

HEART TO HEART

JULIE COHEN

Interviewed by Soraya Nicholas



Julie Cohen is a UK based author, who writes for Harlequin Mills & Boon Modern Heat, single title publisher Little Black Dress, and recently as B. H. Dark for Samhain.

Julie, tell us a little about yourself. How long have you been writing for, and when did you sell your first book?

I grew up in Maine, USA, and I've been writing ever since I can remember, though I wrote my first "novel" when I was eleven, in a notebook, with pictures. I wrote (bad) poetry and (not so bad) comics in school and at university, and had them published in various places. In 1992 I moved to the UK to do a postgraduate degree in nineteenth century children's literature, and in my spare time I started writing a romance novel for fun. I didn't really pursue romance writing for publication until 2001, when I sent off my first query to Harlequin Temptation. It came winging back with a rejection, which is hardly surprising as it was about a tattoo artist and a TSTL heroine who mistakenly bust a drug smuggling ring. Der.

I wrote two further novels aimed at Temptation, which were also rejected, though the second received very encouraging comments. I decided I'd write one more, and then I'd give up and try for another publisher. The last-ditch novel, FEATURED ATTRACTION, was requested by Harlequin and finalled in the RWA Golden Heart contest in 2004. After that, things happened very quickly: I signed on with an agent for my single titles and a month later, a week before the RWA national conference in Dallas, Brenda Chin rang me to tell me I'd sold to Harlequin Temptation. (You can imagine the parties I had at that conference!) However, Temptation immediately folded in North America (it wasn't my fault, honest) and so my book was taken on by London Mills & Boon editorial, which was handy for me as I don't live far from London.

There was a lag for nearly two years before publication, but my agent and I were very busy in that time, so that when 2006 finally rolled around, I had four books released with Harlequin Mills & Boon, and one released with Little Black Dress. Oh, and that was the year I had my baby, too.

What are you working on now?

I'm working on my fifth Little Black Dress, called NINA JONES AND THE TEMPLE OF GLOOM. It's a contemporary romantic comedy about a girl who loses everything and ends up broke in a gothic mansion with an upstairs neighbour she believes is a vampire. My next project will be a contemporary women's fiction novel for the mainstream imprint Headline Review (part of Hachette Livre UK). It's a new challenge for me, and I'm very excited about it. Fortunately I have a great editor and agent to guide and encourage me.

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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

Super woman, Kate Gordon, has regretfully had to hand over her editor duties. The decision has been made to divide up the job to lessen the load on any one person and we now have three editors.



Soraya Nicholas- Features & Interviews

My whole life revolves around writing. By day I work as a freelance journalist and by night write romance. At the moment I am madly working on a requested full manuscript for Special Edition, and every other spare second is spent feeding and exercising horses and dogs! After four years of writing seriously, I am hoping publication is a tiny bit closer . . ."



Suzanne Perazzini- Design and Layout

I have belonged to RWNZ for about six years and have been writing seriously for that length of time. I have two books out with Wild Child Publishing and Red Rose Publishing with a third one out in November. I am currently targeting Harlequin Intrigue and will shortly have a manuscript winging its way across the ocean.

Sue Knight- Regional news and competitions

Hi, I'm Sue and I've been dabbling in fiction writing for 20 years and seriously dabbling for about five years.

My writing focus has changed this year from Sweets to Single Title and my aim for 2008 is to complete a whole manuscript. In other words: to stop dabbling and get business-like. I'm also working on a novel for older children. Over the years, my paid writing has included training programmes, handbooks, policies, articles and a non-fiction book called Accessible Canterbury.

Reminder

Our annual fees are now due and must be paid up by November 15th to avoid a re-joining fee.

Membership Secretary, Rachel, can be contacted by email with any queries:

rachel.collins@xtra.co.nz

PRESIDENT PAT



Welcome

I hope you have all been taking advantage of the truly fantastic weather that has finally hit our country. I've been told that a cold snap is coming again but meanwhile make the most of the sun. Of course sunny weather is not for staying inside but getting out and enjoying and for writers that is a very bad move. I am sure that like me there are people out there who can not sit down at the computer when the sun is shining brilliantly. I want to be outside enjoying it not inside missing it.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Kate Gordon our newsletter editor for all her fantastic work over the last few months. Because of pressure of work she has had to step down from this position and Soraya Nicholas, Suzanne Perazzini and Sue Knight have stepped in to do the newsletters until Soraya takes over next year. Thank you ladies for volunteering for this very important job.

Your conference committee met on the 18 October to forward plan for the 2009 conference, A Capital Affair to be held on the weekend of 21-23rd August. If you have any suggestions on what you would like to see at this conference please do not hesitate to email any of the executive. We will be calling for workshop ideas at a later date, so get your thinking caps on. A form to apply to hold a workshop will be in the next newsletter, so look out for it.

Several members have started receiving H2H by email. If you would like to try this method of getting our newsletter please contact Kamy Chetty at kamychetty@yahoo.com. I received my first copy by email this month and found it great.

If you have not joined the RWNZ loop then you really should. To join send a blank email to NZromance-subscribe@yahoogroups.com or contact Kris Pearson at kris.p@paradise.net.nz. It is a mine of information as well as the first point of call for all the good news, of which there has been heaps over the last few weeks. New Zealanders continue to do well in overseas and local competitions and continue to gain new writing contracts. See the Member Success column for more on this.

Don't forget to keep working on those Clendon entries. Before you know it the closing date in February will be here. The Clendon continues to be our top competition and from the winners have come many writing contracts. You too could be one of those, but first you have to enter. So get writing.

Well that's about it from me at the moment, so keep writing.

Regards,

Pat Snellgrove

President, RWNZ

rwnzpresident@xtra.co.nz

Julie Cohen cont.

How do you juggle writing for 3 completely different publishing houses?

I sort of don't. I can only work on one project at a time; I'm mostly a pantser, not a plotter, so I need to be immersed in a story to figure out what happens in it. So I've arranged my deadlines so that I have enough time to complete one book before working on the next. Of course in practice, it's not that neatly compartmentalised--for example today I did promo for my current Little Black Dress in the morning, wrote my next Little Black Dress in the afternoon, and copy edited the B. H. Dark novel in the evening

Your "other" writing name is B. H. Dark. How did you come up with such a mysterious name, and what sort of books does Ms Dark write?

B. H. Dark is really me and Kathy Love, who writes paranormal romances for Kensington in the USA. Kathy and I have been friends since high school, where we used to sit in the back of our classes writing novels about us having sex with various rock stars. As we grew up, we both kept the dream of being writers and we've been crit partners and mutual support, pre-publication and since. We wrote CLOSE ENCOUNTERS for fun when we were both between books, and it was a total blast--we wrote over the phone and Instant Messenger, and loved it so much that I think we completed a 100K manuscript in something like six weeks, laughing the entire time.

