

HEART TO HEART



ABBY GAINES

Interviewed by Soraya Nicholas



Abby, thank you so much for taking the time to let us know a little more about you and your wonderful books. You have inspired all of us with your many stories! Tell us what you are working on this year...

Your next release with SuperRomance, *The Groom Came Back*, is out in New Zealand in February. What can your readers expect, and what is the story about?

The Groom Came Back is a

marriage of convenience story (one of my favourite hooks!). The hero married the heroine when she was still a schoolgirl, to rescue her from a custody battle, then left town to pursue his rising-star career as a neurosurgeon. Eight years later, he's back in town, looking for a divorce...only his "wife" is no longer a schoolgirl...

Actually, he doesn't even recognise her, which is just the first of many mistakes he makes! As far as the heroine's concerned, he's grown too big for his small-town roots, and she's determined to make him see that his parents need him before she'll sign any divorce papers.

How do you juggle writing for both SuperRomance and Harlequin NASCAR? Do you have the same editor for both lines, and how many books for each do you aim to write each year?

I have two different editors (or three, sort of) – Victoria Curran at Super, and Stacy Boyd for Harlequin NASCAR. Marsha Zinberg, senior editor for special projects, including the NASCAR series, also takes an active editorial interest in those books.

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To join RWNZ's critique partner register, run jointly with RW Australia, email the coordinator Rachel Robinson on rachelrobinson@dodo.com.au

EDITORS' DESK

Well, we're well into 2009 now . . . or at least it feels that way! A new year means different things to different people, but for writers, it's an opportunity to create new goals. A friend once said to me that my goal of "being published by a certain date" was not a positive goal, as it's something I have no control over. A positive goal that we can all achieve through hard work is to perhaps have a partial or full manuscript ready to submit by a set date, or to enter a competition. For me, personally, every year I have a brief moment (or sometimes a few) of telling myself that if I don't sell this year, then it might be time to give up. But then that little part of my brain that pushes me to write, or has characters yapping to me in my sleep, tells me to stop being silly and try harder.

So whatever 2009 means to you, take the time to make some writing goals and make sure you can tick them off by the end of the year. Here's to more sales from our members, and plenty more books from our published ladies.

**Soraya,
Suzanne & Sue.**

(We would like to apologise for the lack of a Member Successes page but the information was never sent to us.)

February Funny

Sourced by Glenda Leader (Foundation member, Auckland Chapter).

Warning, Warning!!

Chinese girl gets 'kiss of deaf'.

Couples are advised to "proceed with caution"

A young Chinese woman was left partially deaf following a passionate kiss from her boyfriend.

The 20-something from Zhuhai in Guangdong province arrived at hospital having completely lost the hearing in her left ear, said local reports. The incident prompted a series of articles in the local media warning of the dangers of excessive kissing.

"While kissing is normally very safe, doctors advise people to proceed with caution," wrote the China Daily.

The doctor who treated the girl in hospital was quoted in the paper explaining what had happened. "The kiss reduced the pressure in the mouth, pulled the eardrum out and caused the breakdown of the ear."

The chorus of warnings was echoed by the Shanghai Daily, which wrote: "A strong kiss may cause an imbalance in the air pressure between two inner ears and lead to a broken ear drum".

The young woman is expected to regain her full hearing within about two months.

PRESIDENT PAT



Welcome to the first Heart to Heart for 2009.

Pat is away with Motorsport for most of January and has asked me to write the President's Report.

Well, it's shaping up to be an interesting year. By now, most of you will be aware of the Executive's late December decision to change our Conference venue from Wellington back to Waipuna in Auckland. This was a difficult choice to make. However, with the toughening economic conditions and having had a chance to review the budgets for the 2009 conference, we felt that it would be in the best interests of RWNZ members to do so.

Please don't think that the Exec is not interested in holding a conference in Wellington. We are. Absolutely. But this year was not a good time to change for many reasons. Our sincere apologies to the Wellington Conference Committee, who put so much heart, energy, and enthusiasm into the venture. Our apologies too to those of you who were looking forward to attending a Wellington conference and had booked accommodation at the Brentwood. Fortunately it is far enough out for you to cancel that reservation and get a refund. If you have booked airfares and incur a transfer fee when changing the flight to Auckland, the Exec has authorised the Conference Committee to deduct the transfer cost of your ticket off your conference fee if a receipt of the transfer costs is given to us. If you have any queries on the above please do not hesitate to contact Pat or me personally and we'll do our best to sort out any problems.

Now, regarding the Waipuna conference. Kris Pearson has more detailed information in her conference article in this issue, but the Conference Committee has decided on the name "Romantic Retreat".

For those who wish to book accommodation at Waipuna our block booking code is RWNZ1808. If you forget the number just quote Romance Writers and they'll find it for you.

The theme for the cocktail party is to be "Leather and Lace," while the Awards Dinner on Saturday night will be "A Touch of Fantasy."

That 'touch of fantasy' theme is most appropriate as our keynote speaker for the conference will be NYT best-selling author and RITA winner Mary Jo Putney. I've just finished reading her book 'The Marriage Spell' and can attest that the lady is a master story-teller. Our agent representative will be Melissa Jeglinski from The Knight Agency. Melissa has an incredibly wide knowledge and experience of the publishing industry. We are thrilled to bits to have both these ladies come and share their expertise with us. We and Australia are still in negotiation with regard to Leslie Wainger joining us too, and will let you know as soon as we hear from HMB.

With the Conference venue changing to Auckland, the Conference Committee is going to need some local input. If you're an Aucklander and would like to help, please email Pat. We need at least two people. The work is not onerous and—besides being fun—it's a great way to learn what actually goes on behind the scenes.

Finally, don't forget the closing date for The Clendon Award entries is 27 February. A request from coordinator Maree Anderson: Please don't courier your entries with a 'signature required'. She can't guarantee to be home to sign and your entry could end up at a depot. Ensure your email address is legible and she'll email you to confirm your baby's safe arrival.

Wishing you happy writing, and many successes in the coming year.

Gracie

Abby Gaines cont.

As for the number of books I aim to write...in 2008, I wrote four books from scratch, plus a few proposals (sample chapters, synopses, etc.). That was too much, though by the end of the year I was writing more productively, so I'm thinking about committing to the same in 2009. I'm currently committed to two NASCAR novellas and two SuperRomances in 2009, so in theory there's room for something else.

Now that you are a multi-published author, what advice do you have for those writing and submitting? What have you learnt along the way?

First up, never stop writing and submitting. You can't sell a book unless you're submitting (and in my opinion, submitting constantly, everywhere. I never expected to sell my first book to SuperRomance, but they bought the first manuscript I sent them).

It's also important to commit to a program of continued professional development – i.e. getting better at what you do. Whether it's attending conferences, doing online classes or reading how-to books, make sure you're always polishing your craft.

Take us back to when you received The Call. How long had you been writing seriously for, how many submissions had you made to Harlequin Mills & Boon, and did you ever consider giving up?

I had been writing nearly six years, by which time I had six completed manuscripts, two nearly completed manuscripts, plus a completed novella in my drawer! I sold the fifth manuscript that I finished.

So I was very far from an overnight success...By the time I had The Call, I'd been rejected by what felt like just about everyone at Harlequin, twice over. I'd had revisions requested on three manuscripts (the last of those being my first sale), but in one case the editor quit, another ms disappeared into the system...you get my drift.

I'd also been rejected by at least couple of dozen agents, some of them multiple times. I'd briefly been represented by an agent, but it became clear almost immediately that we weren't compatible. I'd finalled in several contests over the years (including the Golden

Heart a couple of weeks before I sold), but I'd bombed in many more.

Like everyone, there were moments when the journey to publication seemed too hard to bother with. Certainly if I'd known up front that it would take me so long to sell a book, I'd never have started writing! But once I was on that long road, I never seriously wanted to give up – not for more than half an hour, anyway.

I can tell you that the last few rejections I received didn't register as more than a blip of disappointment – water off a duck's back kind of thing. Maybe, for me, that was the stage I needed to get to before I could sell!

It must have been an exciting time for you, Karina Bliss and Tessa Radley (aka The Tight Four!) when your friend and critique partner Sandra Hyatt sold to Silhouette Desire. Do you all still critique one another's work? If so, has the way you all critique changed from your pre-published days?

Sandra selling during our trip to RWA San Francisco was certainly a career highlight for all of us! I can say with certainty I wouldn't have made the sales I have without the support, guidance and inspiration of these three Wonder Women. Each has her own strengths when it comes to critiquing, and they are all brainstormers extraordinaire. We're very lucky to have found each other.

We do still critique, but much less often than we used to, mainly because we're always rushing to meet a deadline and there's not the chance to send a ms to someone else before the editor wants it. These days, we're more likely to critique just the first chapter, or three chapters, and give feedback about whether the characters are working, whether the story makes sense, etc. But it's a treat when a full ms from one of the others arrives in my inbox, because I love reading their work.

As a SuperRomance author, what advice can you give to others targeting that line? Did you always want to write Supers?

As I said earlier, I had no idea my book would be a fit for SuperRomance. Then Karina sent a manuscript to Super on the advice of another editor, and it occurred to me that her stories and mine aren't a million miles apart, so maybe I should have a go, too.

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E-Publishing Part III

by Angela James of Samhain Publishing

So your book has been accepted

In the past articles, I've talked about the pros and cons of e-publishing, researching and choosing an e-publisher. Of course, the goal was always to find an e-publisher to submit to. And, hopefully, get accepted by. I didn't talk about the submissions process in e-publishing because it's not that different from publishing in general, and because each publisher has their own submissions guidelines and requirements—which you should always read and follow in preparation for submitting.

So now your book has been accepted by an e-publisher and you've been offered a contract. At this point, whether it's your first book or your thirtieth book, you'll want to make sure you read your contract. Let's put this on the table first: a publisher's job is to make money for the company. Your job, the author's job, is to protect your business—yourself. I do not recommend signing any contract without understanding what you're signing, and unless you're an agent or lawyer specializing in publishing moonlighting as an author, it's entirely probable you're not going to understand the entirety of a contract. In traditional publishing, the majority of authors depend on their agents to vet the contract for them, but most authors working in e-publishing don't utilize agents. However, you can hire a literary attorney here in the US, no matter where in the world you live, and have them go over your contract for you. I recommend doing this at least once.

Nonetheless, I know there are any variety of reasons that people might choose not to consult a professional before signing a contract, and while my personal belief is that this is a mistake, especially the first time out, I know it happens more often than not. So let's talk about e-publishing contracts and what you might expect to find in them, things to be cautious of, and what I suggest you shouldn't find in the contracts. Please note that this article is not meant to be substituted for a professional agent or attorney's advice—I'm not an attorney or an agent, and I don't play either on TV—nor is it meant to be a comprehensive examination of contracts. Rather, it is merely an informal look at some of the areas you might want to be aware of in e-publishing contracts, and I hope you will take it in that spirit.

As I stated, the first thing is to read your contract and understand every clause you're signing. You don't want to unintentionally sign an options clause giving that particular publisher first look at every book you write for the next ten years, or sign a clause that gives

don't want to force the publisher into a position where they have to show you the manuscript every time a comma changes, either. That would just be silly.) Every clause in the contract is important, don't skip any because you think they're not. If they weren't important, they wouldn't be there.

Second, find out if the contract is negotiable and...here's the shocking part...be prepared to walk away. Your strongest position of power is going to come from your own personal knowledge that you don't have to sign anything you're not entirely comfortable with. Now, let's be clear, this doesn't mean the publisher is going to give you everything you want. Just because a contract is negotiable it doesn't mean 1) that everything is negotiable or 2) that everything is negotiable to exactly how you want it. What you have to decide is what your deal breakers are. What are you willing to give on, and what must you absolutely have? I find that most publishers will negotiate to a certain extent—but be prepared for those publishers who won't, and have a plan in place for what you're going to do then. Tie yourself contractually to that company? Or be willing to walk away?

One of the things to note is what "outs" are given to the publisher/author? Some things to consider: how long does the publisher have from time of contract to publish your book? Depending on the size of the company, keeping in mind I'm speaking of e-publishing, I would suggest that 18 months from contract to ebook is probably the outside limits of what you should be comfortable with, especially as you earn no money (assuming there has been no advance) until it's released. If they choose not to publish your book, what happens? And when is the book considered out of print? Also, what is the length of the contract? Is it 3 years, 7 years, lifetime and is it negotiable? Does the publisher have reasonable reasons for the length of contract? Length of contract can be especially important if you're writing a series that you later move to another publisher, if you become the next Nora Roberts and want to sell backlist rights, or if you suddenly find religion and become embarrassed about what you wrote in a past life and want to bury it in the nearest pit.

If the publisher is taking more than just ebook rights (audio, print, world, etc) how long do they have to utilize those rights before they revert to you? I think this is especially important for print rights, because those are the rights you're most likely to have the opportunity to sell/use. Pay attention to the length of terms, make sure that you have a way out if the book isn't published in ebook/print in a reasonable time frame. It is not unreasonable to ask for reversion of

the publisher the right to make sweeping editorial changes without your consent (please note that you

rights if a book isn't put into print within a certain period of time—understanding that most companies' print programs do move more slowly than ebook, so 18 months from contract to print is not as likely to happen. Also look to see what outs the publisher has for themselves—keeping in mind that in most contracts, the publisher isn't going to be obligated to publish your book if they feel you have been unable to meet editorial requirements.

I think it's important to mention here that you're signing a legal, binding document and entering into a business relationship with this publisher. If you're not prepared to follow through with the terms of this legal, binding document and feel like down the road, you might find yourself in a position of wanting to no longer be in a position of having a business relationship with the publisher, don't sign it. You're not entering into a friendship, relationship, casual handshake agreement where in a year's time you can decide you're done and expect the publisher to be "nice" and release you from your legal, binding document just because you want and expect them to. Real, professional, business-like publishing doesn't work like that. If you're not ready for the realities of a legal, binding document, don't sign it. Sound harsh? It should, because the consequences of signing something and not being prepared to keep to the agreement can be harsh. Believing that a publisher should dissolve their business interests in you because you want them to is unreasonable, and is unlikely to get you anywhere.

Next, pay. This might be the most important to some. In the contract, be aware of not only what your royalty rates are (gross, net, subsidiary, ebook, print) but also of how often you'll get paid. I may have stated this in an earlier article, but one of the benefits of epubliishing that we often discuss is that authors don't have to wait for royalties as they do with traditional publishers. However, some epubliishers pay monthly, some pay quarterly and some pay bi-annually. You may also want to note the method of payment: check, direct deposit, or PayPal. Does the publisher offer an advance (keeping in mind that few epubliishers do this and generally it's only a token advance) and if so, when is the advance released? Last, you might note whether your publisher sets a "reserve against returns" for print books, how much this is and how long they hold it for. You may also consider author copies as part of payment, and note how many, if any, copies you are given of either ebook or print to use as promotional giveaways or gifts.

Moving on, we get to one of my favorite, and most controversial topics in epubliishing contracts: option clauses. I will tell you straight up, that my personal opinion is not in favor of option clauses for epubliishing contracts. I feel that the epubliishing business model,

which doesn't offer substantial advances to authors for efforts up front—but which works for that reason—shouldn't attempt to mirror and take the same advantages as a traditional publisher's contract without offering the same up front incentives. In short, if the publisher isn't going to provide a guaranteed amount of money, I don't feel they should ask for options for later books because authors may find themselves signing away options to books—to hours of work—only to find out the publisher's sales are not as good as the author hoped. Clearly this opinion isn't a popular one with some epubliishers but one I thought it important for authors to hear the other side of from an epubliishing professional.

For those unfamiliar with option clauses, these are clauses which give the publisher the right to have first look at your next manuscripts. They can range anywhere from right of first refusal on books within a certain genre with word count limits, to right of first refusal of any book the author writes. If you are going to sign an option clause (don't do it), my suggestion is to be sure you're not signing an unlimited, never-ending option clause, giving a publisher lifetime right of first refusal, and that you only sign one with limits, such as a one book option clause limited to a particular genre with word count limits (ie, the publisher can ask to see books of a certain length or longer), or books within a series (though that can stink, too, if you have a substantial series you want to later move elsewhere for future books in the series because you think they will sell better at a different publisher).

In addition to option clauses, there are other clauses you should be wary of. Do not sign contracts which ask you to give up the rights to characters/worlds you created unless you're getting compensated handsomely for it, or clauses asking you to hand over rights to your author/pen name, promising to only use it at that house. Unless you intend to write for only that publisher under that pen name for eternity. Last, a clause I mentioned earlier in this article, make sure you understand the editing clauses. I want to mention here that option clauses such as the ones I've mentioned above, as well as others, are not always presented in an easy-to-spot manner, or in easily identifiable language, which makes understanding how to read a contract and consulting a professional even more important.

The things I've touched on in this article are merely a drop in the bucket to what's contained in a thorough contract and again, I encourage everyone to not just understand what they're reading, but obtain professional advice on it. I can't emphasize enough that each author is a small business and like any small business, you must work to protect yourself, your rights and your work, because those are the fundamentals of your small business.

Book Chat

By Sue Knight



It is a writer's job to get the passion and urgency onto the page.

Philip Gerard wrote this in his how-to-write-biographies book, "Creative Non Fiction – Researching and Crafting Stories of Real Life".

He is talking about interviewing real people to get their story down on paper but his advice can just as easily apply to interviewing our fictional characters.

Here are some gems that appealed to me...

When interviewing:

- The ironic tension between the urgency of the event and the timelessness of its meaning keeps the writer firmly planted in the particulars, in the concrete detail that will make the larger abstract truth come to life on the page.
- The process is a voyage of discovery
- An interview is a human encounter, and however carefully you plan it, the event will take on a life of its own. Roll with it.
- Live in the moment – the real story may not be the one you planned.

On Writing:

- Life is about hard choices – it is the writers job to make us face our choices
- Stories are created in scenes – there is always a magic moment and readers are waiting for it – part of it is always unexpected.
- Pay much attention to learning the story and telling it clearly and economically and the art will happen by itself.

Have a favourite writing "craft" book you want to share with us for Book Chat? Feel free to submit a brief article on what you learnt from reading it and why you think it's great.

TARGET YOUR WRITING

By Soraya Nicholas

It doesn't matter what editor you talk to or which publishing house they represent, one of the most common mistakes they will tell you that a new writer makes is not targeting their work to the correct market. For single title, anything goes, so long as you've researched the correct editor/agent, and your word count meets the recommended amount. However, with category romance, finding your fit is that much harder and could be what's holding you back from success.

On the website www.eharlequin.com, they have recently launched a fantastic new tool. There, writers can listen to podcasts created by the editor of each line. Running for at least 20 minutes each in duration, the podcasts discuss what the editors are looking for, what types of stories fit the line, and common mistakes new writers can make. Ensuring that your work is addressed to the correct person, and that you follow the correct procedure, at least means your work will be considered.

So whether you are targeting raunchy Blaze or exciting Intrigue, the guidelines and podcasts available on the website are a great way to find out more about each and every line. As an aside, if you're interested in meeting other writers in the same boat as you, or finding out more info about Harlequin/Mills & Boon in general, take a peek into the "Talk" section. You can join Subcare (writers submitting/being rejected/selling) or even the UK M&B Editors Club, where real life editors stop by and answer questions.

If you haven't been there already, set aside some time and head to www.eharlequin.com. It's worth the look!

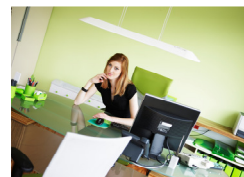
WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST MEMBERS!

Helen Wilson – Wellington
Donna Allen – Western Australia



CLENDON AWARD VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Contact Barbara or Peter at Barbara's Books if you're in the Auckland area and would like to volunteer to help for the Clendon Award. They would certainly appreciate your assistance – drop in or phone to see how you can help.



WHAT DOES CLENDON MEAN TO YOU?

by Soraya Nicholas

A few years back when I first joined RWNZ, I wondered what on earth a "Clendon" was? At my first conference, I realised a Clendon was in reality one of three things . . . a sexy woman in super high heels called Barbara, a lovely man named Peter, and an award that was potentially the key to your manuscript being read by an editor!! My first entry was my first full manuscript, and in fact my only attempt at writing any form of fiction, and in hindsight it probably should have remained unread by human eyes. My next few entries improved significantly, and now each and every year the Clendon Award deadline is the first thing marked in my new diary.

So what does the Clendon mean to you? For me, it's the opportunity to have real readers read my manuscript, to gain invaluable feedback, and of course to get that much closer to publication if I ever final. It also gives me a deadline. I usually aim to complete at least one full manuscript each year, and I know it has to be ready to send in February.

For any newbies reading this who are slightly puzzled, here's the low down . . . The Clendon requires a writer to enter a full manuscript, and this alone makes it a unique competition. Each manuscript is read by a number of readers, who are not writers. This means that real romance readers (hand picked by the Clendons, who happen to own Barbara's Books . . . the best romance book store in New Zealand!) spend hours reading your story, and judge you on how they enjoyed your book.

Recently I asked some of our members what the Clendon meant to them, and this is what they said:

"As far as I know the Clendon is unique in two very important ways, the first is that it's a full manuscript competition, and finishing a book is a lot harder than writing a good first chapter! And second it's judged by readers who look at a manuscript quite differently from writers. They don't care about whether you're breaking writing rules, only whether you're writing a story that they

can enjoy. Their feedback can really let you know if you're on the right track.

Other than that it was always a good deadline to be working towards, so that even when I was getting tired of a story I knew I had to keep plugging away at it to get it done in time to enter. Of course having as wonderful a final judge as Leslie Wainger was a great incentive and a great help in getting many of the Clendon finalists published."

-Sandra Hyatt, recently contracted Silhouette Desire author.

"The Clendon means a goal I haven't reached yet but plan to - a fantastic opportunity - and when it seemed we might lose it, it brought home just how important an opportunity it is."

-Sue Knight.

"I've entered the Clendon over the last 3 years and each year my reason for entering has been different. Initially I chose to enter it as it gave me the chance to submit a full manuscript rather than just the first 3 chapters. I also liked the idea that the judges were readers of the romance genre, not writers. Finding out whether a complete piece of work would appeal to such an audience was invaluable. Secondly, I was also looking to widen the number of competitions I was entering to get feedback (I didn't have a crit partner or group to help develop my craft, so this was the next best thing).

I had such a positive experience in the first year of entering the Clendon (with the incredible feedback, the enthusiasm/ commitment of Barbara for new writers & snagging the Readers' Choice Award) I entered for a second time. My goal this time around was to place and get in front of an editor. It worked and I ended up with mine in front of Lesley Wainger and I was referred to another.

Last year a few ladies I knew from RWNZ, and who were on the main e-loop, wanted to enter the Clendon but either had to edit an old ms. or finish a new one. So we signed up for a Book In 50

Days (BI50D). We created our own e-loop and went at it over Jan/Feb. setting goals, encouraging each other and reporting back daily. I'd started a new ms. (had literally only 3 chapters drafted) and wanted to challenge myself to finishing a book by a deadline. I finished the first draft on the 20th January and spent the rest of the time editing it for the Clendon. I ended up with a 90000 word ms and proved to myself I could meet a deadline.

This year a handful of us are at it again. BI50D is in full swing, and I've another partial I want to finish, so I can enter the Clendon for a fourth year."

-Kylie Short, multiple Clendon Finalist/Readers Choice Award winner.

"For me it's the deadline. When I joined RWNZ (five years ago?) I saw a bit about the Clendon in H2H, and then the entry form turned up, so I thought "Oh - we're supposed to write a book, are we?" So I did.

I really was that brainless, but I also like giving things a shot, and this seemed like an interesting thing to have a go at. The book, of course, was terrible - a first draft with two heroes. (Give the girl a choice!!!)

I've entered every year, and finalled twice. I don't think it's been any help towards publication for me personally - I gather from Barbara that final judge Leslie Wainger isn't a contemporary category fan, and that's what I write. But the end-of-February deadline falls beautifully for the only chunk of spare time I realistically get each year, so that gets me going - and more importantly keeps me going."

-Kris Pearson, multiple Clendon finalist.

"The Clendon was critical in getting my work to a publishable standard. I think the best thing about the Clendon (other than having to actually finish a book) is the feedback from 'real' readers (as opposed to writer judges). 'Real' readers don't care whether you've changed point of view mid scene or any of the other 'rules' we writers tend to obsess over.

With Clendon readers, the story works or it doesn't work and I think it's a testament to their judgment - and Barbara and Peter Clendon's - that so many of the competition finalists have gone on to publication."

-Karina Bliss, Harlequin Super Romance author.

www.romancewriters.co.nz

From my point of view the Clendon Award is one of the most important tools available to Down Under writers. The fact that it is judged by readers instead of other writers puts a whole different slant on the judging process, and needing to 'finish the damn book' requires a commitment that can take writers onto a higher level of investment careerwise. At least this was true for me.

I only ever entered the Clendon twice. In the inaugural competition I was runner up behind Annie Featherstone and Lisa Chaplin, exhilaration and disappointment in one large bundle. However the feedback from readers gave me incentive to carry on, to move up a level in my craft. Of course, now it's ancient history that on my second attempt - good grief, ten years ago - I was the first NZ writer to sell through winning the award - the first of many - and believe me it's always satisfying to be a leader, especially in something so many writers have their hearts set on.

If not for Barbara and Peter Clendon's efforts to help Down Under writers, I'm sure my road to publication would have been much longer and bumpier. I'm only one of many with much to thank them for. Not only that, published writers who have had success through the Clendon are inclined to gravitate together, and through this I have made many like-minded friends. Get a few of us together and what do we talk about? Why writing of course...

-Frances Housden, Clendon winner

So that about sums it up. The Clendon is by all opinions an incredible opportunity for us all, be it the deadline, the kick up the pants to finish a book, or a lifeline toward publication. Looking back over the years, there are many RWNZ members who have become published after finalling or winning the Clendon, and for me, being a finalist is a dream I will always have.

On behalf of RWNZ, I would like to thank the Clendons for their unwavering support of us unpublished writers by continuing to offer the Clendon Award. We know it takes up a ridiculous amount of your time, space and lives, and please know that there are so many of us who will never forget your dedication. You still have time to get your Clendon entry polished and sent in . . . although perhaps not enough time to actually write a new manuscript! Entries were with the December issue of H2H, or visit www.romancewriters.co.nz to download a copy.

RWNZ CONTEST NEWS

CONTEST ENTRY FORMS

Entry forms for RWNZ contests (excluding the Clendon Award) will no longer be available as an insert in the newsletter.

Entry forms can be accessed on the RWNZ website, from the relevant coordinator or from Ellie Huse: elliehuse@yahoo.com

RWNZ CONTEST SCHEDULE 2009

CLENDON AWARD 2009

Closing Date: 27 February 2009

CHAPTER SHORT STORY CONTEST 2009

Closing Date: 27 March 2009

Final Judge: Julie Redlich, Fiction Editor, Woman's Day

Enter: 1500-word short story. Theme is open but story must be a contemporary romance.

Up to 3 entries by same author will be accepted.

Eligibility: Open to published and non-published writers. (Entrants must be current financial members of RWNZ.)

Entry Fee: \$NZ20 (NZ entrants); \$A20 (Australian entrants)

Coordinator: Adèle Gautier - abby@abbygaines.com

GREAT BEGINNINGS CONTEST 2009

Closing Date: 24 April 2009

Final Judge: Kimberley Young, Senior Editor, Mills & Boon, London

Enter: Up to first 25 pages plus 2-page synopsis. Up to 2 entries by same author will be accepted.

Eligibility: Open to published and non-published writers. (Entrants must be current financial members of RWNZ.)

Entry Fee: \$NZ20 (NZ entrants); \$A20 (Australian entrants)

Coordinator: Sue MacKay - ismackay@ts.co.nz

STRICTLY SINGLE CONTEST 2009

Closing Date: 25 September 2009

RWNZ SNAPSHOT

By Sue Knight



WHO ARE WE?

We know we are among friends. We know we have a great logo. We know we love to write and sometimes hate to love to write. We suspect most of us are women. BUT... who exactly are we?



WHERE DO WE LIVE?

193 members live in New Zealand; 42 members Live in Australia;
4 members live overseas; 2 in USA, 1 in Switzerland, 1 in Scotland
159 members live in the North Island
34 members live in the South Island



WHO ARE WE?

Two of us are men, so most of us ARE women!
We don't keep age information but we have members from their teens upwards and there's no retirement age!



WHAT DO WE WRITE?

About 50% of us write Category romance books and 50% of us write Single Title books



HOW MANY OF US ARE PUBLISHED?

We don't have the numbers? But we would love to know?
Plus some of us are published in areas other than romance e.g. non-fiction and books for children.



HOW MANY OF US ENTERED RWNZ COMPETITIONS LAST YEAR?

| | |
|------------------|----|
| Great Beginnings | 37 |
| Strictly Single | 23 |
| Short Story | 24 |



HOW MANY OF US FINISHED THE DAMN BOOK AND ENTERED THE CLENDON?

Barbara says. . .

- 38 in 2008 –lower than usual due to the last minute uncertainties.
- Entry in 2007 was 50, which is much more typical.
- Entry numbers range from 40 to 75, depending on the year.



WHAT'S HAPPENING TO US?

Member numbers have dropped recently. ????????????????????

The overwhelming reason seems to be that members are not writing, mostly due to lack of time.



WHAT'S OUR NEXT STEP?

A Recruitment Drive

In next month's H2H we answer recruitment questions.

How did we find our way here? And how do we help potential new members find us?

Many thanks for statistical information from Rachel Collins, Ellie Huse and Barbara Clendon.

ABBY GAINES contd

A few months earlier, I'd won the Clendon and Barbara Clendon had suggested my story might be a Super, but I was busy submitting it to single title publishers, so I hadn't got around to Super.

(When Super made an offer to buy the book, I'd also had a request for revisions from a single title publisher—it's the one and only time I've had two editors interested in a story simultaneously).

SuperRomance is a fairly wide open line when it comes to the kinds of stories they publish. Mine are lighter-hearted (but full of emotional punch of course ☺) and mostly set in big American cities. But there are lots of small-town settings, Canadian Supers, and some Australian and New Zealand (Hi, Karina!) settings.

Some Supers have a suspense thread running through them, and my editor mentioned last year that there's scope for more stories with a medical thread. There aren't as many wealthy tycoon heroes as you'll find in some other lines (though mine and Karina's mainly tend to be), and you'll often find single parents, pregnant moms etc. Marriages of convenience are rare, but I've done two, so it's always possible.

If you're going to use a classic romance hook like marriage of convenience, make sure it's grounded in a realistic situation rather than the glitzy billionaire or fairytale-style world that's more acceptable in other lines. The truly massive revisions I'm working on now are partly the result of my creating a story world that's too glitzy for Super ("reads like a Presents or Desire," my editor said). It's a fake engagement story, so I should have followed my own advice and known to keep it grounded!

Most of all, although a Superromance often includes subplots based around family, etc, it's essential to keep the main focus on the romance, and keep the romantic conflict strong.

The Super editors like to receive three chapters and a synopsis on first submission, so it's a good chance to bypass the query letter stage. Unless you have a good reason to submit to a specific editor, send your material to the editorial assistant Megan Long (Megan does acquire some authors, as well as farming submissions out to the editors).

And finally, what is an average writing day for you? Do you write every day, where do you like to write, and do you aim to complete a set number of words each day/week?

I have a messy but sunny office upstairs at home, with a peek of a sea view. But because I have a laptop, I often write elsewhere – mainly the lounge or dining room. My favourite thing is to write outside in the sun, but I haven't found the perfect spot in the house we're in now; I need somewhere wind-free and where my screen isn't too reflective for me to see it.

As for my output...due to my own lack of foresight (I forgot that once you're published you have to allow time for revisions, line edits and all kinds of other things) and taking on too much work last year, I've had to focus on increasing my output over the last six months. In 2009, I'll be aiming to write 15 pages a day Monday to Thursday, and 8-10 pages on Fridays. That's for writing new pages – when I revise, I'll be aiming to revise around 25 pages a day, but that's a big step up on what I'm achieving on revisions at the moment, so we'll see...

The last few months, I've been trying not to write on weekends, and that's mostly going to plan, except when I'm coming up to deadline (which, now that I think about it, is quite often!).

Regardless of my output, my goal for 2009 is to love what I do, and do what I love. For me, that means taking some time to experiment with new ideas, and throwing myself wholeheartedly into every project.

Thank you so much Abby! Abby's latest release *The Groom Came Back* will be hitting our shelves this February.



CONFERENCE UPDATE

By Kris Pearson

A Romantic Retreat

It's time to start tracking down those cheap airmiles, people! RWNZ'S 2009 annual conference now has a name – "A Romantic Retreat". So retreat with us for a weekend of absolute indulgence. You'll get great overseas guest speakers, more delicious food and wine than you can possibly need, a wide range of workshops to choose from, and the chance to catch up with friends old and new. You'll work, you'll learn – and you'll have a darn good time.

Guest speakers from USA

Melissa Jeglinski. A name many of you will know. Melissa spent seventeen years with Harlequin Enterprises, and worked her way up to Senior Editor, Silhouette Desire. She bought books from several down-under authors, so she likes our voices. She's now with The Knight Agency as Associate Agent/Submissions Co-ordinator, and will be accepting pitches from you at conference. She says, "Currently I'm interested in most types of romance; historical, contemporary, romantica, light paranormal, humorous and category. I also love cosy mysteries, thrillers, and all types of women's fiction." So what will you pitch to her? Be sure to book yourself a slot.

Mary Jo Putney. Mary Jo has degrees in English Literature and Industrial Design. After selling her first book, she gave up her freelance graphic design business and became a full-time writer as soon as possible. She's published around thirty books in the last twenty-plus years – many of them historical fantasies – including the acclaimed Fallen Angel series. She's a nine-times RITA finalist (twice a winner) and has appeared on the best-seller lists of The New York Times, Wall Street Journal, USA Today and Publishers Weekly. She's a keen and able teacher, and we're sure you'll gain valuable knowledge from her Romantic Retreat sessions.

Dressing up

Not compulsory by any means – but we surely had a lot of clever kitties turn up to the CAT-e-gory cocktail party last year, and a lot of fun because of it.

Cocktail Party – 'Leather and Lace'.

Anything from a sexy nightgown to full bikers' gear. (We doubt we'll get either!) But maybe it's time to bring out the leather trousers or mini-skirt that's languished in your wardrobe for too long. Or find the courage to wear something seductively lacy while you're amongst friends. Thigh-high boots? Buckskins and beads? Gracie Stanners has threatened to turn up in the back half of a cow costume and a crocheted tablecloth, so that should be well worth seeing...

Awards Dinner – 'A Touch of Fantasy'

What's your fantasy? Something historical? Futuristic? Top-Model eye make-up? Jewellery so outrageous you've never had anywhere to wear it? Or just a pretty dress, when you spend the whole year in trousers as I do? Go for it! You've got six months to decide.

In summary

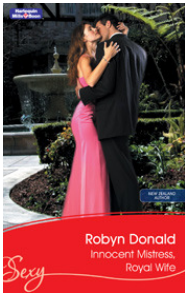
A Romantic Retreat, Waipuna Hotel and Conference Centre, Auckland, August 21st – 23rd. Hope we see you there.

www.romancewriters.co.nz

February 2009

FEBRUARY BOOK RELEASES

Sexy



Innocent Mistress, Royal Wife **Robyn Donald**

Prince Rafiq de Couteville believes Alexa Considine to be a money-hungry mistress, and using her to avenge his sister's death will be sheer pleasure... Lexie can't understand why she's attracted the attention of the Crown Prince of Moraze - she just wants a quiet holiday. But Rafiq is hard to resist,

and soon Lexie finds herself bedded by royalty. But to Rafiq's horror and shame Lexie is a virgin! Out of duty and honour, he must propose!



The Fiorenza Forced Marriage **Melanie Milburne**

Rafaele Fiorenza is furious. To get his inheritance he must marry his estranged father's mistress! Emma March was only doing her job, caring for the late Valentino Fiorenza. She expected no mention in his will, let alone a stipulation to marry his son! Financially Emma is desperate, and

Rafaele will treat her like the money-grabbing harlot he thinks she is. He'll wed her, bed her and destroy her. But then he discovers his new wife is a virgin - and he's forced an innocent woman up the aisle!

Super Romance



A Man She Couldn't Forget **Kathryn Shay**

Both Brady Langston and Jonathan Harris are good men. But their versions of her are so opposite, it's as if she's two different people. One man holds her career future and one man seems to hold her heart. Clare has to choose again: To stick with the life she's made for herself. Or listen to what her heart's been

trying to tell her...

The Groom Came Back **Abby Gaines**

Typical. It takes Dr Jack Mitchell eight years to pull himself away from his terribly important career abroad and come home for a divorce. Callie isn't letting him off quite so easily. Not when she, to her utter dismay, is finding him so irresistible. Irresistible enough to get him to tie the knot again?

Sweet

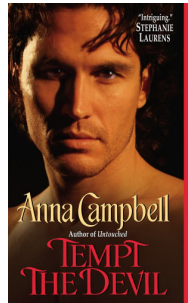


Pregnant: Father Wanted **Claire Baxter**

Australian travel writer Lyssa Belperio may be pregnant and alone, but she can't wait to be a mum. A job offer on the Amalfi Coast of Italy gives her the chance to make a fresh start and hopefully settle down once her baby is born.

But her plans go awry once she meets Ric - a professional footballer with a celebrity lifestyle. There is more beneath the surface than Italian playboy Ric lets the world see. And once they meet, Lyssa begins to wonder if he could be the perfect father for her baby.

Single Title



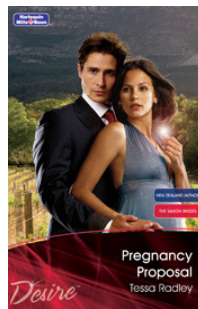
Tempt the Devil (Avon) **Anna Campbell**

Any man in London would worship her. Yet Olivia is, quite frankly, bored of them all. Despite her many dalliances, she's never felt true passion, never longed for any lover's touch . . . until Julian, London's most notoriously wanton rake, decides to make her his mistress.

From the moment he first sees her, Julian knows he must possess her. And when he discovers her greatest secret, a scandal that could ruin her reputation and end her career, he knows just the way to use this damaging information to his most delightful advantage. He offers Olivia a deal with the devil: he'll keep her secret . . . if she allows him the chance to show her true ecstasy.

But Olivia must be careful, for Julian has a secret of his own: he will not rest until she is completely, shamelessly his.

Desire



Pregnancy Proposal **Tessa Radley**

His late brother's fiancé was pregnant with a Saxon heir. Yet she thought she could just leave town? Not even the black sheep of the mighty Saxons would allow that. So Heath Saxon propositioned Amy...

She could avoid illegitimacy for her baby by marrying him. Convincing her wasn't easy. Until he showed her what a night as his wife would be like. But Amy harboured a very big secret about the Saxon baby. About just who the father really was...

INTERNATIONAL CONTEST NEWS

Submitted by Lisa Elkind-Gardiner, aka Lisa Whitefern

Faith, Hope and Love – Inspirational Readers' Choice

Eligibility: For Inspiration Romance authors who were print published in 2008. No POD or self published books.

Deadline- March 1st 2009

You must enter 4 autographed copies of your book. If there is a tie you will need to send 3 more autographed copies. Judges keep books as payment for judging.

Fee \$25 US

All finalists receive certificates.

<http://www.faithhopelove-rwa.org/contests.htm>

Connecticut RWA Connections Writing Contest for Unpublished Writers

Eligibility: Not published in category entered or not published within the last three years

Deadline March 1st 2009

Enter: First 20 pages and optional 1 page synopsis (synopsis will not be judged).

Categories:

1. series contemporary
2. single title
3. romantic suspense
4. historical
5. erotica
6. paranormal
7. young adult

Additional prize for best first meeting between H and h.

Fee \$30 US

Top Prize \$30 and critique

<http://ctrwa.org/connections/>

Hearts through History RWA Chapter 2009 Romance through the Ages Contest

Eligibility: Entrants do not need to be members of RWA to enter the contest. Participation is open to both published and unpublished authors. Any work of fiction that has not been contracted for publication by March 1, 2009 may be entered.

1. Ancient/Medieval/Renaissance
2. Georgian/Regency/Victorian
3. Colonial/Western/Civil War (CWW)- America, for these eras through the late 1800s
4. Post-Victorian - World War 2 (PVW)- worldwide, for these eras
5. Time Travel/Historical Paranormal (TTP)- for all eras of Earth history to the end of WW2, bulk of entry (over half) must be in historical period
6. Historical Erotica (HER)- worldwide, all eras of history to the end of WW2, erotic romance submission only - no straight erotica

The Best of the Best Award is a \$100.00 US cash prize. Category winners will receive gift certificates for online writers' workshops.

Fee \$25 US <http://www.heartsthroughhistory.com/contest.htm>

Chicago – North RWA Fire & Ice Contest

Eligibility: open to all authors who have not signed a publishing contract for novel-length romantic fiction (regardless of publisher) within five years of the contest deadline. The entry must have a projected minimum length of 50,000 words.

Deadline- March 1st 2009

Fee \$25 US

First place winners in each category will receive \$30. All finalists will receive certificates and will be mentioned in the Romance Writers Report. All contestants will receive a score sheet.

<http://www.chicagonorthrwa.org/contest.shtml>

Kiss of Death RWA Daphne du Maurier Award for Excellence in Unpublished Mystery/Suspense

Eligibility: The contest is open to any writer who has never been contracted in book-length fiction (40,000 words or more) from any publisher.

Deadline- March 16th 2009

First 15 pages and unjudged synopsis.

Category (Series) Romantic Mystery/Suspense- Harlequin Intrigue

Historical Romantic Mystery/Suspense- Nelson Literary Agency

Inspirational Romantic Mystery/Suspense- Hartline Literary Agency

Mainstream Mystery/Suspense- St. Martin's Press

Paranormal/Time Travel/Futuristic Romantic Mystery/Suspense- Berkley Publishing

Single Title Romantic Mystery/Suspense- Pocket Books

Fee \$25 US

First Prize is \$25, an engraved bookmark and an online "Coffin" workshop of your choice.

<http://www.rwamysterysuspense.org/contestunpublished.html>

Magnolia State Dixie First Chapter Contest

(This is a fun contest! My (Lisa Whitefern) novella *Waking the Witch* which is now published with Freya's Bower placed third in this last year. I got great feedback and a lovely certificate.)

Eligibility: authors unpublished in novel length fiction or unpublished in the last five years. Entry is limited to 25 numbered pages.

Deadline- March 16th 2009

Paranormal /Futuristic /Time Travel -Dorchester

Super-sexy -Ellora's Cave

Historical - TBA

Romantic Suspense-TBA

Inspirational -Harlequin

Contemporary –Harlequin

Fee \$25 US

You WILL receive comments on your entry. All finalists in each category get certificates.

<http://www2.netdoor.com/~phillman/entryfm09.htm>

Lisa Whitefern was Bareback Magazine's Erotica Author of the month of January. You can read the interview [here](http://www.barebackmagazine.com/interviewlisa_whitefern.html).

http://www.barebackmagazine.com/interviewlisa_whitefern.html

International News

Short Romance Stories Wanted

Read-a-Romance.com is a brand new site geared toward attracting romance readers. The goal? To be a place where romance writers can showcase their work and attract readership. It's said the best way to way to sell new products is to give away free samples first. Read-a-romance.com has set up the place for you to do just that.

Submission details can be found at read-a-romance.com/contribute. The site is active, but hasn't launched yet. And you may be interested to know that in the few weeks we've been active, Google has positioned us well, and we've had steady traffic from people looking to read romance. This is an all ages site, so we're only interested in G Rated stories.

Call for Submissions: Samhain Publishing <http://www.samhainpublishing.com>

Shapeshifter Anthology: 'I'm too sexy for my shape!'

Bad boys and wild girls. Cats, wolves, dragons and hamsters (just kidding about the hamsters...really). We're looking for the best of your shifters, no holds barred. Show us your sexy, your untamed and all the growls, purrs and squeaking hamster wheels (still kidding about this part) you think we can handle. Samhain Publishing is seeking submissions for their as-yet-untitled Summer 2009 shapeshifter anthology. Stories can be of any genre or heat level—make them fun, make them sexy, make them burn right off the pages but whatever you do, they must feature a shifter theme as integral to the story. M/m or same-sex submissions welcome and anticipated. Submissions should be 20,000 to 30,000 words in length. This anthology is open to all authors previously published with Samhain and authors aspiring to publish with Samhain. Submissions must be new material, previously published material will not be considered. Chosen manuscripts will be published as separate ebooks under their individual titles in Summer 2009 but will be combined in print titles for Spring 2010 print release.

To submit a manuscript for consideration, please include:

The full manuscript (of 20,000 to 30,000 words) with a comprehensive 2-5 page synopsis. Please include a letter of introduction/query letter. Full manuscripts are required for this as it's a special project. Important! When sending your manuscript/synopsis please name them: SS_Title_full/synopsis. For instance, if you're writing a book called Hot Hamster Love (which we sincerely hope you're not because that title is ours, darn it!), you'd name your manuscript SS_HotHamsterLove_full and your synopsis SS_HotHamsterLove_synopsis. Following this naming convention insures that your manuscript/synopsis don't get lost in the mess of files and submissions we save to our computers, and helps us keep them separate from normal submissions. And keeps them neat and tidy on the ebook reader! It's harder when you have 50 files called "Synopsis" to know which to look at. Submissions are open until March 1st, 2009 and final decision will be made by March 23rd, 2009. Send your submission to editor@samhainpublishing.com Please put Sexy Shifters Anthology Submission in the subject line. Query letters can be addressed to Angela James.

Call for Submissions: Samhain Publishing

'In a Bind Anthology'

Tie them up, tie them down, use the ancient art of shibari or just plain old furry handcuffs, so long as someone's being bound. I'm very pleased to announce an open call for submissions for a new, yet-to-be titled Winter 2009 anthology. I'm looking for your super-hot bondage romance stories. Push the boundaries and push the bindings. I'm open to any genre, M/F, M/M, or multiples thereof. The only rule is bondage needs to be a main theme in the story and there needs to be a HEA (or HFN). The anthology will include novellas from 20,000 to 25,000 words in length and will be released individually as ebooks in September 2009. Submissions are open to all authors, published with Samhain or aspiring to be published with Samhain. All submissions must be new material, previously published submissions will not be considered. Additionally, manuscripts previously submitted, whether individually or for past anthologies, will not be considered either. Please be aware that manuscripts submitted to this anthology cannot be resubmitted at a later date unless by invitation from an editor.

To submit a manuscript for consideration, please include:

The full manuscript (of 20,000 to 25,000 words) with a comprehensive 2-5 page synopsis. Please include a letter of introduction/query letter. Full manuscripts are required for this as it's a special project. As well, when you send your manuscript, please be sure to use the naming convention Bind_Title_MS or Bind_Title_Synopsis. This will ensure that your submission doesn't get missed in the many submissions we receive, and makes it easy for me to find in my ebook reader. Submissions are open until April 15th, 2009 and final decision will be made by April 30th, 2009. Please send your submission to editor@samhainpublishing.com and include In a Bind Anthology in the subject line. Questions and queries can be addressed to Laurie M. Rauch (laurie@samhainpublishing.com).

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RWNZ NEWS AROUND THE REGIONS

Regional convenor contacts

AUCKLAND – Frances Housden
email: fhousden@xtra.co.nz

CHRISTCHURCH – Sue Knight
email: sueknight@ihug.co.nz

HAWKE'S BAY – Ginny Suckling
email: ginnysuckling@xtra.co.nz

NELSON – Cherie Skinner & Sally Astridge
email: bruceastridge@aol.com or
cheriesk@hotmail.com

WAIKATO, BAY OF PLENTY & KING COUNTRY – Liz Heywood
email: liz.heywood@gmail.com
phone: (09) 2351404

WELLINGTON – Ellie Huse
email: elliehuse@yahoo.com



Don't see your region listed here? If you're interested in helping to start a local RWNZ group in your area, please contact RWNZ president Pat Snellgrove via email rwnzpresident@xtra.co.nz or our membership secretary Rachel Collins on rachel_collins@xtra.co.nz

AUCKLAND - Frances Housden

Happy New Year. The first Auckland meeting for 2009 will be held on Saturday February 7th. Please try to attend as we need to discuss how we intend to go forward for the rest of the year. Any ideas for workshops or talks that you would like in 2009 need to be sorted out early so I can plan the meetings for the rest of the year.

As usual the meeting will be held at the Three Kings Tennis Pavilion, corner of Mt Albert and Mt Eden Roads at 12.30 p.m. Bring a small contribution towards a shared lunch and raffle tickets will be on sale.

WAIKATO - Liz

The Waikato/Bay of Plenty/King Country ladies will meet on Saturday 21st February at Angela Bethell's home in Morrinsville. We will be having a workshop on characterization by Gracie Stanners. All welcome, and please bring a plate for a shared lunch. Hope you all had a wonderful Christmas break.

WELLINGTON MEETING - Kris Pearson

Our final meeting for the year was attended by no less than fourteen members (Jo and Fifi for their first time with us, and Louise possibly for her last) and preceded by a very grand pot-luck lunch.

Once we'd recovered from the food, Cathy Sneyd repeated her Synopsis workshop from the last conference. As an exercise, we all had to write a sample synopsis for Little Red Riding Hood. Whether it was the wine, or because we're a group with vivid imaginations, a lot of the ensuing synopses were rude, hilarious, and bore little resemblance to the original storyline. The cougar sex in the wicker basket was just one of many deviations from the truth...

We shall try to do better at the next meeting. Please bring a one-page single-spaced synopsis for your current work-in-progress.

CHANGE: Because the first Saturday in February falls on Waitangi holiday weekend, we have brought the meeting forward to Saturday January 31st, 1pm at Ellie's, 135 Milne Drive, Paraparaumu. All welcome.

NELSON - Cherie

The sun shone as we gathered outdoors at my home for our Christmas meeting. Everyone contributed a plate of scrumptious food and some entertained us with their creative Christmas-themed stories /plot outlines. The youngest attendee was very cute new baby, Gabrielle, - she loved the stories too - in fact, they sent her to sleep... no, just kidding, she was wide awake - she didn't want to miss out on anything. All in all, a fabulous way to end a productive year!

January's meeting will be on writing a memoir/personal experience of emotional consequence in our lives. Meeting will be held at Shirley's place, 36 Cambria Street, at 2:00 on 17th January.

February's meeting will be on the second Saturday of the month. Members will be emailed as to venue and topic.

Happy New Year everyone.

HAWKES BAY - Ginny

2009 has started off in busy mode for our few members. We have emailed each other and found the beginning of the year wasn't a convenient time to meet. Until we have organised our next meeting anyone can contact me by email - ginnysuckling@xtra.co.nz

CHRISTCHURCH

Tuesday is "Cheap Night at the Movies" - so we're going.

On the first Tuesday of each month we will be choosing a movie of a romantic nature, of course.

Coffee and writing chat before or after as timing suits.

Two highly recommended movies: Caramel and The Visitor.

Our 2009 Workshop Programme is under construction. We're working hard on it - details next month.

For local info contact sueknight@ihug.co.nz

THE NAKED WRITER

Baring all in the world of romance and writing

I've been reading a fascinating book, *The Five Languages of Love*, which has some really good stuff on emotion. Not that it's a writer's book – it's by a chap named Gary Chapman who presents relationship seminars on the five languages. It's all about tapping in to the ways that are important for the individual to be told they are loved. It got me thinking how it could be used as a tool in developing character. The premise is that everybody responds strongly to different "languages" – words of affirmation, touch, acts of service, quality time and gift giving. All are important, but some are more important to different individuals. Gift giving, for example. If it was one's main language, there would be much more emotion behind the receiving of that gift because it says very strongly, "I love you." But to others, gifts don't have as much emotion behind them. For some folk it's Acts of Service. A partner or parent might not be touch-feely or verbal, but they show their love through fixing the car and so on. Ditto, if a partner doesn't help much, for some people it could be seen as a slap in the face. It's very interesting, and would add great depth to a character, especially when you could explore the reason why these "love languages" are the way they are.

Being as we're all busy people with our writing, I thought it appropriate to share a tip on household management. Now, for some time the children (teens actually) have been telling me I should buy a rice cooker. You have to be kidding me, I'd shriek hysterically. Why the heck do I need a rice cooker? Why fork out hard-earned cash for an appliance that will take up room and require cleaning when I already have a stove, a ready supply of chlorinated water and a pot with a lid? What's the point?

Rice cooker rice is the best, they'd tell me.

Seeing as we live in (I read this in the paper prior to the election) the most ethnically diverse electorate in the country, their pals are Indian and Asian so they eat a lot of rice when they go to their homes. And they have been telling me for some time that rice cooker rice is the best. The best, Jerry, the best!! Now, being I'm a sensitive person, I naturally took this personally, as an insult on my cooking skills.

Are you telling me, I'd say, that my rice isn't any good?

Yes!!!, they'd say. (Read- Now she's got it.) But I dug in my heels and proceeded to churn out over cooked sloppy rice like any decent mother who is trying to make a point would. Over Christmas, we were back in Palmy and visited a shop called Norman Ross, which is an offshoot of Harvey Norman. One of the sons spotted rice cookers on sale and said, would I like one? He'd buy it for me. The price looked good, not that I knew, I'd never shopped for them before, but it looked reasonable, and it wouldn't take up too much room in the kitchen. And clearly these poor children were *begging* for "supposedly" good rice. They were in fact so obviously desperate, having tasted decently cooked rice many times, not in our house, that they were prepared to buy me the cooker. So I gave in and let Ben buy me the rice cooker. Oddly, as I was in Farmers later, I saw the same rice cooker on sale and even on sale it was still a good \$15 more expensive than the one Ben had bought. *Score*. Well, naturally the youth was proved right. The next time we had rice, I followed the instructions and cooked the rice. Nakettes, I could not believe how good the rice was. It doesn't over cook. You can let it sit there and keep warm. The Cooker is easy to clean. My life has been transformed – and I got a new appliance out of it – double score!!!!

Just when I vowed to decrease my internet time, I've become quite addicted to blogs. I have been venturing into the hithertounknown (for me) world of blogs not related to books. However, the writing ones are still King. This past week I've been wading my way through some of the posts on www.dearauthor.com. Oh my gosh. There has been some fascinating discussion over Ellora's Cave suing Borders. Writers bitterly unhappy with EC have been popping up. It's done my head in. Read it for yourself.

<http://dearauthor.com/wordpress/2009/01/08/elloras-cave-sues-borders-for-1000000/> (Or better yet, go to dearauthor.com and scroll down 'til you find January 8th). On the topic of blogs, Naked Writer has been doing what all hopeless people do best – fiddling with non important things like a blog that only a few people a day read. I've changed my Naked Writer blog from Blogger to Wordpress cos I actually found the Naked Writer address at Wordpress. Yet another fine score. *Nake's on a roll*. Here tis...

<http://thenakedwriter.wordpress.com>