'til May!...



THE KICKSTART PROGRAM



"Diana and Kris - off to start arranging their USA tax numbers."

DIY its time has come

Kris Pearson shares how she and fellow RWNZers are successfully negotiating the brave new world of **self-publishing**.

How times have changed. A few years ago 'self-published' was almost a derogatory description. ("Oh, she can't get a proper agent or editor, so she's self-published.") Of course there were exceptions to this. People who had experience of publishing could safely guide their books through the process. RWNZ member Lyn Rasmussen started the magazine 'New Zealand Pig Hunter' and saw it through the first seven years of its life, so she was well-able to publish print books. She launched two outdoor-interest books written by her partner, and right now she's reformatting these, plus later ones previously published by Reed. They'll soon all be self-published on Amazon, but her successful novella "The Duke's Blackmailed Bride" is available through The Wild Rose Press because she's found her editor's input invaluable.

And there's always been a place for the 'print-on-demand' companies. You've written a family history you'd like to share around the rellies? Or a book of poetry as a unique Christmas gift for friends? A print-on-demand (or POD) company is your answer. For a set fee they'll take your computer file, design you a simple cover, and provide you with X printed copies for X dollars.

I'd like to slip in a story here about my elderly friend Jo, whose husband started writing a book. He died long before he'd finished it. Jo decided to complete the job – having never written anything in her life. She toiled away for ages, got totally caught up in it, changed the storyline completely, did a painting for the cover, and approached First Edition here in Wellington with her rollicking, un-PC and somewhat unlikely tale. They not only produced the book, but arranged a book launch in a local store, an interview in one of the suburban papers, and got copies into Whitcoulls. Jo sold enough to cover her costs, and make money!

But these days, when we think self-publishing we're most likely thinking e-books for e-readers – the magic devices like Kindle, Nook, Kobo, Sony E-reader, and iPads - which are changing the face of publishing and reading at an astonishing rate. It's not hard to be part of this revolution; all you require is a good book and an eye-catching cover. (We'll leave the self-promotion for a minute.)

To sell your e-books on Amazon, you need to publish with them. They have clear guidelines on how to format your book for Kindle. But you can also list through other e-book sellers like Smashwords, Barnes and Noble, Diesel Books, Sony and iTunes. Different formatting is required for different e-readers. Smashwords has a long but very well-written guide.

Self-publishing will cost you very little, unless you want to get your book professionally edited or require a cover to be designed. RWNZ member Kura Carpenter is a graphic artist and she's happy to take commissions. You can find her at kjane.carpenter@gmail.com. Her words of advice – 'You can't judge a book by its cover, but you can judge a cover by its sales'. Maybe we have other graphic artists in our organisation? Make yourself known on the loop if so because this is a growing industry.

Having an advertising background, I've loved helping to design my own simple covers – searching the photo sites like dreamstime, romancenovelcovers, bigstockphoto and so on for just the right shot...choosing the fonts, and getting things arranged the way I want them. You need some sort of publishing programme to do this. Remember that the covers will be shown at reduced sizes so they must be clear and eye-catching. And on some advertising sites and top-seller

lists they're tiny. I'm looking at AmazonUK's listings for their most popular contemporary romance ebooks during the first week of January as I write this. Diana Holmes and I both have books listed and nicely visible. The covers are barely postage-stamp size.

So why would you self-publish? Because you just might strike it lucky like Amanda Hocking did. After approaching more than 50 agents and getting no interest, she self-published her Trylle trilogy at 99cents per book. The books developed one heck of a following; cue a two million dollar deal with traditional publisher St Martin's Press, including movie rights. We can all dream of such success....

A lot of very well-known print authors are now re-publishing their backlists as e-books. And their new titles as well. As Daphne Claire says in her Christmas newsletter, 'It's normal for a printed book to take from a year to two years from being accepted by the publisher to getting onto bookshop shelves. And publishers increasingly ask their authors to publicise their own books. Internet-savvy authors may decide they're doing much of the work publishers used to do, and it's not so difficult to meet e-book standards, so why not do it themselves?'

A further consideration is that e-books are alterable. If something in your book starts to bug you, or reviews draw attention to an oopsie, you can switch the cover, add a new plot element, alter the heat level, change the ending, swap the name of one of your characters... Your book simply disappears from view while you upload the new version.

