

HEART TO HEART

Breaking The Rules

Do those restrictions and taboos really matter?

NYT Best-selling author Lori Foster shatters some favourite myths.



You need to know the rules. You need to understand them. Then you need to forget them." A direct quote from Harlequin Temptation editor, Susan Sheppard. Deliberately breaking out is vastly different to bumbling in the wrong direction.

The "rules" we've all heard so much about are not really rules at all. They're gentle guides that you need to be aware of but not necessarily conform to, especially when they fall in direct opposition to your natural voice. When handled with skill and talent, breaking the rules is one of the best ways to distinguish yourself.

Lori Foster wrote ten complete manuscripts before ever selling one. She tried to follow the rules in order to better her chances, and continually got rejections. On her tenth manuscript, she got an idea and decided to jump in with both feet. Against everything her friends told her, against every contest judge who rated that manuscript horrendously low, Lori held the faith. It was a story written on gut instinct rather than preconceived notions of what might sell, and it was a story she loved, a book that held every bit of her creativity.

An editor visiting a local conference had just delivered the bad news that they were rejecting Foster's ninth book, so she got up her nerve, mentioned the multi-cursed non-conforming book that more than one contest judge had told her was entirely unsuitable to category, and held her breath. The editor, who suddenly looked more enthusiastic

said, "That is something that just might work for us."

The book was risqué, more so than most categories. But the critiquers and judges and well meaning friends who'd told her, "You can't do that in category!" were obviously wrong. In fact, Foster's second book launched the new Temptation Blaze subseries of more explicit, sensual books, and Lori's career finally took off.

She not only found her niche, but she helped create it.

Just about everyone has heard the dozens and dozens of rules listed as criteria for getting published. How many writers have actually printed them out, determined to fit 'the mold' in the hopes of selling a book?

In truth, there are very few definite rules to publishing romance. One, of course, is the happy ending. Readers pick up a romance novel to find the satisfaction that comes from a happy ending. Another is that the romance be between a man and a woman.

No first person? Well, Karen Harbaugh, a writer for Signet Regencies, said, "At the beginning of my career, with my first two books, I wrote plain vanilla Regencies because I felt moved to write them. Those were published despite the fact that the first one was in first person, which my contest judges told me would never sell." Note this was for Karen's first book, so we can't fall back on the cop out that of course an established writer can do it! Karen wasn't established at that time.

There's also Joan Wolf's single title releases, *The Deception*, *The Guardian*, *The Arrangement*, *The Gamble*, and *The Pretenders*, all done in first person, as well as Megan Chance's *A Season in Eden*, and Anne Stuart's *Cameron's Landing*.

What about those highly taboo sports heroes? We need look no further than the incredibly successful and incomparably humorous Susan Elizabeth Phillips who has managed to get non-sports minded women to fall in love with jocks in general, and football players in particular.

Hebby Roman's *Summer Dreams* has a minor league baseball hero, and Tami Hoag's *Straight From The Heart* has a baseball-playing hero.

Even in restrictive category, we find authors who can break the 'no sports hero' rule. Donna Kauffman's *Illegal Motion* with a football playing hero, got rave reviews, and Catherine Coulter's timeless *The Aristocrat* has a football hero.

The conclusion, of course, is that what really sells your book is your individual voice, not the rules you obey or break.

So, what is voice? To Foster, it's your perspective. "The way you see things, how you interpret them, the way you like words to come together and the method you use to put your thumbprint on a story."

Karen Harbaugh, known for her Vampire Regencies, said, "Voice always comes naturally to people, once

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and where you'll find it...

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Editors' Desk

Well, this month has been an incredible roller coaster of emotions for us both as individuals and an organisation. There was pre-conference panic when we were sure we were going to screw that one chance to pitch our work and our careers would hit the dust before they started. There were the highs of a truly inspiring conference, and fabulous speakers whose experience in the business helped us see that all things are possible. And then there was Sandra's sudden illness, the unbelievable shock of losing her so fast, and the realisation that some things simply aren't possible, aren't fixable, even when we're desperate enough to storm heaven to find a way. Then we get home to the news of Norah's death as well.

I want to say something that will help and comfort all of us without me sounding like a self-righteous git. Not sure I can. So let me just say this.

Death isn't like birth; there's no nine month lead-time, we rarely see it coming, we have no time to prepare, and no say in whether or not we want to participate. But there are things we can do today to make sure that when we—or those we love—step out of this world we leave no regrets behind us.

How? By believing every day is a gift. Life's so short. Love's so precious. Let's not waste our time here. Let's follow Sandra's and Norah's examples and live courageously in the face of adversity, go after our dreams, love our real-life heroes—and let them be in no doubt of it—make sure our kids and extended families know they mean the world to us, and take every opportunity to tell our friends how precious they are.

No one likes to talk about it, but one day we will die. What legacy will we leave behind? Books, certainly. Nothing wrong with that. But the true legacies we leave are the personal memories—good and bad—held in the hearts of those whose lives we've touched. Let's make them good ones. Tender ones. Inspiring ones that will last for generations after we've gone.

Don't wait till tomorrow to say "I love you". Don't put off writing that letter. Sending that email. Making that phone call. Others need to know you love them. You need to know you've told them. It might be the last opportunity either of you will ever have.

In the words of Pablo Picasso, "Only put off until tomorrow what you are willing to die having left undone."

Gracie, Rachel, Bron, & Karen

Have Fun And Win!

Don't forget that the person who gives the best back-story blurb on the couple presented in Emma Wildes' partial last month (Phillip and Alexandra) will win a signed copy of one of Emma's books. The blurb should be no more than 200 words. Email your entries to: romance@bronwenevans.com by 10th September and Emma Wildes will select the winner.



WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST MEMBERS:

Jacquelyn Moran from Auckland

Kathy Taylor from Wellington

Karen Putt from Auckland

Ray Prowse from Auckland

Vivienne Jones from Hamilton

Margaret Millar from Christchurch

RWNZ CONTEST SCHEDULE 2011

STRICTLY SINGLE CONTEST Closes Friday, 23 September 2011

Final Judge:

Alex Logan, Editor

Grand Central Publishing

Agent Judge:

Elaine Spencer, The Knight Agency
(Entry information is available on RWNZ's website.)

If you have any questions, contact
Viv Constable, Contests Coordinator:
vconstable@xtra.co.nz



NORAH HANSEN-HILL

Passed away 18 August, 2011.

Former RWNZ member, Norah Hansen-Hill, was a mother first, her children the best testimony to the kind of mother she was: they are family-oriented, loving, kind, caring, with fantastic manners. Loved by her four children, daughter-in-law and two sons-in-law, Norah was a courageous woman who fought a long battle with her health. You would never know it. Instead, she always wore a smile, her sunny vibrant disposition never once hinting at her struggle.

Then there was Norah the writer. Writing as *N.D. Hansen-Hill* and as *Melody Knight*, she waged a battle at her computer, triumphing as she published forty novels. I will never forget her phone call when contract number forty arrived.

Living a life wide and full, Norah was a woman of many talents, not only her writing and oil painting, but archaeology studies as well as running an irrigation business at one time.

But for me, Norah Hansen-Hill was my friend, forever. Rest in peace, sweetie.

Jane Beckenham and Yvonne Eve Walus

From The Pres.

What's happening in RWNZ?

Incoming President **Iona Jones** brings us up-to-date.

Hi everyone,

My first President's page and I thought I would start by telling you a little about myself. An Aucklander born and bred, I moved to Blenheim, Marlborough, about thirteen years ago thanks to my winemaker husband. No complaints though, as it's a great place to live and bring up my two kids. I'm a lawyer and work part time from home for a Government department based in Wellington and, when I'm not working or running around after my kids, I'm writing. I'm currently unpublished, but I am working hard to rectify that situation! I write Regency Historicals and, more recently, I have been dipping my fingers into Young Adult Fantasy. I'm lucky enough to have a very supportive husband (clearly, or I wouldn't be your new President!) and I'm even more blessed to be part of the fantastic group of women that make up the unofficial Blenheim chapter of RWNZ.

To me, that's a big part of what RWNZ is all about. An organisation that helps bring writers together, whether in person or by electronic means, and fosters a sense of community. Isn't it wonderful to know there's a group of like-minded people who understand when you talk about hearing voices in your head, or how your characters won't leave you alone? Whether you meet fellow writers at a local chapter meeting or simply keep in touch through emails, the support of others is so very important in this business.

And nowhere has that support been more evident than it was at our recent annual conference. I saw it in the wonderfully warm welcome given to all our conference newbies and in the exuberant reunions of far-flung members who hadn't seen each other since the last conference. But most of all I saw it in the way members came together in support of each other on hearing the very tragic news about Sandra Hyde. In the midst of the sadness it was so heartening to see. Sandra was such a warm-hearted, generous lady with a wonderfully bubbly personality and she will be greatly missed by all who knew her.

Despite the sadness though, this year's conference was still a great success and I would like to say a big thank you to everyone involved in its organisation. What a great line up of speakers we had and also a marvellous array of editors and agents taking pitches! There were also some very royal guests at Friday night's cocktail function—everyone from an Arabian princess to Prince (in his Purple Rain days)—and the Romance World Cup Awards Dinner on Saturday night was a veritable sea of All Black!

Planning for next year's conference is well underway. Make sure to block out the dates **24-26 August, 2012** in your diary now. An announcement will be made about who our guest speakers will be once they are confirmed. Thanks to those people who have already volunteered to be part of next year's conference committee. There are still plenty of tasks to go around though, so if you would like to take on even a small job, please drop me an email at iona.jones@xtra.co.nz. The more definitely the merrier!



By the time you read this, you may have already received a survey about this year's conference. If not, you should be receiving it shortly. Your opinion is important to us, so please do complete the survey.

Speaking of surveys, your Executive would like to know what you, the members, want from your organisation. With this in mind, we are considering another more general survey to gather your thoughts on member services and what more we could offer. We are hoping to undertake this survey of all members within the next couple of months. This will be your chance to tell us what you think, so be sure to have your say.

In the meantime, it's that time of the year again—membership renewal fees are **due before 30 September**. Remember that the renewal fee is \$59 provided you pay before 30 September. After that date the fee will be \$64.

Before I wrap up for this month, I would like to say a big thank you to Abby Gaines for being such a wonderful President of RWNZ for the last two years. She has worked tirelessly behind the scenes, not only ensuring the smooth operation of RWNZ but also being instrumental in bringing members such services as the new, updated website, online workshops and, of course, the annual conferences.

Well, I think that's enough from me for now. Have a great month and may the words flow! ♥♥♥

Honorary Membership for Frances Loo of Chapter

RWNZ has a limited number of Honorary Memberships available, and it has been some years since we felt inspired to add to the list.

We're pleased to announce that **Frances Loo of Chapter Book and Teashop** in Mt Eden Village has just been awarded Honorary Membership of Romance Writers of New Zealand in recognition of her unstinting support of our conference, short story competition, Liaisons publication, and New Zealand writers in her store.

Frances has generously provided three book vouchers as short story contest prizes each year, and you may not know she always buys a hundred copies of Liaisons to distribute to her customers—significant and continued support for which we're very grateful. Thank you, Frances.

Conference Extra

For those of you who attended Vicki English's workshop on Carriages and Carriage Driving, her promised article, "Anatomy of a Carriage Driving Accident" is now up on vickyenglishscamelot.blogspot.com



Woos, Hoos, and News

Celebrating our members' achievements.

Tyree Connor keeps us in the loop with RWNZ's successes here and overseas. Let her know yours at rocker.t@xtra.co.nz

SALE!

Louise Groake w/a Louise George has made her first sale to **HMB Medical**—a two book contract! Very exciting, and the call story is on the loop for everyone to check out. AWESOME!

First Impressions Placings

First Impressions No.1:

- 1st—Faye Robertson (*partial requested*)
- 2nd—Peta Mobberley (*partial requested*)
- 3rd—Kendra Delugar

Finalists:

Diana Holmes and Ann Russell

First Impressions No 2:

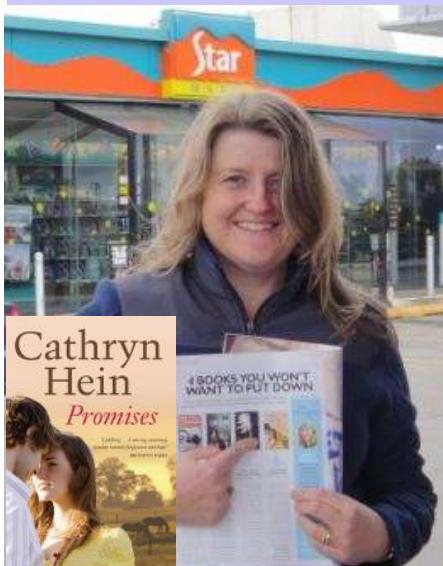
- 1st—Jackie Coates
- 2nd—Nina Wagle
- 3rd—Nina Wagle
- 4th—Kamy Chetty
- 5th—Angela Bissell

First Impressions No. 3:

- 1st—Kendra Delugar
- 2nd—Amanda Wilson
- 3rd—Amanda Wilson

Finalists:

Faye Robertson, Kamy Chetty and Viv Adams



And here's our own little Cosmo Star, Cathryn Hein, and her brand new release, *Promises*. Woot, Cathryn!!

The Clendon Award 2011

- 1st—Rebecca Skrabl (Paranormal)
- 2nd—Iona Jones (Historical)
- 3rd—Michelle de Rooy (Fantasy)
- 4th—Diana Holmes (Sexy/Presents)
- 5th—Michelle de Rooy (Sci Fi)

Finalists:

- Jenny Yates (Historical)
- Kendra Delugar (Special Edition)
- Leeann Morgan (Superromance)

"A friend is a present you give yourself."
Robert Louis Stevenson

Release Success

Jane Beckenham's new release *Secrets and Seduction* hit **Number 1** at **Fictionwise** in General category and **Number 5** in Romance.

Competitions

My Reckless Surrender by Anna Campbell has **finalled** in the **Historical** section of the **2011 Heart of Denver Romance Writers Aspen Gold Contest**.

Rebecca Skrabl has **finalled** in the **Catherine** contest and the **Maggie** this month with *The Devil of Whitechapel*.

RWNZ STRICTLY SINGLE CONTEST 2011

Final Judge: Alex Logan, Grand Central Publishing

Agent Judge: Elaine Spencer, Knight Agency

This contest is open to single title manuscripts, which have a longer, more complex structure than category romances. The word count for a single title manuscript is at least 70,000 words. While entries do not primarily have to be romances, each must contain a relationship that progresses to the next romantic level by the end of the book.

Young Adult entries are also eligible for this contest (the 70,000 word count doesn't apply to Young Adult manuscripts).

OPENS: Tuesday, 23 August 2011

CLOSES: Friday, 23 September 2011

ELIGIBILITY: Open to unpublished RWNZ members

SUBMIT: The first 7,500 words, plus synopsis of 1,250 words

PRIZES: **First:** \$100 Book Voucher from Barbara's Books

Second: \$75 Book Voucher from Barbara's Books

Third: \$50 Book Voucher from Barbara's Books

ENTRY FEE: \$NZ20.00

Details online:

<http://www.romancewriters.co.nz/contests/strictly-single-contest-2011/>

Contest Manager:

Sandii Manning can be contacted at sandii.manning@earthlink.net

How To Write YA Dialogue

Worried about sounding Old Adult in a Young Adult world?

YA writer and Fairy Slayer **Amanda Ashby** gives some tips and insights on how to keep from embarrassing yourself—and your kids.

So what is the difference between writing teen dialogue and adult dialogue? Well, hopefully nothing because like all good writing, the dialogue we use should be character driven. And since you wouldn't have your thirty year old secretary talking like an eighty year old grandmother, neither should you have your teens talking like they've just stepped out of a romance novel. So, with this in mind I thought I'd go over a few dialogue tricks to ensure that your YA dialogue really does reflect your YA characters.

Probably the biggest trap writers fall into when they're writing YA dialogue is that they try and dumb it down. Please, please, don't do this. People seem to think that kids don't use big words. Well, my children are pre-teens and they constantly astound me with their word usage. So, rule number one is don't scrap a word or a concept just because you think that a teenager might not understand you. Trust me, they will. Though, you still need to make sure that your word usage is appropriate for the specific characters you're writing about (without going into cliché mode of making all of your jocks dumb as mud and your geeks speak like they've stepped out of a computer program).

And talking of characters, make sure that you know them. Not all teenagers are the same. Some of them hardly speak at all while others never seem to shut up (I say this in a kind and loving way!) and you need to reflect this in your dialogue. If your character is sullen and moody, then you're probably going to have short, sharp sentences with lots of white space rather than letting them have a lengthy half-hour chat with the mailman just to round out a scene.

If on the other hand your character is a talker then show that. Have other people cut off their long-winded sentences and let's see how they feel about this (in detail!). In other words, let the characters dictate the tone and structure of the dialogue.

It's all about me. Really, it is. In case you haven't noticed, most teenagers are totally self-centred. Plus, they don't always have the same life experiences and coping mechanisms that adults have. So if I told you that there was a fire in my kitchen, the conversation might go like this:

"Worst day ever. I left the stove on and my whole kitchen has burnt down," I say.

"Oh, you poor thing. Are you okay? What can I do to help?" you reply.

Now let's try it again when I tell this information to a teenager.

"Worst day ever. I left the stove on and my whole kitchen has burnt down," I say.

"The kitchen? But what about my party on Saturday night? I might have to cancel it just because you forgot to turn off the stove? You are so unbelievable," self-centred teenager replies before flouncing out of the room.

Another thing to watch out for is Teen Speak. While we all want to seem like we're 'down' with the kids today, there is a good chance that we're not. So just like you (probably) wouldn't go skateboarding down the street, don't start dropping in lots of 'OMGs', 'dudes' and 'totally'. This is even more relevant if you're writing for the US market, because what might be common slang in your local NZ/Australia town isn't necessarily common slang over there.

The easiest way around this is to invent your slang/language or some private joke that your characters can share. This is also a great way to build characters because certain words or sayings can then become so synonymous with them that your reader will automatically know who is speaking.

Oh, and if I haven't convinced you yet, one more reason to go easy on the Teen Speak is because, quite frankly, it can get a little annoying! So apply the same rules as you do when you're

using regional dialect. A little goes a long way.

Cut the boring bits. As writers we are often told to make our dialogue sound real, but of course we don't really want that because real dialogue can be long winded and boring. It's our job to make sure we cut out those parts without losing the authentic appeal we're going for. This is especially true for YA books where readers are used to smart, fast paced writing. Some tricks to stop your dialogue from being boring include:

- using contractions wherever you can.
- keep your structure informal and don't be scared to use broken sentences.
- please don't have your characters constantly say each other's names (because your reader will quite possibly lose the will to live).
- don't include too many social pleasantries such as 'how are you today/what about this weather' unless they are vital to your plot. For example, if someone is having a weather conversation let it be because they're stalling a teacher as their friend tries to sneak out of the aforementioned teacher's office. In other words make your dialogue earn its money!

Dialogue is not the place to info dump. We all know info dumping is bad but there seems to be a school of thought that says if we put all that information into dialogue then no one will notice. This is wrong. Can you imagine overhearing this conversation on a bus?

