

# HEART TO HEART

## DONNA ALWARD

*Interviewed by Soraya Nicholas*



**Donna, it seems that Harlequin Romance rarely buy new authors and yet in 2006 you obviously impressed the editors! Had you been targeting Romance with previous submissions, or did you sell your first manuscript to them?**

I had been targeting Romance specifically for about a year when I submitted *Hired By The Cowboy*, but *Hired* was also my tenth manuscript that I'd submitted across Harlequin and Silhouette lines since early 2002! Around 2005, though, I clued in that Romance was really where my voice belonged, and I started focusing on writing those heartwarming, emotional stories. It took a few tries, but I struck gold in July of 2006.

### **Take us back in time . . . when did you start writing? What was your "call" like?**

Oh boy...I started writing in 2001, and that manuscript will NEVER see the light of day. It is truly horrid! But a miraculous thing happened – I fell in love with writing. I knew this was what I wanted to do for the rest of my life. When I got the call from Romance nearly five years later, I was at my in-laws on vacation with the family. I checked my e-mails and had 2 from my first editor. She called me that afternoon and gave me the great news. It was so special, so...affirming. We went out and bought a bottle of champagne and celebrated by toasting and then playing canasta!

### **Do you write full time? What is your writing routine?**

I do write full time. We were lucky in that I was a stay at home mom, so we didn't have to make a choice that revolved around income. And I do my best work in the morning. Where we're living now, I check e-mail first thing. Then it's walking the kids to the bus stop and taking the dog around the neighbourhood. When I come back, I write until the kids are home at 2:30. Sometimes if it's going well or I'm heavy under deadline, I'll keep on, but some days I'll stop and hang out with the kids or do...gasp...housework. I also knock off early in the summer if I can, and the weather's good, to take advantage of our pool.

### **Why do you love the Harlequin Romance line? Do you still enjoy writing those sweet, tender love stories as much as you did when you first starting writing them?**

Even more so! I love that Romance encourages its authors to take risks, to plumb the depths of unique, highly emotional and even sometimes controversial storylines. I love how I can get right into the heart of a character and cheer with her or him, fall in love, and feel their pain. I admit that part is not so fun – I truly believe in bleeding on the page and that's hard. But the payoff at the end is so worth it. I think Romance is so special because you're guaranteed to get a big story in a small format each and every time. And you'll come away smiling and a little bit happier with the world. I promise.

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## EDITORS' DESK

By the time you receive this issue of H2H, those of us who attended the conference will still be in recovery mode. Some will be writing frantically after being inspired, others will be exhausted, and hopefully even more will be nervously editing requested manuscripts! We will also know the results of the Harlequin email pitch contest, so congratulations to those three lucky writers.

This month we were fortunate to have Harlequin Romance author Donna Alward take the time to talk to us, as well as new author Erica Hayes. Plus we have an interesting article by Kylie Short on her path to finding an agent, a motivating piece by Nalini Singh on how to tackle revisions, and a wonderful article by Maree Anderson and Helen Kirkman on sources of inspiration. And let's not forget lots of information about the new Critique Partner Scheme.

Next month we will have all the gossip from conference along with photos, and the final placings from the Clendon Award!

Until next time.

Soraya & Suzanne

### New Members

Debbie Pryor - North Shore  
Jane Madison-Jones - Christchurch  
Karen Putt - Auckland

## WELCOME

### RWNZ & RWAustralia Critique Partner Scheme

To join RWNZ's critique partner register, run jointly with RWAustralia, go to <http://www.romancewriters.co.nz/members/critique-partner-register.php>. Fill out the online application form and send to [applycritpartners@romanceaustralia.com](mailto:applycritpartners@romanceaustralia.com). Alternatively, email [applycritpartners@romanceaustralia.com](mailto:applycritpartners@romanceaustralia.com) and ask for an application form.

# PRESIDENT ABBY

## From the Pres

The French saying that translates as, “The more things change, the more they remain the same”, has new resonance for me for this month, as I take up the presidency of RWNZ for the second time.

When I was asked to think about people who might stand for president, my own name was nowhere near the list. When those who *were* on the list didn't embrace the opportunity, I favored kidnapping some of the excellent-but-reluctant candidates and running an *RWNZ Survivor* type contest, with the “winner” emerging as the new pres. For some reason, the idea didn't catch on...so I ended up in the hot seat.

I made a strategic decision not to mention my decision to run for president to my husband, who has been known to complain about my tendency to “over-volunteer”. I figured I could do the job for six months—okay, nine months—and shortly before the 2010 conference I would say, oh so casually, “By the way, darling, did I mention that I'm president of RWNZ again?” Because otherwise he might wonder why we were sitting with the VIP guests at the conference dinner...

Soon after the nominations for the executive closed, and it was clear I wouldn't be required to graciously stand down so someone better could do the job, hubby and I were in the car when the RWNZ conference came up in conversation.

Out of the blue, Nigel said, “Don't let anyone suck you into going back on the executive, will you.”

Heart thumping at about eighty guilty decibels, I laughed incredulously.

“You know what you're like,” Nigel continued.

“Really, darling,” I said, managing to appear hurt at his lack of trust...then I changed the subject. So I didn't exactly deny it, did I?

Phew, I thought, the worst was past. Alas, no. A couple of weeks later, when I was out of the house, Nigel found my copy of *Heart to Heart* lying around. He opened it...straight to Pat's president column, naming the new executive. With yours truly at the top of the list. (Note to self: take all incriminating evidence with me when I leave the house in future.)

So, yes, there was a minor confrontation. But it was more a when-will-you-ever-learn kind of confrontation than a you-lied-to-me one. Luckily, I think Nigel sees me as a hopeless case who needs saving from myself. And since he didn't save me, it's probably his fault (most things are, actually). After all, what are heroes for?

That was a long-winded way of saying: I'm back! And, in fact, it's great to be here. Because there's one major change since the last time I filled these shoes. This time around I'm a published author (yay!), and RWNZ gets a lot of the credit for that. If I hadn't joined RWNZ and had access to our wonderful conferences, newsletters and the expertise of local authors like Daphne Clair and Robyn Donald, plus the international authors who've graced our shores, I really don't believe I'd be published today.

I also think serving on the executive was another factor in my getting published. Though it does eat into valuable writing time, it also keeps you focused on the fact you're a writer, and you learn a lot about the industry, as well as making useful contacts. Take a look at the number of former RWNZ executives who've gone on to sell books—Yvonne Lindsay, Nalini Singh, Karina Bliss, Tessa Radley, Sandra Hyatt, to name a few. You can see there's something to my theory. If that seems like a not very subtle way of saying, “Join the exec and you might help yourself get published,” that's exactly right. