

HEART TO HEART

Meet the Agent

Abby Gaines talks to literary agent Pamela Harty, of The Knight Agency



When was The Knight Agency established?

The Knight Agency was started by my younger sister Deidre Knight in 1996, and I joined the team in 2000.

How many agents does your agency have, and who are they?

We currently have four. Deidre Knight, Elaine Spencer and I all are located in the home Madison office. Nephele Tempest heads up our West Coast operations in Los Angeles.

Is romance a big part of the agency's client profile?

Yes, traditionally our romance authors have been a large foundation of our client list, but we also have extremely successful authors writing women's fiction, inspirational fiction, young adult fiction, and non-fiction as well.

Who are some of the agency's major clients, and who are some of the clients represented by you personally?

The Knight Agency represents more than a hundred clients, and a large roster can be found listed on our website knightagency.net. To give a spectrum from my personal list, I have Lauren Baratz-Logsted, Chris Green, Michele Andrea Bowen, Liz Allison, Leslie Kelley, Steven James and Cherie Calbom, just to name a few.

Are you (personally) taking on new clients at the moment? If so, what kind of books are you looking for?

I am definitely looking for new authors. I love most types of romance and would especially love to add a wonderful new romantic suspense author or another strong voice in women's fiction. I'm also always looking for fresh and innovative authors in the areas of health, relationships and pop culture.

What are your main considerations when you take on a published author as a client?

Mainly, I am looking for clients who want to partner with the Knight Agency for the long haul. It's essential that our authors are interested in being a team player, and also that they have realistic expectations and are motivated.

In this issue...

1. Abby Gaines talks to agent **Pamela Harty**
3. The latest from the **President's desk**
5. A bumper crop of **member successes**
6. Kate Gordon explores what's in it for you when **judging contests**
8. "Grammar"
A poem from Gracie Stanners
9. Sandra Hyde reviews the 2007 **Strictly Single** contest
10. Emily Veinglory shares her **digital romance**
11. **Plotting workshop** – register now
12. **Writing markets**
14. **Contest news**
16. **New releases**
18. **RWNZ regional news**
20. **The Naked Writer**

Continued page 4

President: Pat Snellgrove
email: rwnzpresident@xtra.co.nz

Vice president: Gracie Stanners
email: gstanners@xtra.co.nz

Secretary: Sally Rigby
email: sallymrigby@hotmail.com

Treasurer: Bronwyn Evans
email: bronwene@xtra.co.nz

Membership: Emily Gee
P O Box 4085, Blenheim 7242
email: membership@romancewriters.co.nz

Publicity: Cathy Sneyd
email: csneyd@xtra.co.nz

Immediate past president:
Joanne Graves
email: joanne.graves@gmail.com

H2H editor: Kate Gordon
email: kate@relishcomm.co.nz

Website content coordinator:
Kamy Chetty
email: kamychetty@yahoo.com

Principal contest coordinator:
Ellie Huse
email: elliehuse@yahoo.com

Founder: Jean Drew
(RWNZ was founded in Sept 1990)

Contact details: Romance Writers of New Zealand, Inc., P O Box 10264, Dominion Road, Auckland

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

No part may be reproduced or used for profit by RWNZ or others without prior permission from the editor. The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily the views of RWNZ, its executive, or its editor. While every effort is made to ensure accuracy, no responsibility will be taken by RWNZ or the editor for inaccurate information.

To subscribe to the RWNZ online loop, which is dedicated to the support of its writers by and for members, send a blank email to NZromance-subscribe@yahoogroups.com or contact giovanna@xtra.co.nz for information about the loop.

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

EDITOR'S DESK

Well, many of you will know me, especially if you're on the RWNZ loop. I do tend to be fairly vocal (!) and I'm known for posting the 'thought of the day'.

I hope you enjoy the issues of *Heart to Heart* I produce during 2008. (I'm already thanking Soraya Nicholas for saying she'll take on H2H in 2009...)

It's an enjoyable and worthwhile job in many ways. You're certainly 'in the loop' as to what's going on with the exec, contests, and with conference. Those things alone have already invigorated my interest in RWNZ's activities in the months ahead.

I welcome suggestions for ways we can improve the quality, type and quantity of information about the romance writing genre we bring you in H2H. Your comments and contributions are always valuable. After all, it's your newsletter and it needs to reflect the wide variety of writers – published and aspiring – who make up the membership of RWNZ. So, please, do email me on kate@relishcomm.co.nz with your comments and suggestions.

I extend my thanks to Abby Gaines for her fantastic contribution as the editor of H2H ... and to RWNZ in general. We know how busy you are now as a published author, Abby, and it's absolutely brilliant to see your ongoing success. Thanks and all the best.

It's also timely to acknowledge everyone who contributes to H2H. Iona Jones for the daunting task of enveloping over 300 newsletters every month, Jean Drew for collating our members' successes column, and The Naked Writer, aka Joanne Graves, for her always illuminating and entertaining contributions. I'm sure I read about Janet Evanovich in one of Jo's articles and I'll be forever grateful for learning about this fabulous writer of chick lit-style suspense. I'm rereading the Stephanie Plum books at the moment and enjoying them more than the first time around. That's a sign of a good story, for sure!

There are many others who help bring H2H out each month, so thank you and I look forward to working with you during the year ahead.

Kate



Contributions sought

Heart to Heart welcomes contributions from RWNZ members and from people with expertise relevant to our members of the following types:

- Interviews with authors, agents and publishing industry personnel
- With particular relevance to the romance genre, articles regarding writing techniques, the life of a writer, motivation, the industry, etc.
- News on markets, opportunities and competitions

Please contact the editor, Kate Gordon, to discuss.

Contributions should ideally be unpublished. Copyright reverts to the author two weeks after publication in *Heart to Heart*, or earlier by arrangement.



The President says...

Welcome. I'd like to start off with some good news.

We have managed to secure Cindy Hwang from Berkley Publishing for our conference. Go to <http://dearauthor.com/wordpress/2007/01/01/interview-with-an-editor-series-cindy-hwang-berkley/> to read an interview with her. It's well worth reading, so polish up those manuscripts and get ready to pitch them to Cindy at conference.



The executive and conference committee have been working hard on your behalf over the last month. They have sourced keynote speakers, secured a hotel – Waipuna – and are currently working on budgets, workshops and the conference programme. All will be revealed in our next newsletter.

RWNZ members have been doing so well over the last few months and I would like to congratulate every one of you who has achieved their goals. The good news just keeps coming.

- Nalini continues to climb the publishing ladder. *Mine to Possess* was voted one of the Best Books of Year by Lifetime TV and she has done what we all aim for - hit the *New York Times* list with *Mine to Possess* which made it to No 32.
- Cathryn Hein had two entries final in the RWAust Single Title and Loving It contest and one of them placed 2nd overall.
- Gracie Stanners has finalised in the NTRWA Great Expectations competition in the Mainstream with Romantic Elements category. Good luck for the rest of the judging, Gracie.
- Ellie Huse was placed first in the Silicon Valley RWA Gotcha contest in the Series Contemporary category. The prize for this is to have your entry sent to an editor for review and comment. Good luck Ellie. Here's hoping they pick this book up and publish it.
- Viv Constable was placed first in the Silicon Valley RWA Gotcha contest in the Series Mystery/Romantic Suspense category. Her entry is on its way to an editor. Good luck Viv and, like Ellie, I hope they want the whole book.
- Kylie Short continues to win competitions. Over the last few months her list includes:
 - RWNZ Strictly Single Contest 2008 – 2nd with editor; 1st with agent; full manuscript requested by editor (C Hwang – Berkley).
 - RWAust Single Title and Loving It 2008 – 3rd – full manuscript requested by editor (L. Pederson – Berkley).
 - RWAust Emerald Single title section – progressed through to the second round.
- Cathy Sneyd, writing as Leda Swann, has just signed a two book contract with Avon Red.
- Yvonne Lindsay has just been offered a new three-book contract for books scheduled for 2009.
- Clare Scott has had a book accepted by Walker books – young adult/children's.

I am sure that there is more good news out there, but this is all I have for now. Congratulations once again. Down-under writers are proving their worth in the world of publishing. May there be many more in the months to come.

There have been a few changes with RWNZ's area convenors. Check out the back page of this newsletter for the contact person in your area. If you have never been to a monthly meeting, I suggest you get along to one; they are wonderfully supportive. Each area has a different format for their meetings, but you can always count on there being lots of laughter, food and a good time had by all.

Well, that's my lot for this month. Keep up the writing and I hope you got your Clendon entries in by 29 February, if you're entering this year.

Yours in writing,
Pat Snellgrove
RWNZ President

Meet the Agent: Pamela Harty interview (continued from page 1)

How about an unpublished author?

We mostly look at the same things as we do with the published authors, but in this case it's important to us that they are willing to listen and trust the TKA team as we have been around the block before and offer a strong foundation for starting a career.

How do you (personally) like to work with your clients?

I like email because I can answer after-hours. But I do think it's very important to phone conference as well. The key to a great agent-author relationship is communication and it needs to go both ways. I need to know what my clients need from me and they need to know what we need too.

Can you tell us some of the publishers you've sold to in the last year?

2007 was a wonderful year. I sold to Simon and Schuster, NAL, Kensington, TOR, Harlequin, Baker Revell, Berkley, Tyndale, Avon, Harper Collins, Center Street.

How would you say the Knight Agency is different from other agencies?

I think one of the trademarks of our agency is our team approach. Each agent at TKA has unique tastes and insights that we bring to the table. We are constantly joining together to work on projects to find the best result for our clients. We work hard to stay informed of the current market, publishing trends, and marketing responsibilities to really help our clients stay on the cutting edge of the business. We are also lots of fun to work with and take our job very personally!

How has the Knight Agency changed over the last 2-3 years (for the benefit of authors who may have researched the agency previously, but their knowledge may now be out of date)?

Over the past 2-3 years we have really taken aggressive steps to move out of the "boutique" category. We have added multiple staff members and interns who have assisted in developing our marketing, internet, sub-rights, legal, and editorial capabilities. We now offer a much more diverse palate of opportunities and experience than we did three years ago that can really help take our authors to the next level in all aspects of their career.

Do you think category romance authors need an agent? How should they decide if they need an agent or not?

This is a great question and one we have discussed at length. The answer is yes, we think so. For example, if Harlequin makes an across-the-board language change in its contract that could be detrimental to the author, then he or she may very well need a strong advocate and we are here for them. Also, if a category author wants to move into single title, they are definitely going to need an agent to help them get their proposal in front of the best editor and help them adjust to the many differences in writing for the single title vs. category lines.

Is there a "favourite lament" you hear from editors about something they'd like to see but don't get enough of?

We hear the words 'high concept' all the time, but basically they are looking for the same things we are... fresh stories that are finely crafted and emotionally rich. Basically great writing is what we are all looking for!

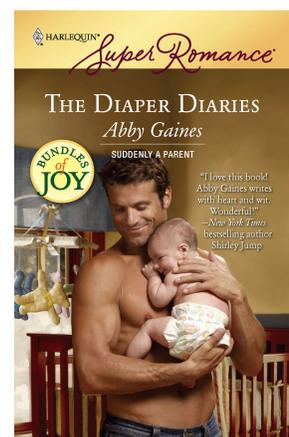
Apart from your own clients, who are some of your favourite authors / books?

I have always been an avid reader and one of the first adult books that I fell in love with as a pre-teen was Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca*. That book hooked me for life! In college I loved Herman Wouks' *Winds of War* and *War and Remembrance*. After college, I fell in love with *The Drifters* by James Michener and then went through a Pat Conroy faze. I also love Rosamund Pilcher's *The Shell Seekers*. Romance authors that I love include Deidre Knight, Sylvia Day, Kresley Cole, Suzanne Brockman and Lisa Kleypas, just to name a very few.

To query The Knight Agency, check out the agency's submission guidelines on http://www.knightagency.net/manuscript_submissions/

Abby Gaines writes for Harlequin Super Romance and Harlequin NASCAR.

Her latest book, *The Diaper Diaries*, will be out down under in April 2008.



MEMBER SUCCESSES

COMPILED BY JEAN DREW

A bumper crop this month!

Ellie Huse won first place in the Silicon Valley RWA Gotcha Contest (first 15 pages) in the Series Contemporary category.

Viv Constable won first place in the Gotcha Contest Series Mystery Suspense category. Way to go ladies.

Rosaleen Conway was published just before Christmas with *The Seeking Feet*. It's her sixth book, New Zealand fiction, set mainly in Tolaga Bay, Whangara and Gisborne. Great going, Rosaleen.

Merle White's *Disclosure* was launched as an e-book in January 2008 with the paperback version coming out about April 2009. Great news.

Congratulations to **Susan Napier** on *Just Once* becoming one of the top six best-selling for Mills & Boon in 2007. That's so cool!

Norah Hansen-Hill does it again with yet more contracts: Red Rose Publishing has picked up *Of Dragons* and *Emerald City*, and All Romance e-books has picked up *Cut & Polish*. Norah's comment, "I know I'll never have a month like this again!" Who says?

Robyn Donald, Nalini Singh and **Amanda Ashby** are nominated for awards by *Romantic Times Book Reviews* magazine; Robyn for *The Greek Tycoon's Virgin Wife* for Best Harlequin Presents Series Romance of 2007, Nalini for *Caressed By Ice* for the Paranormal Action-Adventure Romance Award and Amanda for *You Had Me At Halo* for the Contemporary Paranormal Romance award. We could have told them that, huh? ☺

More great news for **Nalini**. *Mine To Possess* hit the *New York Times* Extended list at #32. That's for the week BEFORE the official release! Comment from Nalini: Yippeee!!!!!!!

Gracie Stanners has been selected as a finalist in the North Texas RWA Great Beginnings contest in the Mainstream with romantic elements category! Final round editor: Liza Schwartz, Editorial Assistant, NAL. Keeping everything crossed for you, Gracie.

Congratulations to **Sandra Hyde** and **Zana Bell** for their placings in a different competition. No titles because the mss are entered into other contests. Well done.

Jean Drew took third place in the From The Heart Wallflower Opening Hook contest.

Sharon Arkell took second place in the East Texas RWA's Southern Heat Contest.

Yvonne Walus is an Amazon finalist and has picked up a new contract/publisher along the way. Well done, Yvonne.



As we say on the loop ...
have some cyber
choccies on us!

Please email news for Member Successes to
jeandrew@xtra.co.nz before the 15th of each month

the IMAGING centre ltd
FOR ALL YOUR DIGITAL PRINTING NEEDS



Over the past 12 years we have moved with technology and innovation that has kept us up with the most advanced digital printing shops in the country.

In the last 3 months we have taken the lead in technology and can now offer you **economical short run perfect bound books**, ie. novels, family trees, manuals from disk, hard copy in line digitally printed.

For an obligation free discussion or quote,
please call **09 298 9600** or **0800 IMAGING**
or email us imaging_centre@xtra.co.nz

Judging contests: What's in it for you?

by Kate Gordon

Most of us would agree that being able to write CONTEST WINNER or FINALIST on a query letter is going to go some way – hopefully a long way – to helping our work stand out from the many hundreds of submissions your targeted editor or agent sees each week.

So being a finalist or winning a well-planned romance writing contest offers us benefits. And, all going well, the score sheets generated by the many volunteers who help judge contests should also offer valuable feedback, and thus benefit our writing in the long term.

I'm just a beginner in terms of actually entering contests, so as a keen reader and a professional writer - but without any specific judging experience - I have judged quite a few RWNZ contests.

Just as our writing differs from person to person, so do the positive things we bring to the judging process. I write and edit for a living, albeit for commercial publications, so I've got a pretty good handle on grammar and punctuation. As an avid reader since about age three, I read widely and can appreciate a good story, a strong plot, good characters and authentic motivation and conflict, even if it's not specifically a genre I would normally read.

When I first put my hand up, I certainly questioned whether I had the right credentials to judge a romance writing contest, particularly as I hadn't written very much romance at the time. RWNZ's principal contests coordinator Ellie Huse encouraged me to give judging a go, reminding me to be impartial and as encouraging as I could with my comments.

I hope I've achieved those objectives, and I certainly always tried to put myself in the position of the entrant, trying to word my comments positively, always looking for something to praise as well as critique, because, ideally it's about helping the entrant improve their writing and take the next step on the l-o-n-g road to publication.

As you'll see from the following comments from judges I've talked to, there is an enormous sense of personal satisfaction in being able to give something back to RWNZ and our members through the judging process.

One writer who's published many books outside romance says: "The main benefits for me are satisfaction, hope and awe! Also learning! I consider it a privilege to be asked – it's so important and personal to the submitter. I only hope I do them and their hopes justice in my comments and marking. But I also learn so much from judging – what

works, what grates, how talented our people are. If they can take a most unlikely premise and make it work – and they do – I am in awe. Often the story has good bones but needs work – if I can help that author on their writing journey, it's so worthwhile. Often the person is obviously new to writing and has much to learn, this I can (gently) share with them – and bravo to them for actually giving it a go."

Another published writer says: "You hope your comments will encourage people to write better and read more."

"The main thing is that it's nice to give back and try and help other people," says one published writer who's judged contests for UK, US and NZ romance writers. "Also, I normally learn from it as well, i.e. if I can see where someone has gone wrong; I can try and not make the same mistake myself."

And a writer with 25 years' experience adds: "It is an honour to be asked to judge, a great responsibility, and fun to read the stories coming through by new and established writers, especially when you find a real gem."

So what are the objectives these judges aim to achieve?

- "To offer concise, constructive comments, and compliment and encourage good points."
- "It's all subjective, but you would hope you fulfil the judging criteria set by the competition organisers and that your comments are constructive."
- "To do exactly what I expect from any contest I enter – to be a fair, impartial, honest, and hopefully helpful judge."
- "Judges need to put aside personal preferences and try to be neutral. I think it's important to come to each manuscript fresh. And for this reason, we mustn't overload judges too heavily."
- "To be fair and to look at each entry as a separate item."



Judging contests cont.

- “I normally look for things like dialogue, pacing, conflict and character development. Occasionally I’ll make a comment on grammar, but only if there are some really big problems. I certainly never bother to nit-pick over a typo or an occasional error because those things are easily fixable.”

If you’ve never judged before, but think you might like to, do keep in mind the following comments:

- “Be honest in your comments. Read widely.”
- “Accept that not everyone will agree with you. Trust yourself! I suggest judges read the chapter/story at least twice (if possible) and with a break between readings, before writing comments in ink. It gives you thinking time.”
- “Simply – DO IT! It’s painless and fun, and a great experience. You will learn HEAPS yourself, and hopefully might help that person on their writing journey (plus you’ll be entertained!).

“To do your entrants justice, you need to set aside some unstressed time to do a basic read-through, and then again in more depth. I make notes as I go, then recheck anything that particularly annoyed or entranced me. I always look for the positives, even in what might not be very strong writing because if someone has taken the time to enter, they want to learn.

“I take judging very seriously because it is serious – these are people’s manuscripts that you’re criticising, their hopes and dreams, and lots of hard slog (not to mention \$\$\$).”

RWNZ’s principal contests coordinator Ellie Huse is frequently looking for people to help judge and coordinate our contests.

Judges for RWNZ contests (not including the Clendon Award) are drawn largely from the New Zealand-based membership. With last year’s Great Beginnings, Autumn Short Story and Meet the Agent Contests attracting 64, 35 and 55 entries respectively, the demand for judges within a three-month period was high.

Each entry is read by three separate judges so, in the case of the Great Beginnings Contest for which entries consist of 25 pages plus a synopsis, 192 sets of score sheets had to be divided among 20 judges. Two months later, more judges had to be found to read the 55 Meet the Agent entries (times three!).

A large pool of judges is therefore needed to cater for the demand throughout the year and it can sometimes be a challenge to find enough people who can afford the time to read entries when they’re already flat out with their own family, writing and business commitments.

If you think you would like to judge but you’re not sure whether you’re ‘qualified’ to do so, here are some questions to ask yourself:

- Do you read a lot? Do you read widely? Judges are provided with score sheets and guidelines, and it helps considerably to have thought about what constitutes a well-written manuscript.

- “Confidentiality is vital – don’t share stories, comments or criticisms with anyone, even though everything’s anonymous. You never know who knows who, and who’s read what - you might even be slugging off that person’s work! But most important, that’s not showing respect or integrity.

“I was quite chuffed to be asked – I simply didn’t think I had the experience, but everyone that judges brings something different to the experience. Don’t wait to be asked – volunteer. And judging is great for those who can’t get to meetings or do the hard slog of running RWNZ for whatever reason, those who may be shy, or new to RWNZ – it’s an opportunity to help out, not only the committee, but the other members, and that’s got to be good. Right?”

- “It’s intensely interesting to see what other people are writing, and how their writing compares with yours. You might get a very pleasant surprise how good your own is!”
- I definitely recommend it! Judging comps is an easy way to give back to the RWNZ and not only are you helping your fellow writers by seeing things that they might be too close to see, you’re also improving your own writing skill as well.

So if you’ve ever thought the standard of judging in RWNZ contests could be improved (!) or you’re looking for a way to give something back to the organisation and our members, read below what Ellie’s looking for in a judge and drop her an email if you’d like to be considered.

Judging contests cont.

- Do you know the difference between category and single title and the conventions that apply to each?
- Are you able to put aside your personal biases (and we all have them) and judge an entry objectively? For instance, you may not like books written in first person point of view or heroes with hairy chests or you're sick of reading about heroines who work in publishing but contestants are entitled to have any of those elements in their books. These are not reasons to give an entry a low score.
- Do you believe you have the ability to give constructive feedback? (i.e. an honest but tactful assessment of an entry: helpful, encouraging, supportive, courteous—never brutal or derogatory).

Judging the work of your peers can provide some interesting insights into your own writing and presents an opportunity to contribute to RWNZ. If you'd like to give it a try please contact me: Ellie Huse, Principal Contests Coordinator via email elliehuse@yahoo.com I look forward to hearing from you.

Author bio

For the past ten years, **Kate Gordon** has dabbled with writing mysteries and romances. This year she's got a lot more serious about finishing at least one manuscript. She (bravely) entered her first competition late last year and has been very encouraged by the judges' comments, although she reserves the right to disagree with one judge's opinion!