'Well, the reason I don't want to eat a salad is because my mum is allergic to avocados and she doesn't like us to eat them either. In fact growing up, we weren't even allowed near a house that had avocados and that's probably why I feel like such an outsider. Though it could also be because my dad is in the army and

(Continued on page 6)





Contests and Markets

P.D.R. Lindsay-Salmon shares some potential markets and **Rachel Collins** suggests a few contests.

Potential Markets

AddaBook ebook publisher

AddaBook is a small newly-started independent Swedish publisher that only releases digital material—downloadable ebooks and PDF files for iPhones, Android phones, e-readers or computers. They don't print or distribute traditional books.

Currently interested in publishing shorter works—short stories, poetry, or shorter works of fiction in any genre—of between roughly 2,000 and 10,000 words.

Email: contact@addabook.com

Website: <http://pupillforlag.se/magento/index.php/about-magento-demo-store?store=engelska>

Audiobooks

Audiolark seek romance and erotica, unpublished scripts as well as self published and previously published books. 8,000 to 35,000 words.

Warning: These are DRM free

Website: www.audiolark.com

Guidelines: www.audiolark.com/submissions-guidelinescategory/

(How to Write YA Dialogue...continued from page 5)

we move town a lot. I remember this one time...'

Dialogue tags. These are things we use to make sure the reader knows who is speaking but because we like to get good value for our money when we're writing, there are plenty of other things we can do with them as well. Now I'm not going to get into the whole adverbs versus 'he said/she said' thing because I am a criminal offender who totally, absolutely and completely loves adverbs. However, I will say you should really think about what you're writing and make sure that your tags are paying their way. So instead of a simple 'she said' you could use an action tag, which will give your reader extra information and help keep your pace nice and fast:

"John, I really need to speak to you." Rebecca crossed the room and picked up the wooden stake, which was sitting on the table. "It's kind of important."

Or use the tags to up the tension and convey extra information:

'Sophie Charlotte-Marie Campbell, I've been waiting for you to come home from school. In here now, please,' her mom said in a tight voice as she did that thing with her lips that could only mean one thing. Trouble.

So, there you have it. A few simple tricks to help make your YA dialogue reflect your YA characters. If you're still having trouble then my advice is to eavesdrop on teen conversations whenever you can, read lots of YA books and go and rent *Skins* and *Misfits* so you can see what comes out of the mouths of teens and just how adventurous and boundary-pushing you can go with your characters! And

International Contests

14th Annual Gotcha! Contest

Deadline: October 30, 2011

Eligibility: Not published in the category entered

Enter: First 15 pages

Fee: \$25.00

Website: www.SVRWA.com

2011 Suzannah Contest

Deadline: October 1, 2011

Enter: 7,200 words (approximately 25 pages) and must include a one-page synopsis

Fee: \$30.00/\$35.00

Website: www.nolastars.com

First Kiss Contest

Deadline: October 1, 2011

Eligibility: Unpublished in book-length fiction

Enter: Scene where your couple first kisses - 10 pages max plus 1 set-up page

Fee: \$25.00/\$28.00

Website: <http://necrwa.org/kisscontest.html> or firstkiss@necrwa.org

2011 Gateway to the Best

Deadline: September 9, 2011

Eligibility: Unpublished and uncontracted in novel-length fiction (40,000+) in last 3 years

Enter: First 7,000 words (25-28 pages)

Fee: \$20.00/\$30.00

Website: <http://www.morwa.org/gateway.htm>

Fiction from the Heartland Contest

Deadline: September 9, 2011

Eligibility: Unpublished in book-length fiction in past five years

Enter: Prologue/First Chapter/Synopsis (max. 35 pages)

Fee: \$30.00

Website: www.mararwa.com

finally, good luck! ♥♥

(Editor's Note. If you haven't yet read Amanda's newest release "Fairy Bad Day" then you need to run, not walk, to your nearest bookstore and get it. No, you don't need a teenager in your household. My husband and I fought over it—the book, not the teenager—because I was laughing so much I kept him awake. When he read it he understood why! Great book, Amanda!)

I cannot even imagine where I would be today were it not for that handful of friends who have given me a heart full of joy.
Let's face it, friends make life a lot more fun.
Charles R. Swindoll

Dialogue in Historicals

What are the conventions?

NYT and USA Today bestselling author **Courtney Milan** suggests ways to strike the balance between authentic and weird.



Dialogue in a historical poses a particular problem for today's authors. The dilemma looks like this: The farther back in time you go, the harder it is to get a feel for what spoken language truly would have sounded like in the time period—and the closer you get to accurate, the more modern readers you will lose. On the other hand, dialogue that does not strike the reader as remotely period-accurate will earn you scorn and derision.

So how do you strike that balance between staying true to the period yet still remaining accessible?

Sadly, there is no easy answer to this question. Or rather, there are a great many answers to the question, and every author chooses a different path. What it really means is that every author needs to ask herself this question: What kind of book are you setting out to write?

Here are a handful of options:

- You can write a book that "feels" as if it had been written in the time-period itself.
- You can write a book where, through distinctive world-building and characteristic language, you give the reader a "feel" for being present in a different era.
- You can write a book that uses less formal language and sentence structure, but pays homage to the era through careful word-choice.
- You can write a book that employs modern language and sentence structure.
- And everything in between!

With all those choices, there's good news and bad news.

The good news is that there are successful authors who employ each of those strategies. Susanna Clarke's brilliant fantasy *Jonathan Strange and Mr. Norrell* is a fabulous novel sent in Regency England,

which adopts more formal sentence structure and word-choice in order to transport the reader back in time.

Georgette Heyer writes books that give the reader a feel for Regency England by adopting slang in dialogue that, quite frankly, is not representative in any period writings—and yet her world-building is so successful, and so distinctive, that to this day her usage is broadly accepted as "period." And then there are authors who go the other route and pay only the barest lip-service to period dialogue—and still write successful books that touch readers' hearts.

My particular approach is to use informal language and sentence structure, but to take care with the actual words employed. I use contractions. I write short sentences. Sometimes, people in dialogue speak in incomplete sentences. On the other hand, I look up a great many words in an etymology dictionary to determine whether the word—or the particular usage—is period appropriate. My goal is to chart a course between "accessible to modern readers" via sentence structure, while conveying a "period feel" through word choice.

Now this brings us to the bad news: no matter what tack you choose, someone will hate what you have done.

For instance, a reviewer of Susanna Clarke's acclaimed masterpiece has this to say about the language: "I cannot for the life of me understand how anyone got through this overwritten, overwrought, meandering mess." At the other extreme, one has only to peruse the many online review sites to find readers frustrated with "wallpaper" historicals featuring modern language.

Even worse, historical accuracy poses its own problems. "Screw" and "shag" were both used in Regency times, but modern readers very often complain that these are modern words. On the other hand, modern readers almost never call out "making love" as a euphemism for "having sex"—even

though both phrases are products of the twentieth century.

It would be more historically accurate for a hero to say, "I want to shag you." It will cause less comment if he says, "I want to make love to you." Which do you choose? Accuracy, or perceived accuracy?

Some historically accurate language is simply unintelligible to modern readers—or utterly ridiculous. I think everyone can agree that, "Darling, let me make love to you" is more effective than "Darling, let me have you at poop-noddy."

Every author has to decide for herself where she draws the line. The good news and the bad news are the same: no matter what you choose, some people will love and applaud your choices, and some people will decry you for them. You have to use your best judgment, charting a course between familiarity and period usage in a way that best fits your story and your authorial voice.

"But Courtney," you're saying, "this is all totally useless! You just told us to do what we wanted to do."

And so here's the only firm recommendation I'll make: read. Read a lot of books that were written during your historical period. Read books published today that are set in your historical period. Get a feel for what modern readers will tolerate, and what period dialogue feels like. Read Dickens and Trollope and Austen. Read Julia Quinn and Elizabeth Boyle and Eloisa James and Tessa Dare. (And why not, just for the heck of it, throw in a Courtney Milan or two.) Think about what writing styles resonate for you, and what doesn't, and why. Think about how different authors convey a historical feel.

And then make an informed decision as to how you will do the same.♥♥

You can visit Courtney at <http://www.courtneymilan.com/>

(Editor's Note: I read my first Courtney Milan—*Unlocked*—when I bought my Kindle last month. Absolutely loved it. Delightful story told with brilliance and humour. I'll be buying more!)



A Game of Dialogue

Tetris and Solitaire aren't the only games in town.

Author and teacher Holly Lisle sets out the rules for the players.

THE RULES OF THE GAME

Novice Rules

The novice rules are simple.

There is one issue at stake—this issue is the prize.

Players take opposite sides, and each wants the prize for himself:

"Kate, I need to go to the meeting on Saturday."

"Bob, I want to go, but I can't on Saturday—I have to work, and the only day I have free is Sunday."

There are no hidden agendas, no one is lying to gain an advantage, both players genuinely want the prize.

Amateur Rules

Amateur rules add some complexity—remember, an amateur is someone who does a thing for the love of it, not someone who has no skill.

There's still just one issue, and this issue remains the prize.

Players take opposite sides, but their relationship to the prize becomes more complex:

"Kate, I need to go to the meeting on Saturday." Bob thought of the date he had with the blonde bombshell on Sunday—he wasn't going to give that up.

"Bob, I want to go, but I can't on Saturday—I have to work, and the only day I have free is Sunday. The marriage counselor said he'd make an exception and meet with us on Sunday."

In amateur rules, hiding the truth is permissible, and so is pretending to want the prize to misdirect the other player's energy and attention.

Professional Rules

Pro rules move the level of complexity higher.

Players can be playing for multiple prizes. These prizes need to be exclusionary—if Kate gets her prize, Bob cannot get his prize. Stakes for the

prizes are therefore high, and the game is exciting enough that people will pay to watch.