Realistically, authors who have a public profile and a number of existing books are the ones who'll have the most success. A case in point is RWNZ member Cathy Sneyd, who posted a wonderful message on the loop at New Year. Well established as erotica-writer Leda Swann and Kate Silver, she decided self-publishing would allow her to write whatever she wanted, to her own timeframes, and that she'd enjoy being boss of all facets of her books. 'So I gradually got back the rights to my old novels and started posting them on Amazon, not really expecting much. Royalties started trickling in at about \$60 - \$120 a month.' Cathy had co-written a teen book, "Blood Shattered", with

(Continued on page 13)



her eldest daughter and wanted to make a success of that as much for daughter Alice as herself. 'So in early December I started experimenting with prices, with covers, and did a bunch of stuff to market them. Just got my updated royalties for the last six weeks – and my publishing venture earned me over \$12,000! Everything but \$50 was made in the last three weeks.'

Bronwen Evans is another who'll soon be self-published, riding on the success of last year's Kensington Brava novel "Invitation to Ruin". To promote her April release "Invitation to Scandal", she plans to self-publish a Regency historical novella, "To Dare the Duke of Dangerfield". This will make use of the extensive contacts she's built up in the last year, and is being done with the blessing of her agent and editor. She has another couple in the pipeline, too.

Then we have people like Diana Holmes and myself – who have done well in competitions, submitted partials to Harlequin for years, waited for months, been asked for the fulls, waited for more months, and eventually been turned down but invited to submit new stories. I've been told by different senior editors that my heroes are not alpha enough – and that the last one was *too* alpha. Sigh. Our books were deemed not suitable for Harlequin's somewhat regimented categories, and our patience finally ran out. Diana writes as Diana Fraser, ("The Italian's Perfect Lover", and "The Sheikh's Bargain Bride"), and I write as me.

I'm uploading re-edited books I wrote for past Clendon Awards, two of which were finalists. So far I have "Seduction on the Cards", "The Wrong Sister", and an anthology of five of my already-published short stories up. "Taken by the Sheikh" goes up tonight (I'm writing this on Jan 10).

Maree Anderson has three titles self-published – "Ruby's Dream", "The Crystal Warrior" and "Freaks of Greenfield High" – which were also written for the Clendon.

We're having fun. We're learning as we go. We're trying different things to promote the books. Cody Young has listed "The Lady and the Locksmith" as a permanent free deal to fuel the sales of her other books. More than 45,000 copies of The Lady have now been downloaded, and it continues to fly off the electronic 'shelves' at around a thousand every week. Cody reckons about one in fifty free downloaders come back to buy. She's even getting fan-mail these days. She warns that free books can attract some less-than-favourable reviews though (which she finds lead to a definite rise in sales!)

Speaking of reviews, these are an integral part of the success of many books. The better the reviews, the further Amazon's algo-

rithms move your title up the ratings. And naturally it's the ones that rate best which sell best. Feel free to click anyone's 'like' button at the top of their page, to leave a review, to tick the tags further down if you find them helpful. You need to be an Amazon customer to do this, but it doesn't seem as though you need to have bought the books. It's all part of the game.

I've taken part in a Kindle promotion

called Select. They promote one book for five chosen days during the next ninety – and price it free. 4000 were downloaded on New Year's Eve, so there's my name in a lot of people's Kindles. It was hard not to think of \$2.99 multiplied by 4000 that I wasn't going to get – but over the next two days I sold more than 400 at 70% royalty. It's still doing well, and I still have three free promotion days up my sleeve. The book has to be exclusive to Amazon for the ninety days – a ploy to stop authors also publishing with Barnes and Noble etc.

My first six weeks' royalties were \$US1052, and as I don't have a pound sign, two hundred and thirty-nine pounds and fifty-two pence. Which converts to close on \$NZ1800 all-up, so I'm mighty pleased.

And so we come to promotion, because there's no publisher waiting to do it for you. Lyn has found Bob Mayer's and Kristen Lamb's blogs great for learning about social media, self-publishing and online marketing. She says Twitter has worked best for her in terms of marketing, and Bron's a dedicated Twitterer, too. Facebook suits some people, blogs do it for others, and websites are a must. Let your prospective readers know what's in the pipeline, what they can expect next. Have them ready and waiting for your up-coming titles. Maybe create a regular newsletter for them, make them feel special. Make them yours.