My Grammar and Me

My Grammar, to me, was the best kind of friend.
We'd spend time together. As the day'd end
She would tuck me up tight in my comfortable bed,
And weave tales of fantasy over my head
While her cat batted gently with subjunctive clause
At the knitting my Grammar kept just for indoors.

Her stories were compound - though some were
complex -
And I never quite knew what was happening next,
'Cause Grammar saw life from a different angle.
(She always let grumpy participles dangle.
With the only sure things parataxis and death
My Grammar believed in not wasting her breath!)

In one of her stories - Count Noun And The Goose -
A terrible serial comma was loose!
All subjects were sentenced to compound arrest
And although the Count did what he thought was the
best
Few voices were passive. Many entreated,
And some were just shouting [expletive deleted].

Count Noun and his soldiers they quartered the halls
While an army of predicates guarded the walls,
And they caught that rogue comma! A palpable hit!
(I'm told objects broke and infinitives split.)
Then factitive missions convened at great speed,
Addressing directly the singular need;
To keep closer watch on restrictive declension
And give violations their proper attention.

I loved Grammar's heroes. I'd dream in a daze
(I was going through my prepositional phrase)
Of a past perfect person of positive mien
In whom no irregular thing could be seen.
Of masculine gender specific was he,
And he rescued the heroine long before tea.

Yes, I loved Grammar's tales, all the fun and the glow
And I reduplicate them wherever I go.
Sure, I hope that my language and stuff is OK
But the story's the challenge ... I keep it that way.

© Grace Caldwell Stanners

Strictly Single Contest Review

From coordinator *Sandra Hyde*

Firstly, congratulations to all those who entered the 2007 Strictly Single contest and, in particular, the winning entrants as ranked by Cindy Hwang of Berkley Publishing, namely Beverley Eikli (1st), Kylie Short (2nd), Peta Mobberley (3rd), Iona Jones (4th), and Lisa Anderson (5th). Cindy has requested full manuscripts from the top three. Good luck, ladies. Our agent judge, Rachel Vater of Folio Literary Management also kindly gave feedback on the entries.

For those of you who don't know, the Strictly Single Contest is for members with manuscripts targeted at the single title market. Our final judges are selected, and the score sheet designed, with this in mind.

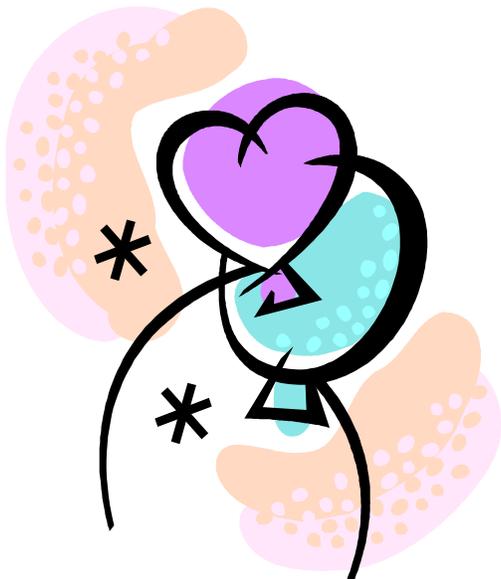
Our first round judges, many of them published authors, deserve a round of thanks for the time and effort they put into the marking and provision of feedback – often invaluable advice for taking your manuscript to the next level, and sometimes just a much needed affirmation that you're on the right track.

I've known, as an entrant, that contests can be a bit of a lottery. Sometimes there are judges who just don't 'get' your voice or your story. Sometimes there are judges who mark tough, giving a work they say they've enjoyed a score only slightly above average. But it really hit home as coordinator how widely the scores across a large number of the manuscripts can vary. We do what we can to level the playing field (e.g. dropping the lowest of the three judges' scores for any entry) but please remember that just because an entry didn't make the final cut does not mean it's not a good entry. I know of more than one published author whose first sale came from a manuscript that bombed in a contest.

One final note for those thinking of entering this, or other, contests, please read the contest rules carefully and ensure that you have followed all of them. It's too easy to miss something simple such as including a cover sheet, but it is important from the coordinator's point of view.

If you're considering coordinating a contest, go ahead and put your hand up – it's a valuable experience. And if you're considering entering the Strictly Single Contest for 2008, it closes in September.

Happy writing,
Sandra Hyde
Contest Coordinator



Final results of the 2007 Strictly Single Contest

Final Judge: Cindy Hwang of Berkley Publishing

1st ~ Beverley Eikli*

2nd ~ Kylie Short*

3rd ~ Peta Mobberley*

* Full ms requested!

Agent's Choice: Rachel Vater, Folio Literary Management

1st ~ Kylie Short

2nd ~ Beverley Eikli

3rd ~ Iona Jones

CONGRATULATIONS!

Digital Romance

News and views from the world of romance e-publishing



January and February were a rather spooky time in the e-publishing world. Last month I made mention of how many small e-publishers are opening and closing each month. This month it became hard even to know whether some of them were large or small, had this name or that name, or even if they were open or closed.

[January 10] Dead

Ocean's Mist Press was intending to close back in January 2007, but continued in the hands of previous owner's daughter. A year later it seemed like they had gone under after all. The death of a romance e-publisher, hardly a new phenomenon you might say... but wait....

[January 15] Alive

Logical-Lust Publications reopened their website <http://www.logical-lust.com> and they are seeking romance, erotic romance, and erotica. Least anyone misunderstand, despite the zombie-poser covers Logical Lust is a fairly long-lived erotica e-publisher who was simply going for a new look.

[January 19] The ghost of e-publishers past?

Venus Press closed back in April. But in January they suddenly reappeared like the website equivalent of the Marie Celeste, apparently with no one at the helm. It seems that they closed so precipitously no one ever took down the website until the authors asked the web host to suppress the site. It seems like this was just a glitch in the matrix, and they remain dead.

[January 20] My, what a big staff you have....

Romance Writers of America has a magazine called *Romance Writers Report*. In the January issue there is an interview with Rhonda Penders of *Wild Rose Press*. She reports, if accurately quoted, that they have "a full time staff of just over 60". I mean I have heard of nepotism, but that would make them one of the most massively overstaffed micro presses ever to exist. I can only assume that "full time" is a misquote.

[January 21] Alive and well

I would have to guess that *Ellora's Cave* is the top selling romance e-publishing. How much to they sell, you might ask? Well actually you don't have to ask as they were happy to let me know--in 2007 they released 414 new titles and in December they sold 74,000 copies in total. That includes sales of around 900 copies of each title in its first month after release.

[January 27] By another name #1

Mardi Gras closed back in September and returned the rights for all books to the authors. The owner started another publisher called *LA Media* in December. But due to howls of outrage *LA Media* kind of went underground. Then two things happened that meant not only does *LA Media* only kind of exists, it is also only kind of a different publisher from *Mardi Gras* which is meant to have stopped trading in preparation for declaring bankruptcy (and defaulting on all outstanding debts). For example, *LA Media* is listed at fictionwise.com but as they have only 3 releases they must be taking credit for some of *Mardi Gras'* books as [fictionwise](http://fictionwise.com) has a 10 book minimum for listing. Then some old listings of out of print *Mardi Gras* books at Barnes and Nobles,

while still out of stock, are now listed with *LA Media* as the publisher. Apparently the owner transferred all her ISBNs (used and unused) from the old to the new press.

[January 30] By another name #2

The press that was going to be known as *Dragon Spell Publishing* when it opened on May 5 is now going to be known as *Lyrical Press*. The reason was apparently that this was going to be less confusing...

[February 2] Undead?

Currently it seems like the *Ocean's Mist* website is back again. So, back to life or just some kind of reanimated corpse? Frankly, I don't know. I can't say I would be giving them the benefit of the doubt given reports of non-payment of their authors.

[February 3] Updates

One good site to watch if you want to keep up with events in e-publishing, or just love gossip, is Piers Anthony's *Publishing on the Web*. Updates were just posted: <http://hipiers.com/publishing.html>

[February 5] It's not all bad news...

Samhain has reopened to general submissions. For what it is worth, I have two books with this press and would recommend them.

[February 9] See?

"*Silhouette Nocturne* is looking to acquire paranormal editorial with strong sexual, fantasy and danger elements for its new eBook program, *Nocturne Bites*."

[February 12] Thud #2

At, um, rather short notice it was announced that *Aphrodite's Apples* is closing, effective February 13, 2008. They released books right up to the day before closure.

[February 13] Food for thought

Estimates of advances for mainstream novels from bloggers like Tobias Buckel and Justine Larbalestier are currently running at around \$5000-6000 (US dollars). Which makes me think that the overlap between mainstream and e-book annual earnings might be a little larger than I thought.

So in summary, *Dragon Spell* changed into *Lyrical*, *Mardi Gras* changed into *LA Media*, *Ocean's Press* changed owners. *Ellora's Cave* and *Logical Lust* are alive, *Aphrodite's Apples* is dead, *Venus Press* and *Mardi Gras* are showing signs of life but are actually dead, *LA Media* is keeping a very low profile and not seeking submissions but is alive, and *Ocean's Mist* is anyone's guess.

So, the more things change the more they stay the same. The best e-publishers can deliver earnings in the thousands – the worst won't even be here next month. The wise author is the one who can tell the difference.

Emily Veinglory

RWNZ WORKSHOP:

The Plot Within - finding and using subplots within your story By Abby Gaines

Part One: March 18-20

Part Two: March 26-31

Editors of long series and single title romances look for more complex stories than are found in a short series novel. For the writer, these longer stories can be very satisfying to write, as they allow more scope for secondary characters, and one or several subplots that can greatly enhance the book's main plot. For the reader, subplots and minor characters deepen the story and provide multiple points of attachment.

The best subplots either parallel or contrast with the main plot. They deepen conflict, enhance the character arc of the hero or heroine, and showcase different aspects of a story's theme.

This workshop discusses the different types of subplot and how to identify the best subplots – ones that will achieve all the above – that are already lurking in your main story. It then looks at how to weave the subplot into your story – when to start it, what structure it should take, where to fit it in, how much page-space it should occupy and when to finish it. Lastly, attendees will learn how to check that their subplot achieves all it was supposed to, and how to fix it if it doesn't.

About the instructor

Abby Gaines has sold a total of 12 books to Harlequin SuperRomance, Harlequin NASCAR and HQN Books.

For several years before she sold, Abby tried to write short contemporary romances. She could never resist the temptation to sneak engaging secondary characters and quirky subplots into her stories. Although editor rejection letters and contest feedback regularly mentioned that the reader preferred the secondary characters to the hero and heroine (ouch!), Abby was slow to grasp the implications.

At last, she woke up to the idea of writing longer stories where her minor characters and more complex plots could flourish. The very first long contemporary novel she wrote became her first sale, to Harlequin SuperRomance. (She'd obviously also figured out how to make her hero and heroine more appealing!)

Abby still includes subplots in all her stories, and readers often email to say how much they enjoy them.

How to participate

If you are already a member of the RWNZ Workshop loop (not the standard RWNZ e-mail loop) you will begin receiving the workshop when it begins.

If you would like to join the loop, please go to:
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/RWNZworkshop> and click on 'Join this Group' before 18 March. Details on how to unsubscribe from the loop are at the bottom of the workshop page.

Any questions about the workshop can be mailed to Barb Jeffcott Geris at geris@paradise.net.nz.



ROMANCE WRITING MARKETS

COMPILED BY PATRIKA SALMON

WITH ADDITIONAL DETAILS FROM CINDI MYER'S MARKET NEWS

Juno Books

Fiction Beyond the Ordinary—Wildside Press
Editor Paula Guran seeks fantasy with a focus on the female. Adventurous quests, dark secrets, light humour, deep desires, high imagination, mystery, metaphysics, magic, myth ... swept into the past, taken to a timeless otherworld, set in the future, or happening right now. Juno publishes books that go beyond the ordinary and take the reader with them.

- Adventures for women (hope they appeal to men too)
- Fantasies with a focus on female characters
- Strong female protagonists or women who grow and become empowered, discover themselves and new worlds
- Plausible well-built worlds - contemporary, set in the past, completely fantastic, or an alternate reality similar to ours
- We'd like some romance or a relationship involved, but we aren't looking for 'category romance' by any means. Our books are shelved as 'fantasy' not 'romance' but cross boundaries into mystery and other genres as well. Stories can be fairly erotic, but the focus is not on sex, but on character and story
- Currently interested in contemporary fantasy, often referred to as 'urban fantasy' - a woman with 'kickassitude' and supernatural power (or some paranormal connection)
- Open to fantasy of any type
- 80,000—120,000 words.

Submission guidelines: We accept only e-mailed submissions attached in .DOC or .RTF. Please submit three chapters (or equivalent sample) and a synopsis. Although not required, best to have a finished manuscript before submitting. If we like it, we usually want to see the entire manuscript right away before deciding whether to purchase. We are also still working on a tight schedule, so a substantially completed manuscript will be to your advantage. For established fiction authors, we may be more likely to buy based on three chapters (or equivalent sample) and a synopsis. E-mail: Submissions/Info: editor@juno-books.com; http://www.juno-books.com

Best New Romantic Fantasy 4 (2009 Edition)

Editor Paula Guran says: "The anthology, compiling works published in the year 2008, will be published in spring 2009. Both the Best New Romantic Fantasy 2 [2007 edition] and the first volume, Best New Paranormal Romance, are available now; the third volume will be out spring 2008. Reading them is your best opportunity to discover what we are looking for. So

we can have the book out early in 2009, reading must be done before the end of the year. Submissions should be made as soon as possible and reading will close on 1 Dec 2008. This is an annual 'best of'-type reprint anthology so we want only material published in 2008. (No original stories.) E-published material is acceptable, but please, no self-published fiction!"

- Looking for stories from all branches of sf/f that include a strong 'romance' element or, conversely, romance that is fantastic, supernatural, paranormal, futuristic, etc.
- Definitions are ambiguous. If in doubt, send it. Erotic romance and alternative sexuality are acceptable but the emphasis must be on well-written stories.
- If your work is scheduled for publication in November/December, please submit it now and indicate where and when it will be published.
- Although we will take copies of magazines, anthologies, or collections in which a story appears, we accept only e-mail submissions (attached in .DOC or .RTF) of stories if sent in outside of the original magazines, anthologies, or collection.
- E-mail us for snail mail address if you wish to send print magazines, anthologies, or collections.
- To avoid confusion, when sending material please put Best New Paranormal Romance 4 or BNPR 4 as subject line of e-mail.
- As with any 'year's best' anthology, the contents will be announced. You will be informed if chosen. No rejections will be sent out. No manuscripts returned.

E-mail: Submissions/Info: editor@juno-books.com
http://www.juno-books.com

Deadline: December 1, 2008.

Harlequin Mills & Boon has a new Black Star

Crime mystery series -- a new series featuring thrillers and crime fiction.