Players can lie, misdirect both the other player and the observer, pretend to change their playing position to obtain a better stance for their attack, and introduce fake targets:

"Kate, I needed to go to the meeting on Saturday, but I've worked things around so I can go with you on Sunday." The tickets to Bermuda were in his pocket, and if he could just get to the bank without her being suspicious, he could clean out the joint account as soon as the bank opened Saturday morning, while she was still at work, and be on the plane with Elsa and gone forever by Saturday afternoon.

Kate gave him a warm smile. "I'll call the marriage counselor and let him know we'll be there at... three?"

Bob pretended to consider. "Make it four if he's willing to go that late. It'll give both of us time to get ready."

Pro rules require leaving the other player still standing, however, which leaves one final level at which the game can be played.

DeathMatch Rules

In Deathmatch Dialogue, anything goes. The objective is no longer a prize, but the destruction of the other player.

Deathmatch Dialogue, however, is rarely played by both players at the same time. Usually, one player is operating under pro rules, while the other has switched into Deathmatch mode.

"Kate, I needed to go to the meeting on Saturday, but I've worked things around so I can go with you on Sunday."

Kate gave him a warm smile. He thought he was getting away with something. He didn't realize he and his girlfriend, who even then was ducked down in the front seat of his car, were two hours away from the

end of their relationship. She said, "I'll call the marriage counselor and let him know we'll be there at... three?" and made sure her voice was calm and happy.

Let him think he was getting away with something.

The police had already raided the creep's company-financed love nest, and had found proof that Elsa was in the country illegally, that he'd ordered her from an overseas bride site—also with company money—that she was underage, and that Bob's computer had things on it that were going to put him in jail for the rest of forever.

"Make it four if he's willing to go that late. It'll give both of us time to get ready."

Kate nodded happily. By four p.m. Sunday, she and Dan, who'd been pretending to be a marriage counselor, would be free to start the relationship they yearned for.

THE PLAYERS

Singles

Most games of Dialogue take place between two opponents.

Opponents can be of any age and any skill level.

It can, for example, be briefly entertaining to watch a Qualified Deathmatch Dialogue Champion leveled to sputtering incoherence by a two-year-old whose sole verbal volley is the word "No."

But the best games take place between serious, well-matched contenders playing for high stakes and big prizes.

Pairs

Another variant of the game is Pairs Dialogue, where partners pair up against another set of partners to contend for the prize. Popular moves in Pairs Dialogue include:

Tag Team, which puts the rested member forward when the stronger player is exhausted or presented with

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Writing Romantic Comedy

It's more than banana skins and pratfalls.

Comedy writer Anne Gracie shares her grab bag of fun.



So, you want to write a romantic comedy. The same rules apply to romantic comedy as with any romance. First and foremost you are writing a romance. You want your readers to identify with your heroine and fall in love with your hero. Your hero and heroine must be drawn irresistibly together by powerful forces of attraction and kept convincingly apart by some sort of barrier(s), whether internal, external or both. Your hero and heroine must be convincingly motivated to do what they do. But it must also be funny.

So, what makes people laugh?

Surprise

We often laugh when we expect one thing and get another. Mernitt refers to the comic reversal of how we expect to see things—e.g. sophisticated people behaving in silly ways (*Cary Grant in Arsenic and Old Lace*); masculine people behaving in a feminine way (*Tootsie*); or vice versa (*Private Benjamin*); private matters becoming public (who can forget the faked orgasm in the deli scene in *When Harry Met Sally?*).

Displacement of fear

Humor often plays on people's fears. The closer to the bone the joke is, the harder we laugh. Because it's not us—it's someone else. It makes the frightening familiar.

Recognition of the human condition

We laugh when we recognize something that's true. It's the "aha!" moment. Stand-up comedians make their living pointing out the foibles of human behavior. They make it funny by pointing it out in a way we haven't noticed before. It's the element of truth presented in a fresh, surprising way that makes it funny.

Truth exaggerated

Comedy is like seeing ourselves or others in one of those fairground distorting mirrors. The images are recognizably ourselves, but exaggerated in some way. Comic figures are often over-the-top caricatures of human beings.

A comic world created

A comic world must be created, where the usual logic of how we live may be partially abandoned, but which has its own internal logic that we can accept—e.g. Road Runner, with the coyote who never dies; Hamish Macbeth (the TV series), with a whole cast of interacting characters.

Why does comedy go so well with romance?

Comedy is most effective when common, everyday themes are given an obscure twist, which helps us to see comedic events in our lives that we normally would not recognize. Romantic comedy is not about laughing at other people, it is about laughing at ourselves. Falling in love is a huge challenge, because if it does not go smoothly (and no romantic comedy will go smoothly) it challenges all we like to believe about ourselves. And this is a positive mine of comedy material because we *all* do silly things when we are falling in love.

We do ridiculous things to impress (or even attract the attention of) the object of our desire. Serious, sensible, intelligent women are appalled to find themselves giggling shrilly at some completely inane joke uttered by you-know-who. Women who have memorized every diet known to womankind suddenly toss logic out the window and try—seriously—to lose 20 pounds in a weekend! Strong, in-control, masterful men become dithering heaps of indecision when love slams into them—and don't we *love* to watch them floundering as they try to cope with the complete upset of their previously neat, well controlled little world!

Situation comedy

We all know the Sit Coms (situation comedies) from the TV guides, comedies where much of the humor arises from the ridiculous, embarrassing or plain silly situations people are stuck in.

Typical situation comedy sources:

The fish out of water—e.g. the city girl

in the country, the cowboy in the city, the technophobe inherits a computer company, the odd couple—the millionaire and Cinderella, the computer whizz and cowboy, the peace activist and the soldier, the criminal and the cop.

The "impossible ask" situations—the lingerie buyer who has to bring in a bail jumper (*Stephanie Plum*), the chorus girl who has to coach a football team, the pampered socialite who must join the army: these are all modern day versions of "slaying the dragon".

But, in my opinion, a funny situation is not enough. The best comedy comes out of the interplay between characters and situation.

Characters in Romantic Comedy

Character is the key to any story, whether a psychological suspense, a dramatic romance or a romantic comedy. In romantic comedy, the characters must be just as convincing, just as real, even if they are comic creations and a little bit over the top. Your readers must care about your characters. The key to good characterization is Motivation.

The other thing to remember is that quite often comedy does not come from characters "being comical". The characters are not always in on the joke.

Your heroine: She needs to have a goal we can sympathize with or understand. She needs to be likable—your readers should be able to empathize with her. She needs to be credible and believable. She needs to be complex. Typically a romantic comedy heroine is independent, perhaps a little unconventional, can be quite decided in manner, often fairly sure of herself. She can't be too vulnerable and helpless, or the comedy might become uncomfortable. Remember, your characters will probably go through quite a bit of "torture by love", so they need to be able to take it.

Your hero: The most important thing is

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Love & Other Crimes

ROMANCE WRITERS
OF NEW ZEALAND

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(Breaking The Rules...continued from page 1)

they have the tools to express it. That's what voice is. For me, it's how my creative mind works. My natural bent seems to be toward the spiritual or toward fantasy; it was there when I grew up—I was raised with it. And of course, because I like it so much, and also have an analytical mind, I like to know why it is, and how it works, and so I take it apart. What I learn gets put back into my writing and I think my writing might just be richer for it. I know what voice is, what my voice in particular is, and I can look at other people's writing and say, yep, there's your voice, right there. Voice is not an elusive thing any more, but something very exciting."

Karen has created a very successful niche for herself. If you ask about the supernatural or Regency romances, you'll invariably hear Ms. Harbaugh's name. If you mention the two together, it's like a trademark. By being different, by doing what she loves most, Ms. Harbaugh has made her stamp in the romance industry.

When explaining some of the difficulties she first faced, Harbaugh said, "My first two Regencies were with HarperCollins when they had a Regency line. They wouldn't take any that had fantasy elements in them and, in fact, I was asked to take it out. Then my agent sent two others to Signet (Penguin/Putnam) and those sold almost immediately—within a week of submitting them to the editor, in fact. The difference was that Signet Regency's editor had the authority to take risks, whereas HarperCollins's editor didn't, so far as I can tell.

"Certainly the difference caught people's attention," Harbaugh added. "A Regency vampire? Good heavens. But that book was also my best selling book, and this year went into a third printing."

Jennifer Crusie, a highly successful author, said, "I never thought, 'Gee, there aren't too many people doing romantic comedy so I'll write romantic comedy.' In the beginning, I didn't even know I was writing romantic comedy. The last three books I've finished haven't been comedies at all, so I'm always amazed (and delighted) when people say they laughed. I'm just trying to get the truth on the page, my vision of the truth in my voice."

Jennifer's novels for St. Martin's Press, *Tell Me Lies*, *Crazy For You*, and

Welcome to Temptation, have made her a New York Times and USA Today bestseller.

"Having a strong voice," Ms. Crusie said, "gave me not only an identity but a selling point because nobody else can sound like me, just as nobody else can sound like you; that's the beauty of voice, it truly is unique in the dictionary sense of the word. If other writers try to imitate you, they're just wannabes, vague echoes. I had an editor once who said she kept getting query letters that said, 'I write just like Jenny Crusie' and it was always clear from the letter that they didn't so she never asked for the manuscript. If they said, 'I write better than Jenny Crusie,' she asked for the manuscript of course."

Anne Stuart is a grandmaster of the genre, winner of Romance Writers of America's prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award, and a survivor of more than twenty-five years in the romance business. "If I have a niche," Stuart said, "it's a combination of my gothic background and my over the top heroes—many of them are, by average standards, immoral, some are lethal, most of them with a questionable set of values. A lot of my books are very dark, almost impossibly so for some readers, but for those who can handle it, the rewards are considerable."