The mysterious name...well, that's a mystery.

B. H.'s stories are funny, very sexy and totally outrageous. We let our imaginations run wild, which some might say is sort of a scary thing.

Do you have an agent? And if so, do they help manage your deadlines?

I'm very lucky to be with Teresa Chris, who has her own agency in London, and who took me on before I was published. Teresa only handles my single-title work; I manage my Mills & Boon and B. H. Dark work myself. So it's up to me to handle the deadlines for the different publishers, although she discusses it all with me and offers me advice. Since she's always right, this advice is pure gold. For the past few months I've been struggling a bit with my current project, which took a long time to find its own structure, and she's rung me up every couple of weeks to give me a little pep talk.

What's an average writing day for you?

My dream came true in 2007 when I quit my teaching job to be a full-time mum and writer. So most days, I juggle both of those jobs. My son goes to a child minder for two afternoons a week, and as soon as he's been dropped off, I run to my computer and try to write as much as I possibly can. Usually I'll get about 2000 words done on each of those days, when I'm writing a first draft, or a good chunk of revision, if that's what I'm doing. On the days he's home with me, I write during his nap and in the evening after he's gone to bed. I

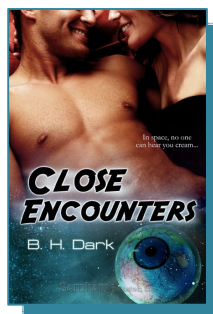
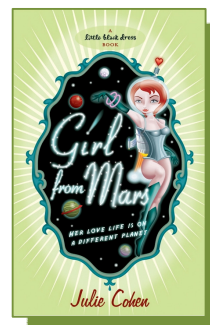
set myself a goal of 1000 words a day on those days. Some days the words come quite quickly, and I can relax in my spare time. Some days, it takes every spare moment I have. I take Sundays off, for pure undiluted family time.

I mostly I write at my dining room table, at my Mac. If I get stuck, and if I can, I'll try to go to a cafe and write by hand, which always helps.

As you can imagine, the housework is rather neglected. But my family and my job are more important.

Tell us about your upcoming releases. What's coming up for your fans late this year and in 2009?

My next release under my own name is GIRL FROM MARS, coming from Little Black Dress in May 2009. It's a romantic comedy about a female comic book artist who takes a vow (in Klingon) not to get a boyfriend.



B. H. Dark's debut novel, CLOSE

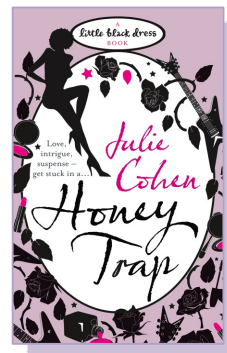
ENCOUNTERS, is out as an ebook from Samhain Publishing from October 2008, and it's an erotic science fiction romantic comedy about four humans who are abducted by aliens in order to form an intergalactic porn empire. It'll be out in paperback next July.

Lastly, are there any authors who particularly inspired you in your pre-published years?

Ohhhhhh yes, too many to name. But I think the ones who made me want to write women's fiction were Marian Keyes and Jennifer Crusie, and the ones who made me want to write category romance were Leslie Kelly and Heather MacAllister and Liz Fielding. I revelled in their stories and their voices and their structure, but mostly the way they just make you feel good. I'm also a member of the Romantic Novelists' Association in the UK, and the authors there are encouraging and supportive, true friends. M&B author Kate Walker took me under her wing before I was published and gave me some of the best advice I've ever received. The romance community is a wonderful place and I feel lucky to be a part of it.

A huge thank you to Julie for taking the time to talk to us! Her latest release from LBD is Honey Trap, with Girl From Mars out in May '09.

B. H. Dark's debut book is available now. Visit Julie at www.julie-cohen.com, and <http://bhdark.blogspot.com>.



NATALIE ANDERSON

Interviewed by Soraya Nicholas

No writer can moan about "lack of time" once they've had an insight into Natalie's life. With four kids under six years, and having sold her first book only days after giving birth to twin daughters, she is an inspiration to us all. Now, having just completed her 8th book for M&B Modern Heat, Natalie shares with us what she's doing 2 years on from that first book sale.

So Natalie, you've just finished book number eight. How have you managed that many books in 2 years?

Ummm, I'm not really sure! One foot in front of the other I guess. I look back at that first year and a lot of it is a blur...when I think about some of the tricky times (health-wise) with the twins I shudder... but I'm never happy without a project on, so I just sort of kept on going because it keeps me sane. I must say I have the world's most supportive husband. In recent months I've needed more time at the library during the weekends and he takes the kids off and entertains them. It'll get a little easier in a year because the twins will turn 3 and go to some form of early childhood education a couple of mornings a week, and that means I'll have that DAY time to write - wahoo!!!

We all know the life of a writer is a pretty unglamorous one, but you had a fabulous trip recently to London and went to the annual AMBA (Association of Mills & Boon Authors) Lunch. What was it like?

Oh it really was FABULOUS! Well, it was also a little scary but that feeling went when the wine slid down :) It was really exciting to be in the same room as some huge M&B 'names' and they were all wonderful. It was particularly cool to meet some of the other 'Mod Hotties' in person. But the best thing by far was meeting my editor - weird to finally meet someone you've worked so closely with for two years... we giggled a lot!

The dreaded question: On your tour of the office, did you see a slush pile?

No!!!! I forgot to ask. I was so busy feeling bamboozled and gabbling because I was nervous... but I did see one shelf with a sign that had 'reject' scrawled in pink highlighter. The shelf was empty though...

What were the editors like in real life?

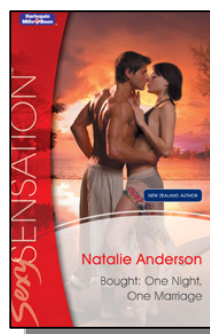
Like our heroines - all gorgeous and funny and kind.

What do you think makes a great Modern Heat?

Sparkle and wit, hot sex, an even hotter hero, fun set-ups, universal hang-ups, fear, searching, change and redemption... it can all be there in a great MH... but most of all I love the happy ever after!

What's next for you? What are you busy writing at the moment?

I'm just about to dive into a Nanowrimo month! I have a novella due in December and I have another story bubbling - so I'm about to attempt something I've never tried hard out before - ie writing a little of each every day... it could get confusing! I'll be checking in each day of November on the Nano thread on eharlequin.com - hopefully I'll see some other Kiwis playing there!!?



Look out for Natalie's latest release, **BOUGHT: ONE NIGHT, ONE MARRIAGE**,

out now. To visit her on-line, go to:

www.natalie-anderson.com

WRITING GREAT SEX

By Natalie Anderson ©



Thinking about targeting a “sexy” category line?

Then read Natalie Anderson’s . . . loving writing loving!