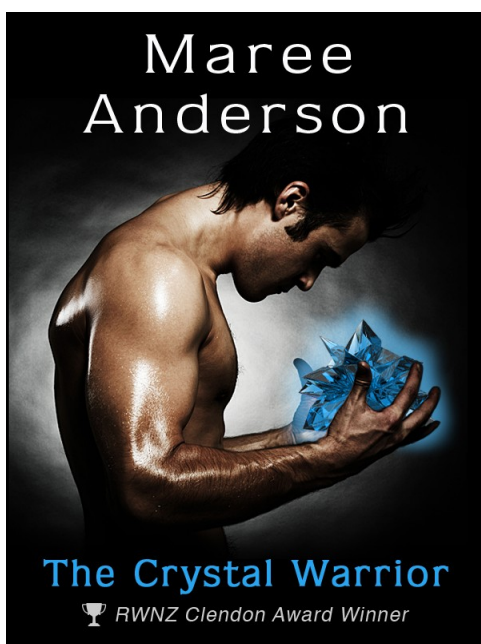
There are whole new industries springing up as a result of the boom in self-publishing. Blog-tour organisers! You can pay for someone to arrange to have you interviewed on a series of blogs where readers of your genre of books hang out. Pirate-chasers! Sadly, piracy of e-books is huge, and so far unstoppable. Hundreds of thousands of stolen books are available cheap or free on a variety of sites. You can pay the pirate-chasers to find them and demand the book is removed. As this often lasts only a day I can't see it's money very well spent.

There are websites dedicated to advertising romance e-books – generally where the authors are expected to pay for the publicity. All Romance eBooks and Super e-Reads are just a couple. But if that's where the readers are looking, why wouldn't you advertise there?

I've only touched the tip of the iceberg in this item, and mentioned just a few of our members who are into this new adventure. Hopefully, in a few months, someone else will update the situation – and introduce more RWNZers who are into DIY and doing well.

Kris has been the Membership Secretary of RWNZ for the past couple of years. If it's fine, her spare time is spent gardening, and if it's wet, she writes. If the writing's going well, the weeds get a bit of extra time to flourish. She's a multi-published short story writer, a double Clendon finalist, and has just embarked on self-publishing her novels.

Heart to Heart loves covers! Send yours (past, present, and future) to Viv, and I'll display them in our 'gallery' when I can.





Vonnie Hughes says *Judging Contests* is personally and professionally rewarding...

Judging Contests: This is a great way to read other people's books for free! More importantly, from a selfish point of view, it is an excellent way to improve your own writing skills. You can think, 'Ooh...that doesn't sound right. I would have put something else there.' Or perhaps you have been asked to judge in a genre you haven't read before. It may open your eyes to see that the genre you were totally uninterested in can be thrilling and challenging. It might even prompt you to try to write in that genre yourself.

Remember you are judging, not critiquing, when you judge the work of others. Don't try to rewrite excerpts in your own style except as a quick example. Contests now are very varied e.g. some ask for an outline and the first chapter; some may want the first 50 pages; some want two columns to a page etc. It is up to the contest co-ordinator to check out if the entry falls within the rules of the contest. As a judge, don't worry about whether the font is one of the required ones; don't nitpick if the writer has a tendency to use capital letters for a particular item that doesn't need capitalizing.

As a judge, your job is to be impartial and also to encourage newbie writers. A handful of kind words will encourage the entrants a lot more than a sharp, negative phrase. I've received some really nice cards and thank-you notes from entrants in the past and I've been thankful that I aimed for constructive criticism e.g. 'You say you are aiming this book at Dorchester. May I suggest that your style is more in keeping with Avon?'

Every year I am one of a big bunch of judges for the STALI (singe title and loving it) and the VPA (the Valerie Parv Award) in Australia. The VPA is intended more for beginners and as a judge I am very conscious that I might put off forever some budding author. At the same time, they need to know that some of their techniques are unacceptable to most publishers so the judge treads a fine line... But these contests have opened the doors for many a budding writer and they are IMPORTANT.

Yes, I find judging very rewarding. Heck, I've derived some of my better ideas out of judging. Something someone has written has lit a flashbulb in my head and I've been able to construct a whole character around that idea. Also, one of the reasons I enjoy judging so much is I like helping people in their work.

Try it and see. As a writer, either published or unpublished, judging is one of the most rewarding things you can do.



Vonnie Hughes, is a New Zealander now living in Queensland. Her latest novel, a romantic suspense/police procedural set in New Zealand, is available now as a paperback from The Wild Rose Press. You can see her background on her website at www.vonniehughes.com. She writes both Regencies and romantic suspense, and she says, "I've been thinking lately of writing a sort of cross-genre historical investigator. Still thinking about it!"

RWNZ CONTEST SCHEDULE 2012

CHAPTER SHORT STORY CONTEST

Closes Friday, 23 March 2012

Final Judge: Gaynor Davies Fiction Editor, English Woman's Weekly

HMB GREAT BEGINNINGS CONTEST

Closes Friday, 20 April 2012

Final Editor Judge: Lucy Gilmour, HM&B

Plus new this year!

Final Agent judge: Jessica Alvarez, BookEnds Literary Agency

STRICTLY SINGLE CONTEST

Closes Friday, 21 September 2012

Final Judge: (To be confirmed)

(All entry information will be available on the website soon)

If you have any questions, contact Viv Constable, Contests Coordinator at

vconstable@xtra.co.nz

Chapter Short Story Contest

This year the contest offers an exciting new opportunity. Gaynor Davies, Fiction Editor of the English Woman's Weekly and the Woman's Weekly Fiction Special has kindly agreed to judge the finalists.

English Woman's Weekly is a well-known publisher of short stories and serials. The stories they look for range across a wide variety of themes and moods such as mystery, humour, relationships and family issues. To give entrants the greatest chance of hooking Gaynor's interest, the contest conditions have been broadened this year to include the above-mentioned themes. But remember, while the stories can incorporate these themes, they must also contain a romantic thread or element.

I think now is also a good time to reflect on the valuable feedback we received from last year's editor judge and perhaps use it to strengthen your entries.

Entrants were encouraged to put a lot of thought into the title they choose before submitting their short stories for consideration. Whether it's a title for a short story or a book, this is your first chance to grab the editor's attention.

Six important points to remember when writing a short story aimed at a magazine are:

1. Keep the title short — three or four words are great.

A title that works for a book might not be an interest-grabber for a reader who is busy flipping her way through the magazine in a waiting room.

The magazine reader wants instant information from the title as to what lies ahead.

Having decided on that attention-grabbing title you now have only 1500 words to tell your story. So be concise! And ways to do this, I hear you ask:

2. Have a clear theme. This is the main idea explored in the story. You don't have a lot of room to expand so keep the story focused. Introduce the tension early and hook your reader.

3. Cover a short time span. Usually the author picks a pivotal event in the character's life that allows room for the character to grow.

4. Don't have a cast of thousands. Two well-developed characters with unique traits are possibly all you'll need.

5. Never underestimate the power of good dialogue — it helps with pace and reveals aspects of your characters emotions.

6. Ensure you reach a satisfying conclusion.

Frances Loo of Chapter has generously agreed to sponsor the contest again this year. So sharpen those pens and you just might win a book voucher or, who knows, maybe even hook an editor's attention...

Please remember to read the entry conditions and submission instructions carefully and take care not to exceed the word count.

If you are in doubt about anything, ask the contest manager.