So, can one aspect of an author's writing define her?

"Yes and no," Stuart said. "The dark, dangerous hero and the strong, almost gothic sense of place will probably always be integral to my work. But there's a lot of creative space involved around such things. And actually, a hidden aspect to my work has always been familial issues. Not as obvious to the casual reader, but it's an ongoing theme and I expect I'll keep up with that too. I have a sense of humor that people often don't expect. It's dark humor, but effective. I call those books my black-hearted romps (as opposed to other people's light-hearted romps)."

Crusie added, "Sharp humor is my life, as anyone who's ever been stuck with me in an elevator or at a dinner knows. I have no desire to write Deeply Serious Books. Probably because I'm not Deep. I write black comic community-based mystery romantic women's fiction. Lot of space to grow there."

And Ms. Harbaugh also contributed, "I've written enough to establish myself, and I've written books where the

fantasy is very, very light, and one where there is no fantasy at all. My natural bent at this time is toward writing in historical periods as well as toward fantasy. If the muse hits me with another two-by-four, I have to pay attention or else she'll bludgeon me until I do. That's the only way, in my humble opinion, to stay fresh."

"The focus can change from day to day," Foster concluded. "Your voice stays the same, but you try new and different things, new lengths, new settings, new character types. You don't ever want to get redundant, or worse, boring! But publishers like you to give them the expected. For me, that was a secret fantasy hook, or a hidden identity. I've managed to put my own spin on those plot devices, and I have a lot of fun with each and every book. If I wasn't having fun, I wouldn't write it."

When asked if she met with any initial resistance to her style, Stuart commented, "When I started in Gothic I could pretty much go as dark as I wanted with my heroes. But when I began writing series romance I ran into problems. There was a time when series romance editors (though not necessarily the readers) wanted beta heroes; kinder, gentler men. They missed the point that these are fantasies, and while the dark heroes are fun to play with, to read about, most readers know the difference between reality and fantasy. So the series editor tried to tone me down, with only marginal success."

In some instances, Ms. Stuart was forced to make drastic career changes, but she refused to change her voice. "In the middle of my career," Stuart explained, "during some of the Harlequin years, I had to tone down some of my books. One of my historicals was toned down a bit too much—the editor wanted the hero softer, I wanted him darker—and I simply ended up rewriting him (and the story) in a third way. At this point, I doubt I would do it. Even back then I tried to buy the books back when I couldn't particularly afford to do so. If an editor and I disagreed strongly on the direction of a book or a character, then I would either buy the book back or come to an agreement to write a different book in its place. I have a brain brimming with wonderful ideas—if I can't do one right then I'll find something else we can agree on. I take intelligent editing gratefully, but I won't

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What is BDSM?

Well, it's more than whips, masks, and handcuffs.

Clinical Sexologist Dr Charley Ferrer gives us some definitions and insights into writing a lifestyle beyond "vanilla".



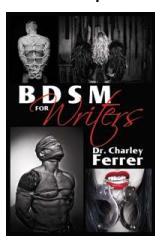
First I think it's important to understand what BDSM actually stands for. It's an acronym for Bondage, Discipline, Sadomasochism.

However, within the lifestyle it's also accepted as a part of identifying the Power Exchange, and Dominance and submission relationships. Individuals who embrace a Master/slave relationship do not consider themselves part of the BDSM mentality but do, however, consider themselves part of the community.

The fact is there are various levels of BDSM, from the pleasure seeker who wants a little kink with his sex before he runs home to his wife/girlfriend, to the adrenaline junkie (major pain slut) who wants to push himself as far as he can go (think, in vanilla terms, of those extreme sports guys/gals), to those that actually embrace Dominance and submission as a way of life; and even further, to those individuals who embrace a Master/slave relationship and live it 24/7.

And we haven't even discussed the subset that follows Gorean beliefs. Wow, talk about totally different. No one ever mentions them and they don't consider themselves part of the BDSM lifestyle/community. However, they do follow a Master/slave tradition. (Gorean beliefs are based on a series of Sci-fi books by John Norman where all the men are Masters and the women are submissive; well, except for the Panther women who do not conform to the slave mentality.)

Contrary to popular belief, BDSM is not merely about Whips and chains. In many instances, toys are never used as the individuals—both Dominant and submissive—are interested in "service" and a spiritual or emotional connection.

It should also be noted that some Dominants do not use impact toys (Whips, Floggers, Paddles, etc.) to enforce their dominance, but use a psychological impact—including Fear Play and/

or humiliation—never once laying a hand on the submissive.

In fact, many BDSM relationships don't involve any sexual interaction or contact.

Although I can continue to provide you with different variables I'm sure you are starting to understand how truly diverse and intricate the world of BDSM is.

There is a mistaken belief that submissives are in "control" of the interactions as they can call a halt any time they wish under the commonly accepted community standard of SSC (Safe, Sane, and Consensual) play. Well, that is what we want them to believe! ☺ However, unlike SSC followers there are those that follow RACK (Risk Aware Consensual Kink).

RACK individuals believe in pushing their submissives further while still maintaining the established negotiated limits. This is where the concept of "consensual non-consensuality" comes into light—a widely debated topic and belief—within the community. This is where trust and vulnerability really comes into play as the Dominant pushes the submissive/slave further, knowing they can take more and breaking through the submissive/slave's barriers yet never breaking the submissive/slaves hard limits.

Once again, there are many diverse opinions as to where to draw the line with consensual non-consensuality as the surrender of a submissive and a slave varies greatly, and these two individuals are not considered the same. Therefore, one (the submissive) has more "rights" and can negotiate and/or call a halt during the interactions, whereas it would be inappropriate for a slave to do so.

Setting limits and negotiations of what'll be done and what implements/toys will be used (i.e: Paddles, Whips, humiliation, sexual contact/penetration, etc), is acceptable for someone you're just meeting or are learning to interact with. However, there are **no** negotiations when someone is a slave or property and belongs to their Master/

Mistress. At that point, the Owner decides what's acceptable and what the slave will tolerate; which loops you back to consensual non-consensuality.

With BDSM situations becoming more popular, and Dominance and submission being out of the leather closet—so to speak—many authors are throwing in scenes which include spankings or bondage or Whips, without understanding the underlying dynamics of the D/s lifestyle. Nor have they set up the foundation for the power exchange. This creates confusion for their readers and/or turns them off altogether.

Unlike Paranormal and Sci-Fi books where you can make up things as you go along, D/s is not one in which you can do so; and when you do, it alters the relationship and the reader's conceptualization of it.

As a writer, it's paramount for you to keep in mind that some individuals may be experiencing their first taste of BDSM and Dominance/submission through your books. If they identify within this unique mindset and have no other clue as to what it's about, your book becomes the yardstick by which they judge whether they're "normal" or not. As for Kinksters who read your book(s), personally, it's always nice to see the men and women represented in a respectful light, and the pathological behavior of the villains distinguished from those of us who practice D/s with love, respect and honor.

Gracie O'Neil posed a great question: "How do you show dialogue in a D/s scene?"

Well, you'd show it like any other dialogue. The major difference is the ability to be blunt and forceful when conveying desire. Remember D/s is about sensual freedom, so "talking dirty" and being naughty is perfectly acceptable. It's also perfectly acceptable to make the scene, the interaction between the Dominant and the submissive, playful. Some of the best scenes I've... um... witnessed

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(Breaking The Rules...continued from page 12)
let someone mess with my innate vision."

It's a common problem in the publishing industry—voice versus marketing. How much should an author bend in order to sell her book? If an editor insists it must be changed, what can an author do? Foster has personally withdrawn books rather than make requested revisions that she felt would change her voice in the book. "I'm lucky in that I now have a wonderful Harlequin editor—Susan Sheppard—who truly understands voice. She makes suggestions and more often than not, she's right. In fact, she's a creative genius. But whenever I've felt strongly about something, she's listened and taken my objections seriously. I've never had to cheap out on my voice."

Foster, who first sold to Harlequin Temptation in 1996 and has since sold twenty-seven novels to five different publishers, believes very strongly in protecting her voice. "It's what defines me as a writer. Whether I'm writing a single title, a novella, or a series book, I want readers to know it's me. I've been incredibly fortunate that the editors I've worked with have understood my style. I've gotten a lot of support and

encouragement. But if I had to put up a fight, it would be over voice, not so much over advances and time frames. Yes, I want to grow in all areas, but I believe if the voice is there, if you're pleasing your readers, the rest will come."

"I've had stellar editors, too," Ms. Crusie said. "Birgit Davis Todd let me take risks with sexual tension, Beth de Guzman let me do insane things with multiple points of view, and Jennifer Enderlin... oh let me count the things for which she's closed her eyes, gritted her teeth, and said, "Okay, go ahead."

Anne Stuart added, "It's more a case of finding a house who knows how to present my voice than finding one who appreciates it. I've had many editors who loved my books, but their houses botch the marketing.

So, what should we do about those rules? Ms. Harbaugh says, "Forget 'always' and 'never' and 'ever.' There is such a thing as art and rhythm and using your ear to figure out what works and what doesn't. There comes a time when you have to look at the art, and that always means bending or breaking the rules, to use them in a way nobody else has thought to try before."

Bend away! And good luck with finding your niche. ♥♥

Please note: The article is about 10 years old and certain aspects of it may now be out of date.

Lori Foster's current releases are: "Men Who Walk the Edge of Honor" series, shown on her website on individual book pages, but here's the page for the newest, that just hit stands this month: <http://lorifoster.com/books/savor/index.php>

Lori Foster first published with Harlequin in January 1996. Her second book launched Temptation Blaze and her 25th book launched Temptation Heat. Since those early days, Lori has routinely had 6 to 10 releases a year. She's a Waldenbooks, USA Today, Publisher's Weekly and New York Times bestselling author with over 50 titles published through a variety of houses, including Berkley/Jove, Kensington, St. Martins, Harlequin and Silhouette.

Love anything and your heart will be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact you must give it to no one, not even an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements. Lock it up safe in the casket of your selfishness. But in that casket—safe, dark, motionless, airless—it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. To love is to be vulnerable.

C.S. Lewis

(A Game of Dialogue...continued from page 8)

something he can't argue convincingly; Research, where one member presents "facts" and the other member backs them up with either real or made-up statistics and references; and,

Divide & Conquer, where team members present questions designed to get the other team's members to make statements individually that can then be used to prove the other team is in fundamental disagreement with each other in order to get them to attack each other.

Unmatched Teams

Unmatched Teams are almost always played at the Deathmatch level, where a lone player faces off against a team that can number from two to a pack.

Further, the utter destruction of the solo player by the pack is almost always the goal. And whenever possible, Deathmatch packs choose novice or amateur Dialoguers to face off against. These matches tend to be bloody, vile, and of little interest to serious fans of Dialogue—they're common instead on playgrounds and in politics.

However, there are instances where an Unmatched Team match can be both brilliant and inspiring—this is again when the stakes are high, where the outcome is something fans are hoping for desperately, and where the Deathmatch pack has accidentally chosen as its victim a Singles player with brilliant but well-hidden Deathmatch skills—and where through intelligence and verbal pyrotechnics rather than brute force and humiliation, the Singles player crushes the Deathmatch pack.

The brilliant Singles player can carry a story, a series, and a career.

Playing Solo

There are three Solo variants of Dialogue: Soliloquy, Rant, and Nutjob Amok.

The soloist can step aside from the action to muse, out loud or in thought, on the Prize he hopes to win or the obstacles he must overcome (Soliloquy).

The soloist can rage against forces greater than he believes he can overcome, or weep and gnash his teeth

at failure to achieve a desperately sought Prize (Rant).

Finally, the soloist can be bat-shit crazy and talk to players who are not there, holding any sort of match and at any level the writer cares to explore. As always, the bigger the Prize and the better the opponents, the more interest and value this variant of Dialogue will have for spectators.

THE PRIZE

Destruction

Playing for destruction is the game of schoolchildren, politicians, parodists, and villains. It's cheap, it's ugly, and it has no upside.

It's also the most common prize of dialogue—and it has its adherents.

People who laugh at home videos of people breaking bones and babies being frightened by big dogs will be happy to spend money to read or watch Destruction Dialogue, as will those who find politics entertaining rather than horrifying, those who think parodies are better than the originals that spawned them, and those who cheer for villains.

(Continued on page 15)

(A Game of Dialogue...continued from page 14)

It's a big group, and you can make a lot of money championing Destruction Dialogue, if that's your thing. Even if it isn't, you keep Destruction Dialogue on hand as the prize for your villains, and as something your heroes fight against.

Glory

As prizes go, glory is a mixed bag. It can present itself as the madman's push for unbridled power, or the young man's search for admiration by looking smart in the midst of an argument.

Heroes and villains alike will seek glory: the way you'll know if your prize is villainous is the winner will then use it force even one other person do what that individual does not wish to do.

The way you know your prize is good is if, in the winning, no one who does not wish to be changed by it will be forced to do so.

Love

The ultimate Dialogue prize is love. Love is the recognition of one's highest values made real in the world—and love cannot coexist with force.

Winning love is the challenge of some of the best Dialogue Matches in fiction.

Love is voluntary. It is chosen. It can be given but never taken. It can be spent upon people, ideals, or objects unworthy of it. The quality of the player's values determine the quality of his love.

People are entirely capable of loving people, ideals, or objects that will destroy them. This lack of discrimination indicates a flaw in the player who loves—ie his failure to identify his own value or his unwillingness to choose things for his love that reflect his true worth.

Obsession is not love. It is a fixation marked by the obsessed's willingness to take by force what is not given willingly. It may be chemical or volitional, or a combination of the two—either way, it is a variant of Destruction.

Lust is not love, either. It is a chemical reaction, and is neither chosen nor reflective of a character's values. Lust can be the initial identifier of an object worthy of love.

However...

Players can—and frequently will—lust after totally inappropriate people or things. Players capable of thought will be able to identify inappropriate lust as

not reflecting what they value, and will refrain from seeking a Lust prize. Characters driven by emotion will pursue lust, often to their destruction.

Lust, being chemical, wears off.

Love does not wear off. It can, however, wear thin as a player's values change, as he realizes he is spending his love on someone or something unworthy of him, or if what he loves acts to seek his destruction.

Love, Obsession, and Lust create superb background for compelling Dialogue Matches, especially where the prizes opponents seek are different.

THE TAKE-AWAY

What You Take Away With You

Every dialogue encounter in well-written fiction features players, rules, and at least one prize. Your job as the writer is to make sure while you are writing your dialogue you understand:

- Who your players are, and what prize or prizes they're after in that conversation.
- What rules they'll use, and what lines they will not cross in that conversation.
- What they have to lose, as well as what they hope to win in that conversation.

People in real life may—and frequently do—talk about nothing.

Characters in fiction cannot. Every instance of dialogue in your work **must** have a purpose and contain win-or-lose conflict, or it is doing nothing to move your story forward.

Your players will use different rules and contend for different prizes throughout your story. But you must know why they're talking every single time.♥♥♥

Holly Lisle, with 32 commercially published novels and more than a million books in print in more than a dozen languages, has recently walked away from commercial publishing and joined the ranks of indie self-publishers. In spite of rumors to the contrary, she has not lost her mind.

You can find out about her and her vigorous pursuit of creative freedom on her personal site: <http://hollylisle.com>

You can also explore her many writing courses (most available as downloads, some offered as online classes) here: <http://hollylisle.com/writing-courses>

"I no doubt deserved my enemies,
but I don't believe I deserved my friends."
Walt Whitman

New! Improved! Easy!

Kris Pearson

(How long did I work in advertising? I know the value of a catchy headline.) Now I have your attention I want to tell you a few things you may not know about RWNZ's membership.

Right now we have 318 members. This ebbs and flows surprisingly much. At renewal time up to forty people are never heard from again. Maybe they attended the last conference, became an automatic member for a year, and found we weren't for them. Perhaps the economic situation has prevented them from signing up for another year. Sadly their health might be failing. Or they've left romance behind for sci-fi or some other genre. Occasionally they tell me why, but mostly they just don't reply to reminders.

Currently our 318 are split like this:

- New Zealand residents—245.
- Aussies—50.
- Elsewhere in the world—8. (Margaret and Nina in England, Sandii and Kaylie in USA, Carmen in Iran, Lisa in Switzerland, Joanne in Italy, and Olivia in Egypt.)
- Honorary members—15.

Each year, although we lose members, we also gain them. In 2011 so far we've signed up 49 new ones—37 Kiwis, 8 Aussies, and 4 from further afield. We're steadily increasing.

This year I'm expecting we won't lose as many members. We really do have something New! Improved! And Easy! It's our electronic renewal form.

No longer do you have to find a paper one in Heart to Heart or print one from the website. No longer need you remember to buy a stamp and post your form. Now you can go straight to our website www.romancewriter.co.nz and click on Membership. Woo-hoo—buttons! Click, click, click and you're done. I'll print it out at this end, check that none of your details have changed, update the database if they have, and all is well. (I'm lying here—Philip does the database updating. If you saw me trying to work on a spreadsheet you'd know why.)

I let Miriam, our Treasurer, know who's sent a form, she checks your money has arrived safely, and that's it—you're in. Kiwis can pay by internet banking, Paypal, Visa, Mastercard or cheque. For overseas residents—Paypal, Visa or Mastercard.

Your current sub will run out on August 31st, so do go to the website before that. Renewing will cost you \$NZ59, plus any credit card or Paypal fee. And to encourage you to pay on time we have a late fee of \$5. The 2012 sub is \$59 until September 30th and \$64 thereafter. Why would you wait? Click your form off to me now! ♥♥♥

(Writing Romantic Comedy...cont from page 9) that he must be the sort of man your readers can really fall for, though he need not start out being instantly appealing to the heroine. He also needs to be credible, believable and complex. He should have a goal we can sympathize with. Never forget that you want your heroine and your readers to fall in love with this man—so if you make him look ridiculous or stupid, readers will either be made uncomfortable or be turned off. Romantic humor can be smart, funny, sassy and over the top—but never cruel.

Both hero and heroine should have a sense of humor, though they may not see their own actions in as humorous a light as your readers will. Both hero and heroine should be flawed. Flaws make a hero or heroine more realistic and also appealing to readers. Flaws can also be a good source of both conflict and comedy. Even if they are opposites your hero and heroine will have interlocking needs which will become increasingly apparent to the readers. You need to convince your readers that these two people are the only possible romantic choice for each other, no matter how different they appear to be. Each completes the other.

The Comic Voice

Your unique voice is the key to selling your writing, and a unique comedy voice is crucial to success in writing romantic comedy. How do you know if you have a comic voice? You probably have a good comic voice if you:

a) write letters, postcards or emails which other people (but not your mother) tell you are entertaining and funny

b) can successfully entertain friends with funny stories about what happened at the office, for example. We can all tell jokes, but not necessarily well. (On the other hand, the ability to tell jokes aloud is not a sure guide to a successful writing voice.)