Mills and Boon, Harlequin Enterprises' British subsidiary, will launch Black Star Crime in August. After one hundred years of publishing romance, Mills and Boon plans to release five crime and thriller titles every two months. Following its successful category romance model, Black Star Crime will be heavily branded and priced at £3.99 (the same price as Mills and Boon Historical Romance). The books will be racked together in stores -- away from romance titles. Mills and Boon expects the series to sell 250,000 to 500,000 units a year (no word on whether that is world-wide or solely in the UK.) Black Star Crime will feature a wide range of stories, from cozy mysteries to thrillers.

ROMANCE WRITING MARKETS CONT.

Editors will be working with both new and established authors. HM&B will work with a book packager, Working Partners (<http://www.workingpartnersltd.co.uk/pages/writers.html>) who will be acquiring all the content and editing the books for the imprint.

08/new-writing-opportunity-in-paranormal-romance/ or <http://tinyurl.com/36q22k>

Red Rose Publishing

(<http://www.redrosepublishing.com>) is a relatively new e-book publisher of mainstream and erotic romance. The editors are actively seeking submissions in all sub-genres of romance and erotica. Right now they'd especially like to see stories featuring sheiks for their Desert Rose imprint.

They pay royalties on a sliding scale -- 40% for the first 300 books sold, 45% for 301-500 books sold and 50% thereafter. Submission guidelines on their website -- look on the far right hand side of the home page, under Extras.

Silhouette Nocturne, a line of sexy, dark paranormal category romance from Silhouette Books, is interested in 10,000 -15,000 word short stories, to be released electronically, for Nocturne Bites. The editors are looking for "fast-paced novellas that hook the reader early by establishing a paranormal world and its conflicts... stories of vampires, shape-shifters, werewolves, psychic powers, etc. set in contemporary times". Complete manuscripts may be submitted electronically. All the details are available at <http://paranormalromanceblog.wordpress.com/2008/02/>



THE WORLD OF PUBLISHING, INDUSTRY NEWS AND OTHER CONTESTS

Sources include Publishers Weekly, Publishers Marketplace, Cindi Myers Market Newsletter and RWA e-notes.

For those who don't know, Mavis Allen left Harlequin on the 31st December. Kelli Martin is the new editor for Kimani Romance.

Editor Beverly Sotolov is leaving Harlequin, where she was an editor for Harlequin American Romance and a couple of Super Romance authors.

Bloomsbury USA Eliminates Seven Jobs

Reacting to disappointing sales in 2007, Bloomsbury USA has eliminated seven positions, including that of publishing director Annik LaFarge. Bloomsbury USA head Karen Rinaldi said the difficult market conditions left no choice but to cut costs. Rinaldi said the cuts were made across the company. LaFarge's responsibilities will be divided up among other Bloomsbury executives. In September, parent company Bloomsbury plc said the U.S. division would not be profitable in 2007 and that it hoped to reduce costs through attrition, although it said it would consider

layoffs if sales didn't improve. The cuts, which included not filling one opened spot, bring the number of fulltime employees to 50.

Rinaldi said Bloomsbury will make a slight cut in the number of new adult titles it releases in 2008. Including its children's operations and Walker division, Bloomsbury published about 300 titles last year. "We'll try to put more focus on what we publish," Rinaldi said. The company also released the first titles in its new Bloomsbury Press imprint this month with approximately 15 books set for publication this year.

The 77th Annual Writer's Digest Writing Competition is now open for submissions. Top prize is \$3000 and a trip to New York to meet with four editors or agents. There are ten categories for both fiction and non-fiction. The entry fee is \$15 and the deadline to enter is May 15, 2008. All the details are online at www.writersdigest.com/contests/annual/77th/

RWNZ Contest News

For all contest queries, please contact Ellie Huse, RWNZ Principal
Contests Coordinator - elliehuse@yahoo.com

2008 Contest Schedule

Short Story Contest

- ♦ RWNZ, in association with Chapter Books & Café, presents the 2008 Short Story Contest
- ♦ Final judge: Julie Redlich, Fiction Editor, *Woman's Day*
- ♦ The theme is open but must be a contemporary romance
- ♦ No longer than 1500 words
- ♦ Entries must be postmarked by 28 March 2008
- ♦ The entry form is enclosed with this issue of Heart to Heart
- ♦ Contest coordinator is Kamy Chetty: kamy@kamychetty.net

Great Beginnings Contest

- ♦ RWNZ, in association with Harlequin Mills & Boon, presents the 2008 Great Beginnings Contest
- ♦ Final judge: Kimberley Young, Senior Editor, Mills & Boon, London
- ♦ Contest open only to category entries targeted at any one of the Harlequin, Silhouette or Mills and Boon lines
- ♦ Entries must be postmarked by 24 April 2008
- ♦ The entry form is enclosed with this issue of Heart to Heart
- ♦ Contest coordinator is Ellie Huse: elliehuse@yahoo.com

Meet the Editor/Agent Contest

- ♦ Entries close 23 May 2008
- ♦ Details to follow

Strictly Single Contest

- ♦ Entries close 26 September 2008
- ♦ Details to follow



CLENDON HELP STILL NEEDED

If you can help out with
administration of the Clendon
Award - the world's best contest for
unpublished romance manuscripts -
please contact Barbara Clendon via
email: reading@barbarasbooks.co.nz
or phone 09 263 5002

THANK YOU!

Other Writing Contest News

Compiled by Chrissie Ward & Gracie Stanners

Wergle Flomp Humor Poetry Contest

Seventh annual free contest with a special twist. Fifteen cash prizes totaling \$3,336.40. Top prize \$1,359. Submit one poem by April 1 deadline. No entry fee. Winning entries published online. Judge: Jendi Reiter. Sponsored by Winning Writers. Winning Writers is proud to be one of "101 Best Websites for Writers" (Writer's Digest, 2005-2007). Guidelines and online submission at <http://www.winningwriters.com/wergle>

Win a \$1000 in the Rodney Writes Writing Competition

Rodney District Council in association with Rodney Libraries presents the Rodney Writes Writing Competition.

First prize in the Premier category for previously published authors is \$1000. First prize in both the Novice and Young Writers category is \$500. All you have to do is write a short story based on a well-known New Zealand word or phrase that represents Kiwi culture to you.

This is a wonderful opportunity to capture the essence of what it is to be Kiwi by demonstrating in words the uniqueness, ingenuity and give-it-a-go attitude of New Zealanders.

See the entry form for terms and conditions. At <http://www.rodney.govt.nz/Community/RodneyWrites-entry-form.pdf>

Valerie Parv Award

Romance Writers of Australia
Deadline: 4 April 2008
Enter first 50p + 2p synopsis of your unpublished romance manuscript
Final judges: Valerie Parv will rank the three finalists and the top prize winner will also be read by Leslie Wainger, Silhouette Books, New York
Prizes:
1st - 1 years mentorship with Valerie Parv
2nd - 1 years RWA membership
3rd - book prize
Entry criteria: for unpublished writers only
Entry forms at: www.romanceaustralia.com

From the **RW America Romance Contests Loop** for April 2008 (via AngiPlatt@aol.com)

FOOL FOR LOVE

Deadline: April 1, 2008
Virginia Romance Writers (paper entries)
www.virginiaromancewriters.com

MADCAP AWARD

Deadline: April 1, 2008
Heart & Scroll RWA (for published only)
www.heartandscroll.com

MAGIC MOMENTS

Deadline: April 1, 2008
Heart and Scroll RWA (paper entries)
www.heartandscroll.com

THE ORANGE ROSE

Deadline: April 12, 2008
Orange County Chapter RWA (published and unpublished; paper entries)
www.occrwa.com

SHARE THE DREAM

Deadline: April 15, 2008
Scriptscene RWA (paper entries)
www.scriptscene.org

LOOKING AHEAD...