Contests

Angela Bissell suggests a few international contests

<p>The Sandy (Crested Butte Writers)</p> <p>Deadline: February 12, 2012</p> <p>Eligibility: Unpublished and published authors (entry must be uncontracted). Entries will be capped at 250.</p> <p>Enter: First 20 pages and two-page maximum synopsis for total page count of 22 pages.</p> <p>Fee: US\$35</p> <p>Contact: www.thesandy.org or coordinator@thesandy.org</p> <p>Merritt Contest (San Antonio Romance Authors)</p> <p>Deadline: February 14, 2012</p> <p>Eligibility: Unpublished, or published but not eligible for RWA's PAN membership</p> <p>Enter: First chapter and synopsis (25 pages total including 5-page maximum synopsis)</p> <p>Fee: RWA members US\$30. Non-members US\$35.</p> <p>Contact: www.saranwa.net or sarameritt.coord@gmail.com</p> <p>First Kiss Contest (Romance Writers of Australia)</p> <p>Deadline: February 17, 2012</p>	<p>Eligibility: Unpublished RWAustralia members only</p> <p>Enter: One scene ONLY depicting first kiss between hero and heroine (1,500 words maximum) plus half-page (25 lines) set-up (judged)</p> <p>Fee: Members in Australia A\$22 inc GST. Members outside Australia A\$20.</p> <p>Contact: www.romanceaustralia.com or firstkiss2012@y7mail.com (Kasey)</p> <p>Fabulous Five Contest (Wisconsin RWAmerica)</p> <p>Deadline: March 1, 2012</p> <p>Eligibility: Unpublished within the last five years</p> <p>Enter: First pages up to 2500 words. No synopsis required.</p> <p>Fee: US\$20</p> <p>Contact: www.wisrwa.org</p> <p>Great Beginnings Contest (Utah RWAmerica)</p> <p>Deadline: March 1, 2012</p> <p>Eligibility: Unpublished within the last three years</p> <p>Enter: First five pages of romance manuscript (projected length of at least 50,000 words)</p> <p>Fee: US\$10</p>	<p>Contact: www.utahrwa.com</p> <p>Inspirational Reader's Choice Award Contest (Faith, Hope & Love RWAmerica)</p> <p>Deadline: Entries by March 1, 2012, and books by March 15, 2012</p> <p>Eligibility: Published inspirational writers (refer website for further detail)</p> <p>Enter: Four autographed copies of inspirational romance novel or novella published by RWA-approved publishing house in 2011</p> <p>Fee: Faith, Hope & Love members US\$20. Non-members US\$25</p> <p>Contact: www.faithhopelove-rwa.org</p> <p>More Than Magic Contest (RWI Magic Contests)</p> <p>Deadline: Entries by March 2, 2012, and books by March 7, 2012</p> <p>Eligibility: Published writers</p> <p>Enter: Book-length romance fiction of 40,000 words or more, or novellas of 15,000 to 40,000 words, with copyright date 2011</p> <p>Fee: US\$25-27 per title</p> <p>Contact: rwimagiccontests.wordpress.com or jackie.rwimagic@netscape.com</p>
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potential **MARKETS** with *P.D.R. Lindsay-Salmon*

(Continued from page 10)

Email: info@nookienotes.com;

Website: <http://www.nookienotes.com>;

4. Title: 'Eggplant Literary Productions'

Deadline: none

Eligibility: all writers

Seeking: speculative fiction novellas, 20,000 to 40,000 words, includes all genres of SF, fantasy and horror.

Payment: US\$250 advance + 25% royalty on the list price.

Guidelines: <http://eggplantproductions.com/?p=31>;

Email: submissions@eggplantproductions.com;

Website: www.eggplantproductions.com;

5. Title: 'Shadowfire Press'

Deadline: none

Eligibility: all writers

Seeking: novels, novellas, long and short stories, both romance and erotica

Payment: 40% royalties on the net income

Guidelines: <http://shadowfirepress.com>;

Email: submissions@shadowfirepress.com

Website: <http://shadowfirepress.com>;

6. Title: 'Coffee and Cream Publishing'

Deadline: none

Eligibility: all writers

Seeking: stories 7,000 to 20,000 words, interracial and multicultural romance, for the website **Payment:** US\$2.50 per page, based on a 350 word count per page.

Guidelines: <http://www.coffeewithcreampublishing.com/submissions>

Email: elizabeth@coffeewithcreampublishing.com;

Website: <http://www.coffeewithcreampublishing.com>;

2012

Clendon Award

AKA "Finish The Damn Book!!".

It's time to enter the 2012 Clendon Award (AKA "Finish The Damn Book"), New Zealand's – make that "the world's" – premier romance writing contest.

It's the only contest we know where your **whole book** is judged by every judge ... and depending on how far you get in the contest, that could be up to eight judges (minimum three). What's more, all judges are romance readers, not writers – a network of readers led by Barbara and Peter Clendon, the inventors and wonderful sponsors of the Clendon Award.

The Clendon Award is open only to paid-up members of RWNZ (if you have friends who'd like to enter, now's the time for them to join!). Entrants must be unpublished, uncontracted and unaccepted for print publication or e-publication at the closing date of the competition. Published short stories up to 30,000 words, non-fiction publications, or a fiction publication more than five years previous will not affect eligibility.

So, what do you need to do?

Write your book – yes, the whole thing! We suggest you finish it by February, to give yourself a chance to polish it to publishable standard.

Look out for the entry form in this issue of Heart to Heart, and available on www.romancewriters.co.nz website.

*Send in your manuscript (three copies), your entry form and your \$55 entry fee by the **deadline of Friday, 30th March 2012**. Refer to the entry form for further details.*

Why enter the Clendon Award?

Apart from the fantastic motivation to FINISH THE DAMN BOOK – check out how many authors have sold their first book as a direct result or soon after winning the Clendon: Sophia James, Frances Housden, Helen Kirkman, Bronwyn Jameson, Melissa James, Yvonne Lindsay, Karina Bliss, Abby Gaines – **last year's winner Rebecca Skrabl...** The feedback you'll receive from real readers is unique. Because your whole book gets read, it's not instant death if first chapters don't happen to be your strong point (though we strongly advise you to write the best first chapter you can, of course!)

Your story can be any kind of romance: historical, contemporary, paranormal, young adult, suspense etc. For the purpose of the contest, "romance" is defined as a fictional story which has the development and resolution of a romance between a male and a female as the primary motivation of the plot. A happy ending is mandatory!! Entries deemed "not a romance" will be disqualified, so do make sure your story contains a strong romance.

Unsure which is your best work? You can enter up to three manuscripts in the contest. Manuscript length must fall between 45,000 and 110,000 words.

The finalist entries – at least three of them – will be sent to Mary-Theresa Hussey, Executive Editor at Harlequin in New York for final judging.

In addition to the wonderful chance to have your book read by an editor, the winner will be awarded the coveted Clendon trophy for a year – which brings with it UNLIMITED kudos as the Clendon Winner!

(Based on 2010 Clendon Announcement)

So get those manuscripts polished and send them to Tyree Connor, this year's Clendon Coordinator. If you have any questions don't hesitate to contact her tyreeconnor@xtra.co.nz

Huge thanks to Barbara and Peter Clendon for their vision, passion and on-going incredible support of the Clendon Award – you both ROCK!!



Woos, Hoos, and News

Celebrating our members' achievements.

Email Tyree Connor at rocker.t@extra.co.nz with your successes to be included in this page.

SOLD

Thiloshini Govender w/a T.G. Ayer has made her first sale to Evolved Publishing. "Dead Radiance" is due for release in March 2012.

Faye Robertson has sold "Holly's First Noel" to Entangled Publishing.

Jean Drew signed with The Wild Rose Press for "A Man Like Saxon"

COMPETITIONS

Romance Writers of New Zealand-Strictly Single

Placings

Editor: Alex Logan - Grand Central Publishing.

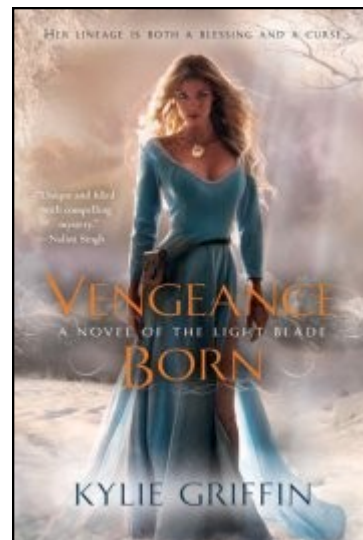
1. Leeann Morgan * Full Requested.
2. Allison Withers
3. Leeann Morgan
4. Michelle De Rooy
5. Michelle De Rooy

Agent: Elaine Spencer - The Knight Agency.

1. Michelle De Rooy.
2. Allison Withers.
3. Leeann Morgan.
4. Leeann Morgan.
5. Michelle De Rooy.

Abby Gaines placed second in the Contemporary Single Title category of the Valley of the Sun Romance Writers 2011 Hot Prospects Contest.

Iona Jones has finalised in the Historical category of the Finally A Bride competition.



Kylie Griffin's "Vengeance Born" is being released by Berkley Sensation.

Decide what you want, decide what you are willing to exchange for it. Establish your priorities and go to work.
- H. L. Hunt

Can This Manuscript Be Saved?