Comic devices

You can use a variety of these devices in your ms, depending on the style of comedy you adopt. I find the following list useful for brainstorming sometimes, but it is in no particular order. And many of them will overlap—e.g. you might have a running gag, which is part of a character's internal monologue and which uses absurdity and exaggeration. The best comedy fuses all sorts of devices seamlessly.

a) The element of surprise. Surprise is the key to good comedy writing. Surprises which really amaze the readers but which make sense in retrospect (i.e. are still believable) will add zing to your writing. At any particular point, try to anticipate what your readers want or expect, and then try to subvert it. However, avoid the use of cheap tricks (like extreme coincidences) or your readers will feel manipulated instead of delighted.

b) The running gag. This is a recurring theme or motif, which gains significance and/or humor as the novel progresses. It may become a shorthand symbolic reference which speaks to the readers. For instance, in my book *How The Sheriff Was Won* I use doughnuts as a running gag.

c) Puns, plays on words, repetitions. Part of creating your particular world of romantic comedy can come from the repeated use of particular words or phrases. However, repetition should also be considered carefully. It's a fine line between amusing repetition and repetitive dreariness. Puns and plays on words should also be used sparingly.

d) Slapstick antics. Again, these should be used sparingly, as most slapstick is visual and this is harder to create on paper. However the judicious use of some elements of slapstick can be quite effective, particularly if they come as a surprise to the reader. Slapstick can also be effectively combined and sometimes heightened by combining it with internal monologue, using point of view to give it a particular slant. For instance, the dinner party scene in Jennifer Crusie's *Strange Bedpersons* degenerates completely into farce and ends with a slapstick moment involving the mother-in-law's shoes. The action came as a complete surprise yet, in retrospect, all the signs were there, so it didn't come as a cheap trick but a splendidly hilarious moment. (If you haven't read Jennifer Crusie's early romantic comedies, then do so—they're wonderful.)

e) Misunderstandings of all sorts, including eavesdropping. These are very useful devices and have been used for centuries. Men and women often interpret the same things in quite different ways, and so the field of misunderstandings is

very fertile for romantic comedy. However IMO it's better to concentrate on small misunderstandings and differences of interpretation than use a basic misunderstanding as the main source of conflict for your plot. It's very irritating to have a hero and heroine floundering and flouncing around for 150 pages when a simple question back in chapter 1 would have put the situation right.

f) Absurdity and exaggeration. Most life situations are absurd when looked at in the right way. And exaggeration is the tried and true method for heightening the absurd effect. Again, the trick lies in pushing the exaggeration to an extreme which is funny and yet still recognizably "true". Fawlty Towers does this. We don't actually know anyone exactly like Basil Fawlty, but he's enough like bits of people we know for us to find him believable and hilarious. But if he was much more over-the-top, we could easily be turned off and find him boring. It's a matter of taste, but I never bought the way some gorgeous woman always fell for a Jerry Lewis character—he was just too over the top to believe in. He was too busy "being funny" to be real enough for me.

g) Witty repartee and snappy dialogue. This is a joy to read and listen to and extremely difficult to write. The best thing to do is to read it aloud. Workshop it, if you have a good person to bounce ideas off. But unless you really have a gift for witty repartee, use it sparingly. It's better to have a few really witty lines than a lot of attempts to be clever which don't quite make it. Don't forget, your characters don't have to be funny by spouting clever one-liners all the time. Often characters who are deadly earnest and who take themselves seriously are the funniest.

h) Black comedy. This (i.e. comedy based on really dark subjects, like death, or tragic situations) can be used in romantic comedy, but it's risky. Black comedy generally makes us laugh because it cuts so close to the bone—it's a whisper away from tragedy and we laugh to dispel anxiety or in relief. Romantic comedy is feel-good fantasy. For instance, in my Duets *How The Sheriff Was Won* there is a bus crash. It was originally

(Continued on page 17)

(What is *BDSM*? continued from page 13)

were very playful and this helped to break the nervous tension between the participants to allow them to interact more deeply as the “scene” progressed. (Scene is what you call a D/s interaction.)

I am conducting a few workshops on *BDSM For Writers* which are geared toward helping authors understand the dynamics of the Power Exchange as well as what it looks like in action. (Please visit my website www.bdsmforwriters.com for further information.)

My new book, *BDSM For Writers*, provides valuable information on the emotional and psychological connections men and women make. It discusses the various levels within the community (as briefly mentioned above), gives you tips on character development, personality traits, how to train a slave, the benefits of rewards and punishments and much more.

There's even a special *BDSM For Writers* Checklist I created just for authors, to help you develop your characters and scenes ensuring they are more believable and erotic.

My second book, *BDSM The Naked Truth*, is the version for the general public and doesn't include all the author tidbits nor the many secrets Dominants use on their submissives. However, it does have a special chapter on relationships just for them.

To ensure they were available uncensored, I decided to self-publish *BDSM For Writers* and *BDSM The Naked Truth*. The eBooks debuted August 1, 2011. Paperbacks are currently available for Pre-Order and are due out October 2011. Once you purchase a copy you're enrolled in my LIGHTNING BRIGADE—this is what I affectionately call the first 300 people to purchase a copy of my book—which entitles you to a \$500 Digital Erotic Art Collection from *Captured Erotica*

absolutely free. Plus you'll be entered to win 35 fun kinky prizes and one mundane one—a Kindle.

I welcome your questions and comments. Also, if you are writing in the BDSM genre or planning to, please contact me if you wish to join my exclusive *BDSM For Writers* Yahoo group. And join me for the upcoming discussion on Gracie's blog www.romanceshewrote.com on September 6th.♥♥



Dr. Charley Ferrer is a Clinical Sexologist, an Educator, a TV/Radio Host and Producer, an Award Winning Author, and Sex Expert for Fox News Latino. You can find more about her work at: www.bdsmforwriters.com

"Friends are the chocolate chips in the cookie of life."

(Writing Romantic Comedy...cont from page 16)

a little dramatic because I like the contrast of drama and comedy, light and shade—I like to pull the rug out from under, so to speak. But my editor wanted me to cut the scene because she thought a dark scene was out of place in a Duets comedy. I wanted to keep the scene because it was leading up to... (I'm not gonna say what!)... So I lightened it, so I was able to keep some of the drama but not the darkness.

i) **Internal dialogue/monologue.** This is an excellent source of comedy for a romance novel. It's the perfect way to highlight the inconsistencies and contradictions of human beings. We say one thing, we mean another. We do one thing, we think another. We often have a running commentary going in our heads that is utterly opposite to the impression we are giving—or trying to give.

j) **The comic twist.** A fairly ordinary scene can be given a comic twist by something quite small, for example something which might make a character self-conscious, which will move the emphasis away from the main action onto something funny. Mernitt relates an instance where a scene in *Murphy Brown* was livened up by having her sidekick Miles have a goofy new hairstyle. His self-consciousness of it as he waits for her to comment on it lifted a fairly

ordinary scene into a funny one.

k) **Using a character's frame of reference.** All characters bring with them a set of experiences, expectations, and assumptions about the world. You can often exploit these to bring out humor—e.g. the character who is a chef, who will see most things, including romance, in terms of food. And often, the gap between different characters' expectations will add to the comedy potential of your story.

l) **Minor characters.** Your cast of minor characters is incredibly useful for a romantic comedy. While you should remember that you are writing a romance, and therefore the main focus should be on your hero and heroine, minor characters can be wonderful to add atmosphere, to provide a foil for the hero or heroine, to provide commentary outside the hero or heroine's point of view and as very useful plot devices. Not to mention a splendid source of comedy. The minor characters also help to create the special world of your romantic comedy. What would *Seachange* be without Bob Jelly, or some of the other minor characters? (*Seachange* is a very funny Australian TV show). A good comparison is the wheeling-dealing Brian Quigley from *Ballykissangel*.

The Market for Romantic Comedy

There is a growing market for romantic comedy whether it's in category romance or in single title. There is also mainstream semi-romantic comedy, like *Bridget Jones's Diary* and others. The main category market is, of course, Harlequin Duets, and because it's a fairly new line, there are still real opportunities for new writers. I talked to Birgit Davis-Todd (senior editor of Harlequin Duets) in New Orleans and she said the two most important ways to catch an editor's eye are through “Comic Premise” and “Comic Voice”. I've already talked about comic voice. Show your comic voice in the way you do your synopsis. Or maybe with the headline—e.g. Holly Jacob's *I Waxed My Legs for This?* or Jackie D'Allesandro's *Naked in New England*. A catchy title has “pick-upability” and shows you have a way with words.

Comic premise

A comic premise is about presenting the high concept—the story in a few sentences—which gives your audience your novel in a nutshell. It must appeal to an editor's funny bone if she is to want to know more. Encapsulate the conflict in the novel—but show its comic potential—e.g. this is my comic premise for my Duets book, *How The Sheriff Was Won*:

(Continued on page 18)



HMB Great Beginnings Contest 2011 Report

Contest Manager **Julie-Ann Miskell** gives an analysis of the entries.

This year there were forty-one entries in the Harlequin Mills & Boon Great Beginnings Contest, covering a wide variety of targeted lines. Apart from a few glitches involving the difference between the .doc and .docx format, entries were generally well presented.

The breakdown of the entries:

- Mills & Boon Sexy—6
- Harlequin Historical—6
- Harlequin Blaze—5
- Sexy Sensation—4
- Silhouette Desire—4
- Mills & Boon Medical—4
- Harlequin Superromance—3
- Silhouette Romantic Suspense—2
- Harlequin Intrigue—2
- Mills & Boon Sweet—2
- Harlequin Nocturne—1
- Silhouette Special Edition—1
- Harlequin American Romance—1

Due to the high qualities of the entries we had two tied scores, which resulted

in six finalists' entries being sent to Megan Haslam, editor for Harlequin Mills & Boon in London. The finalists' average scores were between 89.7 and 91.7. The average total mark for the contest was 74.6.