Ok, let me be bold and admit it. I love writing sex scenes. I think they’re a challenge, a great way of revealing your characters (not just their nudity!) and they can be a lot of fun! I think to be able to write a successful love scene, you have to enjoy it. If you don’t enjoy writing it, no one is going to enjoy reading it. Obviously the degree of intimacy and detail you go into is going to depend on your own comfort zone, what line you’re writing for, and who your intended

audience is. But let’s say you’re up for writing sex, and possibly targeting a ‘passion’ series - like Sexy/Sexy Sensation/Desire/Blaze, i.e. where that bedroom door is open and the reader is with you all the way....

Before you begin you do have to accept that not everyone is going to approve. What one reader might love, another might loathe – or worse still, not be moved at all! Deal with it. Then leave your mother and your mother-in-law at the door – in fact, leave everyone at the door except you and your characters. When writing love scenes I am never thinking about what my editor or mother or husband or anyone is going to think when reading them. In fact, when I’m drafting, I couldn’t give a stuff. It’s just me and those two characters and nobody else. Focus on them and only them... what are they thinking, feeling, saying, doing... how and why and when and where...

There is no one else in the room, and there is nothing else to worry about other than exploring those two people in that moment.

I think that writing sex requires bravery on the writer’s part. And for me the easiest way to lose the fear is to pretend that no one will ever read it. Then, when they do and you get some of those ‘where do you get your inspiration’ questions? Why then, you just smile.

Getting to the nitty gritty, I’m not a fan of waffley euphemisms that make me spend two minutes trying to work out what the writer is talking about. A penis is a penis. (Although I admit I use ‘erection’ more). Find the descriptive language that works for you, but I do think there is a lot to be said for keeping it simple. Read widely in the line you’re targeting – you’ll soon see if there are some words that aren’t used. Let’s face it, some words just aren’t that romantic!

There are many ‘writing sex’ articles out there that’ll tell you not to go on about the physical aspects too much – the whole “insert A into slot B = boring reading thing”. They suggest you focus on feelings, other senses and so on. And that’s good, valid advice.

But I confess... I'm always wondering – what are they doing??? Maybe this is just me, I have a strong need to know thing, in fact I am the person who always, always reads the end of the book first (even when it's a romance and I know the HEA is assured). So I like the where and how and why. Of course I still want to know how they're feeling and whether they're laughing and what they're saying and whatever. But I also want to know the details. How a person makes love to another tells the reader a lot about that person – about how they feel about themselves and how they feel about the person they're being intimate with.

At the same time, remember the fantasy element – this is dream lover stuff! My heroes are champions. They're big, strong and virile with blessed endurance and stamina. In a Sexy Sensation, the hero is the heroine's ultimate temptation – the lover she just can't say no to. He needs to live up to her expectations! (But yes, be credible at the same time).

Much is made of maintaining sexual tension and in a hot story, how do you regain/maintain that tension once they've done it so early on (as they often do, or mine do anyway)? The answer comes from the fall out from the intimacy – the more these people reveal themselves to another, the more complications arise. Sex always complicates things. And as their relationship changes and develops, so does the sex. So you can use the love scenes within the novel to show the journey of their relationship – both the steps forward and back. Basically, love scenes should be completely character driven. And your understanding of their characters is what will make the sex between those two unique. Even the little details – under his jeans does he wear briefs or boxers or not bother with underwear at all? Is he quietly confident or arrogant, cheeky or intense, putting her first... (to that last – he better be!)

By knowing your characters and understanding where they are in their emotional arc at the time they're intimate together, you'll keep your scenes unique and stop them from becoming repetitive. Because every time is different as they're in a different level of their relationship. You shouldn't be able to divorce the love scene from the book. It is the action and there must be reaction. If you can delete the love scene and not have to rewrite the next section to make the book make sense, then you should delete the love scene.

So where do you find 'inspiration'? Firstly it's the characters themselves. You should know them so well, you'll know how they'll act and react, what they'll do/say and why. More broadly though, newspapers and magazines are great for keeping up with trends and identifying issues. I once read a sex survey that talked about the high percentage of woman who've never achieved orgasm through penetrative sex. This got me thinking... and so Cally, my heroine in Bought: One Night, One Marriage, is in that percentage... but not for long of course! Blake helps Cally achieve a lot of things that she never thought were possible for her. The orgasm detail is just one example and adds a layer to the story. And one, I admit again, that was a lot of fun to write!

Writing sex isn't easy but it is always interesting. Just shut your door, give yourself the mental privacy to be brave, be bold and then find out how far you and your characters are willing to go...

To find out if Cally did achieve that satisfaction, read Natalie's latest release! Bought: One Night, One Marriage is out now.

MEMBER SUCCESSES

Sold

Yvonne Walus sold "Danger, Word Games" to Red Rose Publishing and "The Seventh Taboo" to The Wild Rose Press.

Jean Drew has sold YESTERDAY'S DREAMS, set in the Bay of Islands, to Highland Press. Release date to be announced.

Yvonne Lindsay has been offered, and accepted, a contract for a Christmas themed book with Silhouette Desire. The story, as yet untitled, will be released in the North American market December 2009.

Competitions

Jackie Coats - runner up in the Feel the Heat; Modern Heat contest run by Mills and Boon.

Awards

Nominated for Eppie – Wandering Minstrel **Ann Patrick**, Cherished **Beth Heywood**, Beneath the Surface **Suzanne Perazzini**

Officially Released

Suzanne Perazzini ROUGH JUSTICE released by Red Rose publishing –11 September 2008.

Christina Phillips FORETASTE OF FOREVER released by The Wild Rose Press - 24 October 2008.

Nalini Singh THE MAGICAL CHRISTMAS CAT, an anthology to which she contributed the novella "Stroke of Enticement" hit #21 on the New York Times Extended Bestseller list.

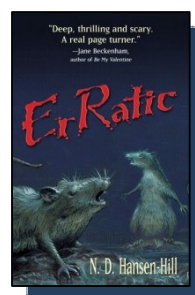
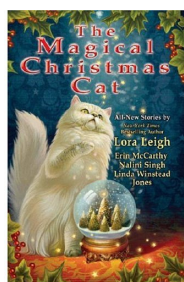
Yvonne Walus as Eve Summers THE SLAVE OF MY OWN DESIRE released by Red Rose Publishing - October 2008.

Karen Christie FORECAST OF FOREVER released by The Wild Rose Press - 23 October 2008.

Jean Drew A PLACE OF HEALING released by The Wild Rose Press – October 2008

Norah Hansen-Hill as Melody Knight EMERALD CITY released by Red Rose Publishing – 23 October '08

Norah Hansen-Hill ERRATIC released by Fictionwise – October 2008



SANDRA HYATT – CALL STORY

Interviewed by Soraya Nicholas



Sandra, firstly a huge congratulations on selling! You must be ecstatic. How does it feel to be a real author with a real life editor?

Thanks for the congratulations. It feels absolutely fantastic to have finally sold and to not feel quite so much of a fraud when I put 'writer' down on forms that ask for an occupation. And being able to say those two words 'my editor' still gives me such a thrill. I think maybe it always will.

Tell us how you sold? I heard you pitched this manuscript on-line . . .

I'd actually been working on this manuscript with the intention of sending it to Harlequin Mills & Boon in London. But through posting on the Diamonds Down Under Blog, (a blog being run for the Australia/New Zealand Desire authors' continuity series) I won an editor critique of a full manuscript by the then head of the line, Melissa Jeglinski. I sent the manuscript in expecting to get back the said critique so was completely stunned when a mere four weeks later I got a phone call from Diana Ventimiglia saying they wanted to BUY the manuscript.

And the call itself? For those of us who don't know, please share the excitement of the big day!

I got the call early one morning while I was at the RWA conference in San Francisco. I'd just finished my shower when the wonderful Tessa Radley, who I was rooming with, started pounding on the bathroom door. She'd been in email contact with Diana about an unrelated matter and when she'd mentioned she was rooming with me, Diana told her she wanted to phone me. Tessa figured the call could be about only one thing and was ecstatic. I prefer a more paranoid approach, and while I couldn't think of any other reason Diana would want to speak to me, I also couldn't believe that this might finally be it.

Fortunately, I had enough time to finish getting dressed, and not too much time to stress before the phone rang. And, yes, it was Diana, and, yes, she did want to buy my book. I was stunned. By the end of the call critique partners Karina Bliss and Abby Gaines who were rooming next door had come in, and let's just say that it was a good thing the gist of the phone call was over because the noise levels started making conversation pretty difficult (not that I was particularly coherent anyway).

So then I got to spend the whole day surrounded by people who totally 'got' my news and excitement and were able to celebrate with me.

I can't imagine it happening a better way.

What are you working on next? Or do you have revisions to worry about?

Yes, I did have some revisions. I've done those and sent them in and am waiting to hear if they're okay. Meanwhile, I've been taking another look at an earlier manuscript, a marriage of convenience story, that Desire had been interested in but ultimately passed on. I'm also working on something new and percolating a few ideas about future stories.

Now that you are published, what advice can you give to us great unpublished writers?

It took me ten years, with plenty of ups and downs, to finally sell. So my only advice is that if this is what you truly want, celebrate your successes along the way, roll with the punches, and never give up.

My title for the book is *In the Arms of a Stranger* (I'm guessing it will change though) and it will be out in September '09.

WRITERS AREN'T ALL THE SAME!

By Lesley Marshall ©

There are as many different ways of writing as there are types of books. And there are no rules in this business - if it works for you, for at least this book, then that's the right way to do it. It's a good idea to read how-to books by lots of other writers, learning how those writers write and then trying out some methods that you think might work for you, but in the end your best system could be quite different from other people's.

Beware of writers who say you have to write in the way that works for them - no system will apply to everyone. Use only the ways that pertain to you.

There are basically two kinds of writers - planners and "wingers". If you're a winger (also known as an organic writer or pantsier, among other terms) you shouldn't do too much planning. Organic writers find that if they plan too much they stop wanting to write the book/story because they already know how it's going to go - it's no longer a journey of discovery. Planners, on the other hand, might spend weeks, months, even years mapping out a book before they write a word. Planners probably don't need to do as much rewriting as organic writers, but they usually take longer to get a first draft done. However one multi-published author maintains that his charts and notes make the first draft come faster and he doesn't need to rewrite.

An organic writer might start with nothing more than the image of a scene, the name of a character, an idea for an ending, or a vague thought based on a newspaper cutting or TV interview. She'll then start writing, and often have no idea what's going to come out until it's on paper. There'll be scenes that seem to be leading nowhere that she's sure she'll have to cut later, but she'll leave them there until she's finished the first draft. Often then she'll find the scenes were absolutely vital, and led to something that startled her as much as it will her future readers. It's exciting stuff, being that sort of writer, but also scary - you're seriously heading out into the open sea in a coracle at night with a toothbrush for an

oar. An American novelist said it's like driving from one city to another at night with the lights on low beam. You can't see ahead more than the light's reach - a few metres only - yet you can travel the entire length of the country that way if you have faith and just keep going.

A writer of detective fiction said she never knows who's dunnit until she's finished, and then of course has to go back and seed in a few extra red herrings and/or clues - mostly clues, I think, since the red herrings were probably already there, fooling her along with her future readers. Last year I edited half a murder mystery for a writer who was approaching agents and publishers with it, and I found it totally frustrating because I had about four suspects in my head, all jostling for prominence, and when I asked her who had done the dirty deed she didn't have any idea either. We had an intriguing discussion about which one it might be without coming to any conclusions. What was really interesting was that later, when we both found out, it was rather shocking, and not any of the original suspects, and yet the clues were all there. She'd written them, I'd edited around them, and yet neither of us had seen them. I'd had a niggles that I was missing something and so had she, but we couldn't see it until she'd written it down.

I remember another book where the artist hero painted the heroine, and painted in her history of abuse without her having told him about it. It appalled her, because she thought she'd hidden her past from the world. It also shocked the writer when she wrote it in because she hadn't realised, yet I'd seen it coming while I was editing the earlier chapters. So the writer's subconscious had known all along and was leading her up to it. Note that this was a very experienced writer with a couple of dozen books under her belt.

Working with organic writers is fascinating, especially when they're under deadline and are frantically feeding me chapters as they go - we occasionally discover I know more about the

characters than the writer does because I'm reading (*seeing*) the clues she's writing, but she's only writing them without realising that they're clues. It may sound odd but it's true.

If you're a planner, try various methods until one works for you. Some writers won't start without character sketches, a theme, a well-thought-out plot (written down), or a breakdown of the story that may run to fifty pages. Others have notes, charts, and illustrations of scenes and people pinned on their study walls. One uses a roll of cheap wallpaper and writes down the entire plot, making sure there are turning points or "highs" in the right places – not too spaced out but not all bunched together – before starting her book. There are several charting methods, including the three-act structure beloved of screenwriters and many novelists, and the mind maps of Tony Buzan's *Use Your Head*, which many writers enthusiastically use.

An article in the magazine *The Writer* suggested "interviewing" every character, using a series of forty questions to find out all about their likes, dislikes, backgrounds and secrets, and only then begin writing. And of course there are computer programmes that help writers plan every aspect of their story, checking that they have the "right" mix of characterisation, action, background etc. either before they begin or as they go along.

I've said there are two categories of writers, but even this isn't entirely true, because within those two categories there are many variations. One author I know writes all the narrative and then adds dialogue afterwards; another does it the other way around. An excellent writer I have worked with writes a whole collection of scenes featuring a large cast of characters, and when she's kind of run out of ideas she looks at them all, juggles them rather like a pack of cards into some kind of order, and there's her book. Totally weird and I still can't believe it works, but that's what she does.