High Five Contest (RW Aus)
First five pages of category romance
Deadline: September 2008
Details via: www.romanceaustralia.com

Emerald Award

 (RW Aus)

First three chapters of category or single title romance; second round entrants submit full manuscripts.
Deadline: November 2008
Details via: www.romanceaustralia.com



MARCH RELEASES FROM

SEXY

INNOCENT WIFE, BABY OF SHAME

Melanie Milburne

Ruthless husband, pregnant wife...

As far as Patrizio Trelini is concerned, everything points to Keira Worthington's infidelity. Her ruthless Italian husband isn't a fool so he throws his temptress wife out into the cold.

Two months on, Patrizio needs his bride back in his life ... and in his bed. But his heart remains as guarded as the day he insisted she betrayed him. With her marriage revived, Keira has one last chance to prove she's not guilty. But she's just discovered she's pregnant. Will Patrizio insist paternity lies with another man, or accept the truth that Keira's having *his* baby?

SWEET

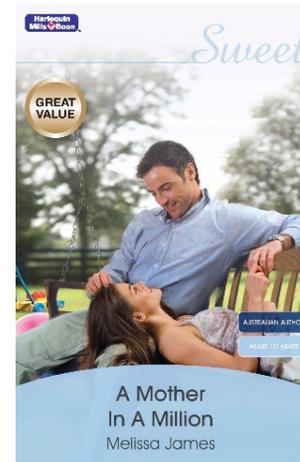
A MOTHER IN A MILLION

Melissa James

The family she'd always longed for...

Jennifer's heart went out to new neighbour Noah and his three little kids. Their mother had gone missing a few years before, and the single dad was struggling. All Jennifer could do was to be there for them. And, when the truth finally emerged, help them get over their loss.

For so long the attraction that simmered between Jennifer and Noah had been denied. Then out of the blue he offered his hand in marriage. But was it because he loved her—or because he needed a stand-in mother for his children?



CATTLE RANCHER, SECRET SON

Margaret Way

He's the toast of Australian society...

Cattlemen Cal McKendrick is under pressure from his family to produce an heir for the magnificent McKendrick homestead that lies deep in the Outback. Then he discovers he's already a father!

Gina Romano fell in love with Cal the moment she saw him - though she knew she had never be good enough for his society family. She had to keep her pregnancy from him. But now that Cal knows the truth, he demands she marry him. But Gina wants Cal's love, not just to be his convenient bride.

EXECUTIVE MOTHER-TO-BE

Nicola Marsh

From employee to mum-to-be...

Career-girl Kristen Lewis is at the top of her field. She's driven, sensible—and her spur-of-the-moment decision to have one night with sexy Nate Boyd was totally out of character. But just as she puts it all behind her, she finds out that she's pregnant, and Nate is her new boss!

Nate, one of Australia's leading entrepreneurs, buries himself in his work to forget his private torment. But now he's faced with a dilemma: the first woman to tempt him in a long time is his employee. Life is suddenly about to get a whole lot more complicated.

MEDICAL

FOUND: A FATHER FOR HER CHILD

Amy Andrews

Charmed by a mother and her little daughter...

Carrie Douglas is put to the test when her latest assignment puts her in the path of sexy and unconventional doctor Charlie Wentworth, who spends every waking hour caring for Brisbane's neediest citizens at his drop-in clinic.

Charlie is a man who would be the perfect husband and father. So how can she tell him that she has been sent to assess the viability of his clinic without destroying the trust and love growing between them—and her dream that they might one day become the family she has always longed for?

HARLEQUIN MILLS & BOON

HER VERY SPECIAL BABY

Lucy Clark

The baby he needs...

His skill, charm and caring nature make gorgeous doctor Nathan Young a wonderful addition to the practice. He lavishes attention on his patients, but after the loss of his wife and newborn child he can't face treating young children again.

Beautiful single mum and colleague Morena Camden can see that the memory of Nathan's family affecting him both professionally and personally, and she desperately wants Nathan to overcome his hurt. Could Morena and her adorable son by his side be just what Nathan needs?

SPECIAL EDITION

A MOTHER IN THE MAKING

Lilian Darcy

Carmen O'Brien has a lot on her plate - Including raising her orphaned siblings. And if that isn't enough, a gorgeous, sexy new man has just entered her life.

But who has time for gorgeous, sexy new men? Carmen has to put family first. Except then she discovers she's bound to Jack Davey for good...

DESIRE SINGLES

PRIDE & A PREGNANCY SECRET

Tessa Radley

"I'm having your baby."

They were words she would never speak to her lover, Ryan Blackstone, Australia's richest gem dealer. For Jessica Cotter was his secret mistress, with him only for torrid sessions behind the drawn drapes of his bachelor bedroom.

Jessica had no future with the man whose mantra was "No kids, no carats". Though she knew the rules, Jessica had broken them. Now she had no choice but to walk away from Ryan ... unless the man with a heart as hard as diamonds could learn to love her back.

TYCOON'S VALENTINE VENDETTA

Yvonne Lindsay

A dish best served hot...

For take-no-prisoners tycoon Hunter Dolan, there was nothing more delicious than payback. Ten years after his passionate nights with Lily Fontaine, and the Fontaine's fatal betrayal of Hunter's family, bitterness still fuelled his success. Now he was *this close* to destroying the Fontaine Empire and ultimate victory.

Luring Lily back to his bed was the master stroke in his revenge plot; having the socialite bear him the child he'd long been denied would be a just dessert.

SUPERROMANCE

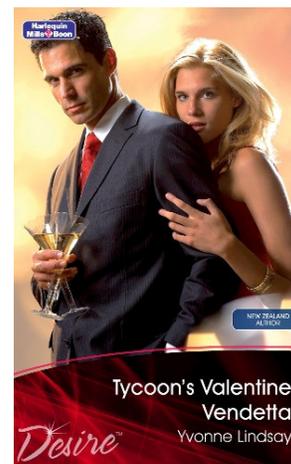
MR. UNFORGETTABLE

Karina Bliss

Whose side is the mayor on?

Luke Carter can never forget that he had been abandoned as a child. And that's why the millionaire and former Olympian is driven to build his camp for underprivileged kids in Beacon Bay. If only the rural New Zealand community trusted his motives.

And if only the beautiful widow mayor, Liz Light, would stop grieving long enough to prove where her loyalties lie - with Luke or her late husband - and show him once and for all which man is truly unforgettable.



RWNZ news from around the regions

Regional convenor contacts

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

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

MANAWATU – Joanne Cleland
email: d.j.cleland@xtra.co.nz

HAWKE'S BAY – Ginny Suckling
email: ginny.suckling@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 Emily Gee on membership@romancewriters.co.nz

NELSON

Our lovely convenor, Sue MacKay, has moved out of town and onto greener pastures, so Sally Astridge and Cherie Skinner have offered to take on the challenge as a job-share.

At our first meeting of 2008 we plan to watch a DVD of a romantic comedy, followed by questions for discussion. We'll be watching for things such as characters' personality traits, plot construction, turning points where characters start to change, etc.

Saturday 8 March at 2pm. Please contact Sally or Cherie for more details.

CHRISTCHURCH

Six of us have entered the Harlequin online competition and now that is over we will be planning our next few meetings and workshops.

This month we farewell Kathryn Taylor as our wonderful and inspiring group coordinator after ten years of keeping the group afloat. Kathryn has always given generously of her time, energy and knowledge. Fortunately she will remain as a talented and popular member of our group.