Online Workshop – March 5-April 1, 2012 – Register now!

* This workshop will be run via the RWNZworkshop Yahooogroup

About the Workshop

Rejected? Can't get an agent? Can't sell, even though your critique partners LOVE your work? Susan Meier reviews the seven most common rejection catch phrases and explains why you and even your critique partners can't spot them, then shows how determining whether your book's trouble is a story, scene or word problem is the first step on the road to recovery.

Participants in the **Can This Manuscript Be Saved?** workshop will learn how to "skim-read" their manuscripts quickly, marking specific problems with post-its. Susan also demonstrates how to use a storyboard, a list of twenty and a one-paragraph blurb to create a plan of attack for fixing your book's trouble.

Susan can't revise or rewrite your manuscript for you, but with her tricks you'll not only see how to revise the book of your heart; you'll also see how published authors are able to write four, five and even six books a year without breaking a sweat!

About Susan Meier

Susan Meier is the author of 47 books for Harlequin and Silhouette and one of Guideposts' Grace Chapel Inn series books, *The Kindness of Strangers*. Her books have been finalists for Reviewers Choice Awards, National Reader's Choice Awards and Cataromance.com Reviewer's Choice Awards and nominated for Romantic Times awards. Her book, *HER BABY'S FIRST CHRISTMAS* won the traditional category in the 2009 More Than Magic contest. *THE MAGIC OF A FAMILY CHRISTMAS* is a finalist in the Gayle Wilson Award of Excellence!

Her *Pregnancy Surprise*, her first release for the Harlequin Romance line, made both Walden's Bestseller List for Series Romance and Bookscan. *THE BABY PROJECT*, *SECOND CHANCE BABY*, *A BABY ON THE RANCH*, and *KISSES ON HER CHRISTMAS LIST* are her 2011 releases. Susan loves to teach as much as she loves to write and is a popular speaker at RWA chapter conferences. *Can This Manuscript Be Saved?* and *Journey Steps, No Frills Guide to Plotting!* are her most requested workshops. Her article "How to Write a Category Romance" appeared in 2003 *Writer's Digest* Novel and Short Story Markets. Susan also gives online workshops for various groups and her articles regularly appear in RWA chapter newsletters.

Register online

Can this manuscript be saved? is being offered to RWNZ members at the special rate of NZ\$10, and non-members can register for NZ\$25. Registration is now open on the RWNZ website (<http://www.romancewriters.co.nz/workshops-2>).

RWNZ News Around the Regions

Keeping in touch with each other.



Auckland

Wishing all RWNZ Members the very best for the New Year.

We had forty attendees to our Magic of Romance end of year function at my home on 4 December and wonderful contributions from everyone for the lunch. We enjoyed the magician's performance. Danny Phillips' sleight of hand is legendary.

Barbara Clendon with Nalini Singh gave us magical insight into the readership market and latest publications.

Our first Chapter meeting will be on Saturday 4/02 at 12.30pm as usual at the Three Kings Tennis Club Rooms.

The speaker at this meeting will be Nalini Singh on 'World Building.' Remember to bring a plate of something to share and change for the raffles. Also please bring a gold coin for a donation to our Chapter funds. We have a monthly rental to pay to the Council plus sundry other expenses. Please let me know beforehand of any member successes so I can announce these at the meeting.

Central North (C2C)

The C2C ladies had their final meeting of last year on 4th, 5th and 6th of November at the Presbyterian Camp, on the Awhitu Peninsula. 12 ladies were present. Daphne Clair was the keynote speaker on the Saturday, with Colin Peel, a thriller writer speaking on the Sunday. Both authors are multi-published. Jenny Yates did the 'naughty but nice' (sex) workshop on Saturday night. There were gifts and spot prizes, beach walks, and raffle prizes. The wine flowed freely, as did the laughter, new friendships were formed, and old acquaintances renewed. There were massages and fortunes-told, but the prize everyone coveted was the raffle donated by Jeanne and Hardy Drake - a beautiful amethyst ring and a cut, but unset, amethyst stone. Which were won by Sophie Taylor and Netta Newbound respectively. Of course, there was food to die for! A very successful weekend and a fabulous way for C2C to finish off their 2011 year.