There are also in-between writers, but they're not as common. One Auckland writer rewrites and rewrites the first chapter for ages – weeks sometimes. And when she's perfectly satisfied with that, rips into the rest without rewriting until she's finished. A Brisbane one said she has to keep polishing as she goes so that by the end there's very little rewriting at all.

Some organic writers write chronologically until they get stuck, and then they might go and write a flashback to find out what's pushing their character's buttons, or write the end so they have a road map of where they're going. Or even write that last scene and then keep working backwards, scene by scene (again, I can't imagine doing that, but it sometimes works for a ms that's blocked in the middle).

For some writers, editing as they go, writing synopses early on, drawing up chapter-by-chapter or even scene-by-scene outlines, or talking things over with a trusted advisor can help them shape their story. Other writers find they've killed their book if they do it. In my early editing days I sometimes didn't realise when a discussion with an organic writer was going too far and likely to spoil things for the writing process, but later on I could see that point and we'd stop it, occasionally rather abruptly. Then I'd wait and see what happened in the ms. As would the writer!

In the end, whatever works for you is the way you should do it, although it's always worth trying other systems, especially if you're having trouble with a particular book. Depending on the kind of writer you are, too much pre-planning or editing while you write *can* stifle your creativity, and certainly would with most organic writers – but I'm not saying *will*, only *can*. The same goes for writing a synopsis before you've finished the first draft, or discussing the plot with an outsider. For others these may be necessary steps to help them formulate a coherent storyline and create realistic characters, stop them wandering off down dead-end byways that distract them from the plot, and prevent them falling love with minor characters who don't advance or enhance the story.

You'll eventually find out what works for you and, once you know that's what you should do. Whatever system it is. And no matter what criticism or astonishment this may engender in other people. Or even yourself.

Lesley Marshall of Editline is a freelance editor & member of the New Zealand Association of Manuscript Assessors. She specialises in the romance genre.

INTERVIEW with MARCI BRAUN

By Lisa Whitefern

Lisa Whitefern interviews Marci Baun, editor-in-chief of Freya's Bower and Wild Child Publishing, Marci Baun. Many thanks, Marci!

Q. Freya's Bower is primarily an e-publisher. New Zealanders have to pay huge shipping and importing costs on print books and e-books are a vastly cheaper alternative. What other benefits do you think e-books have over print books?

There are numerous benefits to e-books. I'll list a few here:

1. **Clutter-free.** They don't take up any tangible space. This means you can carry several with via laptop, iPhone, PDA, or eReader. Laptops and iPhones alone can easily hold 1,000 ebooks. Try carrying that in your laptop or finding space for that many paperback/hard cover in your house. Your significant other might disown you.

2. **Eco-friendly.** They are relatively environmentally friendly. Relative because you need some type of electronic equipment and power to read them. As many people own computers, PDAs, etc, as part of their daily life, the impact has already been made on the environment. However, ebooks don't require paper, unless the reader chooses to print them out. So, by reading ebooks, you save trees and any of the other toxic chemicals associated with print.

3. **Font size.** You can adjust the font size to one that suits your needs.

4. **Privacy.** Unless someone is reading over your shoulder, what you read is private. So, if you enjoy erotica or romance, no one need know what you are reading anymore.

5. **Cost.** Ebooks are cheaper, for the most part, and tax-free.

6. **Immediacy.** If you see a title you like, you can buy it and download it immediately. You don't have to wait for the mail to bring it to you.

7. **Anywhere.** If you have access to wi-fi and have either a computer or other devices that access the internet, you can buy them right then and there. You don't have to go to a store or even be at home.

These are just a few reasons that make ebooks so wonderful.

Q. You've been the editor-in-chief of Freya's Bower since its inception. Can you tell us why you think Freya's Bower has such a good reputation with readers and writers, and why it has succeeded where other electronic publishers have failed?

We have always focused on quality and treating our customers as well as writers with courtesy and professionalism. Our editing standards rival that of NYC. However, we aren't closed to new authors like NYC is. We also do our best to respond to emails in a timely manner, and we care. We care about the product we produce and the people who help us produce it (authors, editors, proofreaders, cover artists, etc). And while making money is wonderful, we aren't just about making money.

I've watched companies overextend themselves financially. So, I am very careful about where the money goes. For instance, there have been a number of e-publishers who have gone into print in a big way. This can kill you. The big NYC publishers have the deep pockets to accept the returns that bookstores require. Smaller publishers can't accept thousands of books back. This is why you'll only find a few print books on our site. We really focus on the ebooks and require that a title meet a certain length as well as sell a certain number of ebook copies before we'll consider print publishing it.

Q. What would you say makes a story distinctly right for Freya's Bower?

We don't really have a "distinctly right." We publish erotica and romance as well as a combination of the two. There are virtually all the regular genres you would see at a publishing house, but they must have either romance, erotica, or both integral to the plot. Real characters are best. While it's nice to have a hero that's drop dead gorgeous, not every heroine wants someone who's drop dead gorgeous. Matter of fact, not every *woman* does. Nor is it mandatory for every heroine to be so beautiful it hurts your eyes. As long as the hero and heroine find each other attractive, that is what is most important.

Beyond that, we want interesting, well written, entertaining, and believable stories. Whether that

means it makes you laugh, cry, think, smile, or gasp in anger and/or surprise, those are the types of stories we are looking for. Believability is also important. If a story is set in a fantasy world, the world and characters must be developed enough for the reader to find the scenario possible. If the story is set in a historical era, we expect events, dress, language, technology, and even names to be true to the era. Now, that doesn't mean we want the dialogue to be as someone would speak during the era the story is set. Very few people would be able to understand someone from the 1500s. However, we don't want to see terms or words from later time periods slipping in. To help prevent that, we are more than happy to give authors links to websites or suggest books that would help them do the research should there be a question about a technology, word, etc.

As I stated above, we are willing to accept material from new authors, but we don't want to be teaching grammar, punctuation, spelling, etc. Be sure that you look at our submissions guidelines page as that does detail our interests.

Q. What are you currently looking for in your subs? What's the book that you really wish someone would write for Freya's Bower?

A Regency with a twist. I am a sucker for a good Regency, but I'd love to see it combined with perhaps something like our Valkyrie series. What fun it would be to see a Valkyrie during the Regency era! I am also a sucker for a good historical.

Q. My novella *Waking the Witch*, set just prior to *The Salem Witch Trials* is available from Freya's Bower from Halloween onwards- what other exciting things are happening at Freya's Bower?

We have three more releases for Freya's Bower coming very soon. One at the end of October with yours and two more in November so far. In December, we'll have a sweet anthology releasing just in time for Christmas. There will be more as December approaches. We also have monthly contests to win a free ebook and chats on the calendar. The best way to know what we are doing is to sign up for an account at www.freyasbower.com and be sure to say you want our newsletter too. You can also find us on MySpace, Twitter, Facebook, and Yahoo groups.