Our new coordinator is Sue Knight and our next meeting is Thursday 21 February, 7.30pm, at Memories Café, cnr Papanui and Harewood Rds, Christchurch. For information contact Sue Knight 3554 735 or sueknight@ihug.co.nz.

AUCKLAND

The first meeting of the year was a great success and very well attended. Yvonne Lindsay ran a workshop on "making the most of your strengths and taking your weaknesses along for the ride".

In March, Jane Beckenham, Norah Hansen Hill and Yvonne Walus will be letting us in on "the secrets of their selling success. Anyone on the loop will know how well these ladies have been selling this year and it's still only February.

So come join us at the Three Kings Tennis Pavilion on Saturday 1 March.
Address: corner of Mt Albert and Mt Eden Roads.

Time: 12.30pm. Bring a small plate for lunch and expect to be excited by the raffle prizes.

March's discussion: Leap Year and other romantic myths - where do they come from?

WAIKATO, BAY OF PLENTY & KING COUNTRY

The first 2008 meeting of the BOP/Waikato Writers was held at the Lilypad Café in Cambridge on Saturday 16 February. Our exercise was a half-page description of characterisation of either your hero or heroine.

Our March meeting will be in Lyn Rasmussen's home in Rotorua on Saturday 16 March. We are a friendly group which meets monthly and new members are always made to feel welcome.

For more information contact Liz Heywood on liz.heywood@gmail.com who has taken over the role of convenor from our very able friend Gaylene Atkins. Many thanks, Gaylene, for all your hard work over the past year.

News from around the regions cont.

HAWKE'S BAY

We had our first meeting of this year on 16 February at Ginny Suckling's house. As our group has dwindled over the past year, it was great to welcome two new members, Amanda Ashby and Sally Rigby. It was more of a social get-together as we got to know one another over a cup of tea and homemade scones.

We discussed when we would meet again and decided on meetings every two months. The next one should be about 12 April at June's but I'll confirm this nearer the time. If anyone wants to know more details they can contact me on 06 843 9715 or ginny.suckling@xtra.co.nz.

WELLINGTON

Nine of us met at Ellie's home for our usual gossip-fest, chocolate overload and encouragement session.

Prospective new member Joan shared a Historical Society item she had written about her father who built and flew his own aeroplane at the age of 20 – only ten years after the Wright brothers.

Ellie read the first chapter of a new *Sexy Sensation* she is currently working on. Given the standard of Ellie's writing (recent finalist in the Silicon Valley Gotcha contest and into the next round of the Emerald), this was hugely enjoyed by everyone.

Cathy kindly gave away copies of her *Sugar 'n' Spice* erotic anthology – we'll see if Joan ever reappears!

We meet at 1 o'clock on the first Saturday of each month at 135 Milne Drive, Paraparaumu.

GETTING TO KNOW "US"

As the editor of *Heart to Heart*, Kate Gordon seeks to know the RWNZ membership better, what you want to achieve with your writing, what you love about books and reading, and so on.

From time to time, she'll ask a few questions that relate to writing, reading, romance and where we're at in our writing career.

The idea is that we can all know more about our fellow members, see there are others in similar situations in terms of writing ability and publishing experience and, as we often do with the RWNZ email loop, share and learn from others' experiences for our mutual benefit and interest. Future story ideas for *Heart to Heart* will undoubtedly arise.

If you want to contribute, you'll have two weeks to reply to Kate via email with your answers which she'll collate and include in the next issue of *Heart to Heart*.

Feel free to suggest questions in the future.

Please email Kate with your **brief response** to the following questions by 15 March. (No more than 25 words per answer please – you'll have to self-edit! It's too hard to collate into percentages otherwise.)

1. Why do you write?
2. When did you first start writing?
3. When did you first start writing romance?
4. Are you published or unpublished in romance fiction?

Thoughts of the month

Be determined to handle any challenge in a way that will make you grow.

Les Brown

The way to achieve a difficult thing was to set it in motion.

Kate O'Brien, 1943

Welcome new members!

Lynette Hedrick – Auckland

Bud Hedrick – Auckland

Trish Lemberg – Tauranga

Mary McKinnon Simons – Kapiti Coast

Louise Williams – Auckland

Carolyn Joy Holm – Australia

Karen White – Christchurch

THE NAKED WRITER

Baring all in the world of romance and writing

Bits and bobs...

... I had the pleasure of judging an RWNZ contest recently and I feel compelled to say, gosh, there is some amazing talent out there. Most of the entries I read were as good if not better than some of the books I've paid hard cash for. Just a reminder to all us un-pub's to keep on trucking.

... Haven't heard much about the lovely Sharon Sala too much, but Publishers Lunch reported her latest deal – a whopping \$500,000 with Mira with Leslie Wainger editing. Sharon is represented by the Meredith Bernstein Literary agency

... Wendyl Nissen, the former women's mag editor, is writing a romantic thriller. She said in her memoir, *Bitch and Famous*, out from Penguin late last year (a fascinating read, by the way, if you're interested in local media. Well worth getting your hands on a copy), "I'm trying to write a little every day, as most authors advise. It's not easy but the story haunts me."

Actually, she doesn't say it's a romantic thriller in her book, but it does say on her blog she's writing a romantic thriller, so the Naked Writer, being a top notch, investigate reporter, of the ilk of Woodward and Bernstein, has put two and two together. What's the bet Wendyl gets a local publisher to grab it up, too, once it's done

... Erin Cartwright Niumata, our agent from 2006, is finally leaving Avalon. Yes, she is still there, and is scheduled to depart at the end of February. You may recall Erin was to be leaving Avalon at the end of 2006, where she would take up agenting with Folio Literary Agency full-time, but another Avalon staff member left, which meant Erin had to continue. Then she had a baby ... interestingly, some nine months after the conference. Hmmm... So it might be well worth re-queyering Erin again (www.foliolit.com) if you met her at our 2006 conference, since it looks like finally she's full-time agenting.

I still don't know these women do it with their babies and careers. I honestly don't. ..



... Abby Gaines scored two four-star ratings in the latest *Romantic Times* with *The Diaper Diaries* ("a fun story with a novel premise") and another of her NASCAR stories, *Fully Engaged*. Well done!

Abby has sold a sequel, *The Diamond Diaries* to SuperRomance and two other books as well. I can see why she had to leave the *Heart to Heart* editing job – she's going to be glued to the keyboard for a while.

... Aussie Robyn Grady got a four-star for her Modern Extra (know Sexy Sensation here). The *Romantic Times* reviewer said, "Grady wonderfully captures feelings of love, envy, insecurity and ego in this terrific tale." Ditto, I loved this story, "Hired for the Boss's Bed." Robyn writes for both Desire and Sexy Sensation.

... And of course, finally, there is Nalini... dear Nalini. On the *New York Times* bestseller list, the holy grail of bestseller lists. Not an easy thing to achieve.

Consider, for example, Anne Stuart. She made the NYT for the first time in 2006 and she had a massive career behind her – 30 years with 50 odd books. She was first published in 1974 by Ballantine according to her Wikipedia entry – and she only appeared on the NYT list two years ago.

Nalini hasn't been published that long in the scheme of the things. Has any other New Zealand writer even been on the NYT list? I don't know. *Mr Pip* was big last year, but not sure where it went on the actual lists and *the bone people* was massive too. My top notch investigative reporting (via www.google.com) reveals it was reviewed by the NYT but I can't see if it placed on the list.

Now, whether there's a RITA nomination in the next month or so, for Nalini, or any of our other authors, who knows, but I'm crossing my fingers. What a way to start 2008.

Check out *The Naked Writer* blog:
<http://johill.blogspot.com>