And our first meeting for the 2012 year:

Date: Saturday 18th February. Time: @ 12-00 midday Venue: Hamilton Gardens. Park in either carpark and **meet outside the Hamilton Gardens cafe** at 12-00 with your own picnic lunch basket. Also bring a rug or portable chair and notebook as this will be our annual goal setting meeting. Once all there, we'll proceed to find a suitable tree and set ourselves up to have a picnic in the park and enjoy our first get-together for the year! If wet, there will be a plan B. Please email Gaylene if you are intending to come

Hawkes Bay Please email Ginny Suckling for details of the next meeting.

Wellington

Our Christmas meeting was a long, rambling, far-too-fattening lunch, and everyone outdid themselves on the cooking. We had a really big crowd, and welcomed new member Jane. Some of us remembered to bring three paragraphs to sell our writing, and these were read out for comment. We'll repeat this for the February meeting – keep in mind the wording can be to interest an editor in a novel or a magazine article or short story.

February's meeting will be at Meryl's on Saturday the 4th at the usual time of 1pm. Special guest Gracie Stanners has agreed to present a workshop, so come prepared to learn.

Nelson

Our last meeting for 2011 was December 11 and we made it a Christmas lunch do. But before indulging in good food, we went to the Nelson Cathedral to admire all the Xmas trees on display there. Most of all, of course, we admired our own 'Romance Tree', which this year had an extra touch of the group's published novels & short stories under the tree as our 'pressies'. Cherie's cheeky angel at the top had had a bit of a make-over and got a 'book' in her hands as well.

Then we went to Café Affair for lunch and a toast in iced water for a successful 2011 and wishing each other another one 2012, while we through the open windows could watch the Santa Parade marching by.

Our first meeting for 2012 will not be until everyone is back from holidaying, that is Saturday February 11 at 2pm, Annika's place 63 Golf Rd, Tahuna. Anyone interested in becoming a member of our group is welcome to call Annika, ph: 03 – 548 5561 or email: allan-annika@xtra.co.nz

Christchurch

Low turn out to the December meeting but the writers who attended made lots of plans and commitments for the holiday period. The aim is to write a book in a year, (or less) and there is no better time to start than this month. Come along to the next meeting with your writing or plans.

Monday Feb. the 13th at 7.00 pm at 283 Memorial Ave.

Otago

In December, over a festive brunch, we welcomed Sarah Addison-Rowe to our group. We set February 25th as our date to resume meeting on a two monthly basis. Sarah has just taken over as co-ordinator, so please contact her for details about where and when.

REGIONAL CONVENORS

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Central North (C2C):

Gaylene Atkins

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email: iona.jones@xtra.co.nz

Christchurch: Jill Scott

email: scottss@snap.net.nz

Otago: Sarah Addison Rowe

email: rowefamily3@xtra.co.nz

The Editorial Team would like to correct the following errors in "How To Market Your Book" on page 13 of the December edition:

1. While Rae asked for a repeat book signing at the Village Bookshop in Matakana she did not, in fact, do one.

2. Publicist Sarah Thornton was contracted and paid by Penguin, not Rae.

The Rural Women NZ fundraiser is 'Aftersocks' not 'Aftershocks'.

Rae Roadley can be contacted at her website www.raeroadley.co.nz

the back page

Click Onto This...

with Raina Singh

I see my path, but I don't know where it leads. Not knowing where I'm going is what inspires me to travel it." - Rosalia de Castro

While you were sleeping: the subconscious mind toils over your writing: says Deanna Mascle. <http://www.talewins.com/sleepwriting.htm>

The end of the affair Writer Graham Greene shares how the subconscious mind is instrumental in his writing. <http://www.williamlanday.com/2009/07/08/how-writers-write-graham-greene/>

Mike Reeves McMillan hypnotherapist and health coach asks 8 action takers how they deal with procrastination. Check this out on: <http://hypno.co.nz/blogs/2010/11/16/8-action-takers-tell-us-how-they-deal-with-procrastination/>

Dustin Wax shares the SMART way to set and achieve goals: <http://www.createspace.com/en/community/docs/DOC-1241>



Source : New York Cartoon Prints

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Heart To Heart (H2H) is the official publication of
Romance Writers of New Zealand (RWNZ)
and is published eleven times a year.

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