Q. Lisa-Freya's Bower publishes quality Erotic Romance and Sweet Romance. Wild Child Publishing is your sister company that publishes Mainstream fiction. Suzanne Perazzini is another Auckland member who has a book available, Wild Child Publishing- *Beneath the Surface*.

What sort of books is Wild Child looking for?

Wild Child Publishing is similar to Freya's Bower. We are always looking for a story that's well-executed. The length isn't as important as the quality. Give us a story that engrosses us, and you'll find yourself with a contract.

By the way, Suzanne has another title coming out with Wild Child Publishing in November titled *Crash into Darkness*. This one is a paranormal romance with a mystery blended in. Excellent book.

Although she isn't contracted with Wild Child Publishing, Babe King is another Freya's Bower author from down your way. She's in Australia. One of her novels with us, *Between the Gutter and the Sky*, happens to be set in Australia.

Q. Freya's Bower has a few novels in print. Can you tell us about your choice to do limited print publishing?

This comes down to being smart with our assets. We started as an ebook publisher because I really believe this is the way of the future. However, we do recognize that people still enjoy holding a book in their hand. So we let them...with a select few. In order for a book to go to print, it must sell at least a certain amount in ebooks before we consider it. The reason for this is that print is an expensive endeavor, and we want to make sure the book is popular enough to warrant going to print.

Q. Finally, please tell us anything you'd like about yourself and your personal tastes...

Well, I am a proud mother of one very precocious four-year-old (She's a handful.) and happily married woman of seven years plus years. I'm also an avid swimmer and love to sing. Matter of fact, I'm operatically trained. So, yeah, I'm loud and a bit of a ham. (grin) This does come in handy when I do presentations. On occasion, you can find me at a local café singing animal folk songs, which is what I sing most of the time now that I'm a mother. As she grows, I am branching out, though. She does hear me sing opera on occasion. (And, yes, my daughter likes opera. Train them young!)



Lisa Whitefern writes paranormal romance. This is her first e-book with Freya's Bower set during the Salem Witch trials, and is available from October 28th. Go to www.freyasbower.com

VOICE - PART ONE

By Anne Gracie ©

Whether you're a writer of contemporaries, historicals, fantasy, or crime, the "flavour" you present in your books can make or break you as a writer. I'm talking about voice, I'm talking about style, I'm talking about the way you see the world and the world you build in your books.

You won't stand out from the slush pile by being the same as everyone else. No editor is going to leap from their bath, shrieking "Eureka -- I've found someone who writes just like Marion Lennox! Or Stephanie Laurens. Or whoever."

It's like chocolate. There's no point inventing Cherry Ripe or Mars Bars again, because we already have Cherry Ripe and Mars Bars. We want something just as good -- only different. And that's what publishers want -- something just as good, only different.

Would any of us seriously argue that there's already enough chocolate in the world? Of course not -- there's always room for more good chocolate, as there is for more good romance.

So how can you develop your own brand of choc-- er romance?

By discovering the "you" in your writing, by using your own experiences, our own sensory differences, by tapping into small moments into your own life, you can bring a sharpness and individuality to your writing that will make it stand out from the pack.

You bring to your writing a particular view of the world, shaped by your values, your experiences, your aesthetic tastes, your sense of humour. When you write, in a sense, you invite the reader to share your world -- and it is your skill of writing which will make that sharing an intense one.

Believe in your way of seeing the world. A friend of mine used to teach ceramics and she was a new young teacher and boys that there was more to this "sissy" throw. One day, in desperation, she boys really see.

The art room had big old-of the school, through trees to the houses was divided into 16 panes. The boys' one window pane and make a ceramic same size as the window panes and they

This got the boys interested -- for accurate to fit together, which they wrestled with scale and proportion, trying to get their part of the trees and houses etc. right, so not only would it look like part of a tree and houses, but would fit with the adjoining plaques. Some boys initially worried because the inside of their plaque didn't look the same as other people's, but my friend reassured them, saying the difference was fine: the only rule was that the boundaries had to join accurately.

The boys became more and more absorbed. Nobody bothered with pellets any more. Some even came in at lunchtime and after school to work on the plaques.

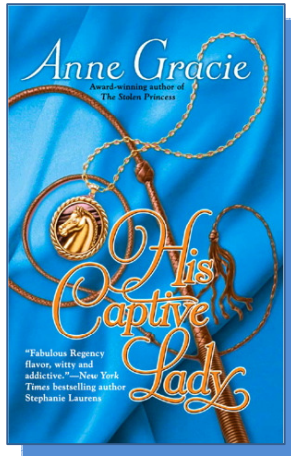
When the finished plaques were placed together, the result was astonishing. Every plaque had been painstakingly rendered; they joined together perfectly. Each plaque was an accurate rendition of the view from that pane of glass.

And yet each plaque was utterly unique. The choices in texture, shaping, colour, the amount and style of detail in each reflected the unique perspective of the individual boy artists. In one, the tree branch was flat and thick and crude and bisected a very detailed scene of the houses behind like an intrusive overlay. The same branch was picked up in the adjoining plaque, only in this one the texture of the bark and leaves had been lovingly recreated with every twist and ridge and imperfection, leaves thinned almost to translucency, ready to flutter in the breeze. There were even tiny insects marching across it. The houses behind were stylized and blank.

It was a most beautiful creation. The differences in the plaques was what made the assembled piece so vibrant and so fascinating. And the whole was greater than the sum of the parts.

It was a marvellous celebration of "voice" and I've never forgotten it.

We each have our own pane of glass to look through.



in an all-boys school. It was a new subject she had to work very hard to teach the subject than making clay pellets to flick or conceived a project designed to make the

fashioned windows looking out to the front on the hill across the road. Each window assignment was for each of them to take plaque of it. The plaques had to be the all had to fit together at the end.

a start, their measurements had to be respected. As the work progressed, they

Anne's latest release is His Captive Lady, published by Berkley Sensation, USA.

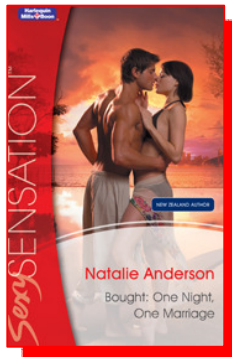
Visit Anne at www.annegracie.com

HARLEQUIN RELEASES

SEXY SENSATION

Bought: One Night, One Marriage

Natalie Anderson



When Cally wins the services of sexy tycoon Blake McKay, she's mortified! Aware of her non-model looks, she steers clear of good-looking men - and this guy is way off the handsome scale.