Megan Haslam found some real talent and some very exciting voices amongst the finalists. The highest-scoring entries all contained a compelling setup, in-depth characterisation, and a clear conflict in both manuscript and synopsis.

Key points of concern from the first round judges:

Research your targeted line—judges noted that some of entries did not fit the line targeted in the contest. Writers need to read extensively within the line they intend to target, to make sure it's the right fit for their story.

Research the score sheet for the contest—score sheets for the contest are available before the closing date so entrants can check to see if their story fits the score sheet.

Beginnings—the opening scene needs to grab the reader so they will continue to read the story. Too many characters in the beginning scenes can lead to confusion as to who the heroine and

hero are.

Characterisation—some judges commented on the lack of depth in the characterisation of the main characters. In some entries the hero hadn't been introduced by the end of the contest entry, which meant that in the characterisation section of the score sheet the entrant was marked down. A hero needs some redeeming qualities—otherwise the reader may have no empathy for him.

Pacing—slow beginnings, excessive backstory, too much introspection, and over description all slow down the pace of the story.

Dialogue—unnatural or stilted dialogue was noted by several judges. Try reading your dialogue out loud. Also beware of the overuse of dialogue tags.

Setting—there is a fine line between too little and too much description.

Conflict—unclear, or a lack of, internal conflict was a common theme coming from judges while scoring the entries and synopses. With category romance the emotional journey of the heroine and hero is the most important thing to consider. The judges wanted to know how the main characters fall in love and how they overcome the obstacles keeping them apart. The conflict and plot must have enough depth to last the length of the novel.

Good punctuation, grammar and spelling will increase the reader's enjoyment of the entry.

Congratulations to the three winners—Diana Holmes and Faye Robertson (X2)—and to the finalists—Kendra Delugar, Jackie Coates, and Bernice Greenham. Megan Haslam has asked for the full manuscripts of Diana's and Faye's winning entries for further consideration.

We would like to thank Harlequin Mills & Boon for their generous sponsorship of the contest, final judge Megan Haslam of Harlequin Mills & Boon, and the first round judges for all their hard work. ♥♥

(Writing Romantic Comedy...cont from page 17)

Big city journalist comes to small town to run the local paper. She decides to while away her year in the sticks by having a fling with the local sheriff. But he doesn't want to play. So how does she get his attention? By publishing provocative personal headlines about him.

An editor can immediately see the comic potential—the fish out of water (eg Big city journalist comes to small town); the conflict—she wants a fling, he doesn't; the madcap element (publishing provocative personal headlines about him); and even a little alliteration to show a touch of comic voice (all the p's). If you can make the editor smile or even chuckle with your query letter or synopsis, then you're halfway there. You will certainly get

your partial requested.

As well as the comedy elements, don't forget all the usual best-selling romance concepts—the convenient marriage, the cowboy, sheriff, or mounty, the secret baby—they are all there in the romantic comedies, but with a comic twist.

The best advice I can give is read widely in the genre until you find publishers who are publishing books along the lines of what you want to write and submit there.

But whatever you do, you must *enjoy* writing your story, because if you have fun writing it, then chances are, your reader will also have fun reading it. ♥♥

RWNZ News Around the Regions

Keeping in touch with each other.

AUCKLAND

Frances Housden has stepped down as Convenor for Auckland Chapter and Pamela Gervai is the new Convenor. Jo Fereday is taking over as Treasurer in September.

Last meeting we had twenty attendees and an inspiring talk from Sandra Hyatt. Her reference for the information she gave us was Michael Hauge's work, 'Identity to Essence.' The title sums up Sandra's talk which related to story development from character growth.

Barbara Clendon brought books to tell us about, along with info on latest authors. She's always a font of useful information on trends and genres.

Our next meeting will be Saturday 3rd September at 12.30 pm at the Three Kings Tennis Pavilion. Frances Housden has arranged our speaker—thank you, Frances—and I'll advise you closer to the meeting time who it is. 

CENTRAL NORTH C2C

Our next meeting is on Sunday 11th September at Helen McFarlane's home, 15 Sophia Street, in Rotorua. The meeting starts at 12.00 mid-day with a shared pot luck lunch. Please bring a small plate. There is no homework. Helen has the workshop in hand—random scenes with a 500 word off-the-cuff writing exercise to get the scene to a natural conclusion or cliffhanger. So please bring pen, paper/notebook, inspiration, a sense of humour and a smile! See you all there. I'll send contact details and directions closer to the date. Don't forget RWNZ subs are now due, ladies (on-line payment is an easy option). 

HAWKES BAY

There have been no meetings recently as I'm still working in Australia, Christine has been busy with her business, and Sylvia lives in Wairoa. However, I attended both the RWA conference in Melbourne and then the RWNZ conference in Auckland. Both were absolutely wonderful. It was great to meet lots of new friends and greet old ones. No one else from the Hawke's Bay attended this year but I met an old friend, Mary Jones, who used to come to our Hawke's Bay group but who now lives in Auckland.

If anyone would like to join us we would love to hear from you. Just send an email to me—Ginny (contact details on this page). 

WELLINGTON

Eleven of us from Wellington/Kapiti branch had a lively August meeting—and we welcomed new member Bernice who shared a little about her ten years' work in India. Several of us read out two pages using our choice of the eight words provided. This triggered topics as diverse as fortune-telling and underwear for large ladies. Pitches were practised, items for a tempting conference raffle prize gathered up, and Leeann took a great photo and emailed it to us afterwards.

Next meeting is 1pm, Saturday 3rd September at Meryl's. Everyone attending conference is to write two paragraphs (100 words max) on the things we most enjoyed there. 

CHRISTCHURCH

We all agreed the standards for the Clendon were going to be high this year and wanted the Christchurch authors to do well. Besides earthquakes the new topic was snow and that led to world building: the importance of background, clothing and attitudes can add layers to the plot. But even a simple thing like choosing names for secondary characters can jar the creative flow and waste valuable writing time. Everyone contributed to a great discussion.

Wednesday meetings started and we have great hopes for them. Email sandramarkle@yahoo.com for more information.

Next meeting Monday 12th September at 7.00. Discussion topic—the conference. 

OTAGO

Where did August go? Some of us who finished current WIPs just before August 18th barely saw this month. Those who went to Auckland agree three days of networking with equally super-charged romance writers is the best way to celebrate reaching 'The End' of a manuscript. Our group next meets on Saturday 10th September where after a catch-up on conference news, everyone will announce their goals for this new writing year. As this is Viv's last note, please contact Rosalie (contact details on this page). 

"With every friend I love who has been taken into the brown bosom of the earth
a part of me has been buried there;
but their contribution to my being of happiness, strength and understanding
remains to sustain me in an altered world."

Helen Keller



REGIONAL CONVENORS

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"A friend is someone
who is there for you
when she'd rather be somewhere else."

Anonymous

Here Comes The Judge!

Have you ever thought about volunteering as a judge for one of RWNZ's great contests but been put off because you weren't sure about the judging process? Are you already a judge but would like a bit of a refresher? Well, we have the answer for you. RWNZ's Judge Training Scheme is now underway.

By enrolling in the scheme, not only will you receive some great guidelines on how to score, what to score, what to look for and what not to look for, but you'll also get a chance to study some pre-judged samples to see how it's done. After that, it will be your turn to have a go at judging a sample piece of writing in a non-competitive environment and you'll get feedback to let you know how you went. So, how about it? Ready to give it a go?

If so, then email the Judge Training Coordinator at

rwnzjudgetraining@gmail.com

Sandra Hyde/Hyatt

1965–2011

Longtime RWNZ member, Sandra Hyde (published as Sandra Hyatt), died on August 21—after being taken suddenly ill while attending RWNZ's conference in Auckland. Sandra had an undetected cerebral arteriovenous malformation (AVM), which caused a bleed in her brain.

In the outpouring of emails since Sandra's death four words came up repeatedly from her many friends at Romance Writers of New Zealand.

Vibrant. Smiling. Giving. Positive.

Sandra was one of those rare people who managed to successfully balance writing with the family she adored. She made a huge contribution to RWNZ, serving on the Executive for three terms in positions that included Vice-President and Secretary. Many of us will remember her stint as MC for conference one year and her inimitable running joke that began, 'A man walked into a bar.'

She also reached out to new members, always willing to offer advice and encouragement.

Published with Desire, Sandra was a gifted writer with her books regularly hitting the USA Today bestseller list and Waldens/Borders' Bestseller list. Her fourth book, a novella called *Mistletoe Magic*, was nominated for a 2011 Rita, the romance world's equivalent of the Oscars. She was always meant for great things. As an unpublished writer, Sandra often featured among the names of Clendon Award finalists.

In her books, Sandra always said she struggled with her endings. Right now, we're struggling with her ending, too. But as author Maureen Child said to Tessa Radley, 'Better to miss Sandra now, than to have missed knowing her at all.'

It helps to remember that Sandra wrote romance because it reflected who she was as a person. Someone who had the courage to be an idealist in a cynical world. Someone who believed in the power of love to overcome any tragedy or obstacle. Someone who believed in heroes and had one at home to prove it. Someone who loved her children, Sarah and Matthew, more than any thing on earth.

As an organisation we send our heartfelt condolences to her family.

Love is her legacy to all of us.

Cards and messages of condolence can be sent to Sandra's husband, Scott, and their children, Matthew and Sarah, at 191 McNicol Road, Clevedon RD5, Papakura 2585. Our deepest sympathy to the family.

Sandra tweets on writing

Back from a long walk with friends. Solved all the problems of the world except what happens next in my book and what to have for dinner. (12 Aug, 2011)

You would think, being a writer, that I could find a pen somewhere in my house. (8 Aug, 2011)

The writing process. Start with an idea you love, then write, edit and polish until you hate it but everyone else likes it. (1 Jul, 2011)

Karina Bliss



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