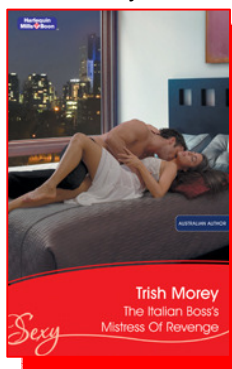
Blake can see there's a fiery, passionate woman beneath Cally's perfectly poised exterior, so he buys another date with her. This time, though, he's going to be calling the shots,

and he will give her a night she'll never forget! But neither of them has bargained on what might happen next...

SEXY

The Italian Boss's Mistress Of Revenge

Trish Morey



All that stands in the way of Dante Carrazzo and revenge is Mackenzi Keogh, the sexy manager of the hotel he plans to ruin. Mackenzi will do almost anything to save the business, and Dante ruthlessly uses this: he will reconsider destroying the hotel if she becomes his mistress! From manager to mistress in a day... Mackenzi knows she shouldn't trust Dante, except the pleasure he

gives is too heady to resist. But will their bedroom bargain come to an end when Dante learns that his mistress of revenge is pregnant with his child?

DESIRE

Mistaken Mistress

Tessa Radley



Celebrity wine critic Alyssa Blake gatecrashes the annual Saxon winery masked ball looking for her long lost brother - not the man of her dreams, or the reckless passion that unites them...

For Joshua Saxon it's a shock when a beautiful uninvited stranger sets his senses on fire - even more so when he discovers her true identity. But Alyssa's

distraught reaction to his brother's tragic death is disturbing. Was this notorious, provocative woman his brother's lover? What does she want from him? And what, exactly, is she doing at Saxon's Folly?

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SWEET

Wedding At Wangaree Valley

Margaret Way



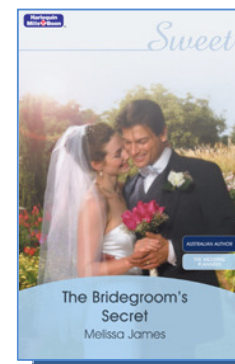
Master of Wangaree Homestead Guy Radcliffe is successful, wealthy, charming, and a member of one of the most revered families in the Outback. Now he wants a wife, and a queue of society beauties are at his door.

Alana Callaghan is from the wrong side of town and doesn't fit the glamorous, pampered world of the other girls. But that

hasn't stopped her from secretly being in love with Guy for years - even though she knows he'll never view her as wife material. A wedding at Wangaree will take place. Can Alana find a way to be Guy's bride?

The Bridegroom's Secret

Melissa James



With a glittering wedding to plan, Julie Montgomery is the happiest girl in town. The engagement party is the talk of Boston. But then Julie discovers everyone seems to know more about her groom-to-be than she does.

Matt McLachlan wants to protect his beautiful fiancée from the complications in his life - he only wants good things

for her. But Matt has to learn that marriage is about sharing everything, for better and for worse. Before he says 'I do', he has something he must tell Julie...

INTERNATIONAL CONTEST NEWS

Submitted by Lisa Elkind-Gardiner, aka Lisa Whitefern

The Writer's Digest Short Short Story Competition

Deadline: 12/1/2008

Writer's Digest is now accepting entries for the 9th Annual Short Short Story Competition. They are looking for fiction that's bold, brilliant...but brief.

Eligibility- The competition is open to manuscripts of 1,500 words or fewer. Entries outside the word limitation will be disregarded. You may enter electronically.

PRIZES

First Place: \$3,000

Second Place: \$1,500

Third Place: \$500

Fourth Through Tenth Place: \$100

Eleventh Through Twenty-Fifth Place: \$50 gift certificate for Writer's Digest Books

* The First-Place winner has the option of a FREE "Best Seller Publishing Package" from Trafford Publishing, a leading provider of book-publishing services.

* The names and story titles of the First-through Tenth-Place winners will be printed in the May/June 2009 Writer's Digest, and winners will receive the 2009 Novel & Short Story Writer's Market. Plus, all winners will receive a free copy of the 9th Annual Writer's Digest Short Short Story Competition Collection. Trafford Publishing is also offering a 20% discount on select publishing packages to all winners.

Fee- entry fee is \$12US per manuscript

<http://www.writersdigest.com/short>

Romance Writers of America- RITA award

Register by December 1st.

Deadline January 2nd

Eligibility unpublished or not contracted in last 5 years.

\$40US for RWA members \$140US for non members

Categories

Contemporary Series Romance

Contemporary Series Romance: Suspense/Adventure

Contemporary Single Title Romance

Historical Romance

(Romance novels set in any time period prior to 1945, and taking place in any location.)

Inspirational Romance

Novel with Strong Romantic Elements

Paranormal Romance

Regency Historical Romance

Romantic Suspense

Writers of the Future

Deadline-Postmark by December 31st 2008

Eligibility-

Open to those who have not professionally published a novel or short novel, or more than one novelette, or more than 3 short stories in any medium. Professional publication is deemed to be payment and at least 5,000 copies or 5,000 hits.

Entries must be works of prose, up to 17,000 words in length. They must be science fiction, fantasy and dark fantasy written for adult readers. This contest is not for children's fiction.

Entry fee- FREE

<http://www.writersofthefuture.com/rules.htm>

Colorado Romance Writers' Award of Excellence Published Author Contest

Entry Deadline: JANUARY 9, 2009

Eligibility- All novels [no anthologies or novellas] entered must have an original copyright date of 2008. Published novels.

Categories

Short Contemporary ~ Romantic novels under 60,000 words

Long Contemporary ~ Romantic novels over 60,000 words, including Category Suspense.

Single Title Contemporary Releases ~ Romantic novels not printed as part of a series.

Romantic Suspense ~ Romantic novels with a mystery/suspense element.

Historical ~ Historical romance novels, including Regencies, Series and Single Title Historical Paranormal/Time Travel/Futuristic/Fantasy Inspirational Mainstream With Romantic Elements

Spicy Romance ~ Romantic novels featuring sexual content and language that is explicit and leaves nothing to the imagination.

Entry Fee- \$20 US

<http://coloradoromancewriters.org/aoe.html>

Orange County RWA 2009 Book Buyer's Best Contest

A contest for published RWA authors judged by industry book buyers.

Entry Deadline- Must be received by January 10th.

Eligibility- Published RWA members with novel with 2008 copyright date.

Categories

- Series Short Contemporary: (Under 70,000 Words)
- Series Long Contemporary: (Over 70,000 Words)
- Single Title Romance with Romantic Elements: (Over 70,000 Words)
- Romantic suspense/Mystery with romantic elements: (Over 70,000 Words)
- Historical & Regency: (Both Series and Single Title Over 70,000 Words)
- Paranormal/Time Travel/Fantasy: (Both Series and Single Title)

Entry Fee is \$25.00 per entry for OCC/RWA members; \$35.00 for other RWA members.

RWNZ CONTEST NEWS

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

RWNZ Contest Schedule 2009

The Clendon Award
Closing Date: 27 February 2009 ***

Chapter Short Story
Closing Date: 27 March 2009

Great Beginnings Contest
Closing Date: 24 April 2009

Strictly Single Contest
Closing Date: 25 September 2009

*** The continuation of The Clendon Award is dependent on the assistance of volunteers.

WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST MEMBERS!

Colleen Squires – Ohope
Marian Rocco – Auckland
Jill Scott – Christchurch
Carla Munro – Christchurch
Toni Coleman – Upper Hutt



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: 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 Rachel Collins on rachel_collins@xtra.co.nz

Auckland

The next meeting will be held on November 1st at the Three Kings Tennis pavilion, corner of Mt Albert and Mt Eden Roads at 12.30pm. Annie Featherstone will be doing a workshop on layering. Bring a small plate for a shared lunch and of course be prepared to buy raffle tickets.

Instead of our usual Christmas lunch, this year we will be meeting at the home of Jane Beckenham in Mairangi Bay at 2pm on 15th November. Award-winning author of historical romance, Laura Lee Guhrke, will be present to answer all your questions. Please bring a small plate for a shared afternoon tea and a little money for raffles. Frances's next email newsletter will give you the details. **Frances Housden**

Nelson

This month we taxed our brains, taking directly a writing technique used at the conference by Margie. We did our best to write *average* paragraphs (an exercise in itself) then really pulled them apart, concentrating upon substituting strong verbs for passive ones, and eliminating as many adverbs as possible.

Fun, informative and valuable.

Then, while we gorged on chocolate cake (seeing a pattern forming here?) out came our *prize* cards, and we tossed around all manner of unlikely heroes and heroines in even more unlikely situations.

Our next meeting will be at 10 Mana Heights, on 8th November, at 2:00.

Sally Astridge

Waikato/Bay of Plenty/King Country

We held our meeting on Sunday 19th October at Angela Bethell's home in Morrinsville, with an excellent workshop on blogging by Sandra Toornstra. There were 5 members present this time – a small but select meeting!

Thank you for your lovely hospitality Angela, for thank you to Sandra for an excellent and informative workshop.

Our member Colleen White had a very encouraging rejection from a publisher this month. Way to go, Colleen. It's always good to get good feedback.

Our next meeting is the first weekend in December at Gaylene Atkins' home in Matiere. Overnight beds are already taken, but there are plenty of places for people to visit during the Saturday.

Liz Heywood

Christchurch

We are planning our next meeting at the end of November when we will dive deep into Editing our work. We also welcome our new member, Carla.

For local information, email sueknight@ihug.co.nz

Thanks, **Sue Knight**

Hawke's Bay news

We have decided to make our next meeting around Christmas time or in the New Year. If anyone wants any information about our group please contact me on ginny.suckling@xtra.co.nz

Wellington

Saturday October 4th saw a lively gathering at Ellie's place. First of all we decided our Christmas meeting would be on Saturday December 6th, at the earlier time of midday, with a suitable lunch dish to share. With that important decision out of the way, we wondered if Cathy Sneyd might like to repeat her synopsis workshop from conference for us as a Christmas treat. Cathy agreed – and let slip that her family had auditioned for an earthquake documentary – and got the part/s. Hopefully some of you saw "Aftershock – would you survive?"

We also discussed the first historical Blaze, (thumbs down), power words at the ends of sentences, the need to attract more members to our most enjoyable organisation, and of course Hugh Jackman.

Change: November's meeting will be at 1 pm on Saturday 1st at Rachel's home, **10 Redwood Close, Paraparaumu**. All welcome. Please remember to bring at least the first page of a new novel you're working on. **Kris Pearson**

THE NAKED WRITER

Baring all in the world of romance and writing

FORBES magazine has come up with the highest earning authors over 2007 and its no surprise that Rowling tops the list; she banked an estimated 300 million bucks over the past year. (And I thought the lotto hitting 30 mill was mind blowing!!) Second is James Patterson with \$50 million. Forbes calls him an "author turned brand" who, while he's sold more than 150 million books worldwide, has ventured into video games and adaptations of his books for TV and movies. Third is Steven King with \$45 million, and fourth, Tom Clancy \$35 million. Part of Clancy's fortune was due to selling the rights for a few thrillers a year or so back - for a nice \$100 million to a game company. In fifth place, Danielle Steel banked \$30 million for the year. Rounding out the top ten are Nicholas Sparks, Janet Evanovich, John Grisham, Dean Koontz and Ken Follet. Follet's new status, incidentally, was directly attributed to Oprah picking *The Pillars of the Earth* for one of her 2007 Bookclub selections.

Speaking of Janet Evanovich, check this out from her website, www.evanovich.com. She explains how the writing biz is a true family business. "When we moved to New Hampshire we realized there was more to this writing stuff than just writing, so we formed a family business, Evanovich, Inc. My son, Peter, a Dartmouth College graduate, assumed responsibility for everything financial. He's the guy who pulls his hair out at tax time and cracks his knuckles when the stock market dips. In '96 my daughter Alex, a film and photography school graduate, came on board and created the website. We get about four and a half million hits a month on the site and Alex does it all ... the graphics, the mail, the comics, the store, the online advertising and the newsletter. Both Peter and Alex work full-time for Evanovich, Inc. I'm their only client. My husband, Pete, has his

University and now manages all aspects of the business and tries to keep me on time (a thankless, impossible job!) ... plus he does a little golfing."

Melissa Jeglinski, new agent on the Knight Agency block, is now representing Desire Author, Michelle Celmer. MJ recently got Celmer a four book deal. The new JD Robb goes on sale November – *Salvation in Death*.... It's pushing it if you want to enter, but the biggies in the contest season are upon us. The Golden Heart closes beginning of November, and while the feedback is dismal and the cost of getting your beloved to America exorbitant, the kudos if you final – or heaven forbid, even win, is something else. The Emerald, from RWAustralia closes 29th of November – first three chapters of your ms. Check out the respective websites for more info, www.romanceaustralia.com, or www.rwanational.org. Note that you need to have a current membership to enter and a complete manuscript. ... It's hard to believe but at my place of work, people are scrambling already to get their annual leave in for the first half of 2009!! Dates to note: Romantic Times Booklovers Convention, Orlando, Florida, April 22-26; The Romantic Novelists Association in the UK, July 10-12, the Newton Rigg Campus of the University of Cumbria at Penrith (I want to break into an Emmerdale impersonation just writing that!); Romance Writers of America, Washington DC, July 15-18, Marriot Wardman Park Hotel. Romance Writers of Australia, August 14-16 at Sebel and Citigate Hotel, Brisbane. And of course the main one of the lot, the most important in the conference schedule – August 21-23rd 2009, the Brentwood in Kilbrinie, Wellington for A Capital Affair. Two words. "Piggy Bank", people – Piggy bank.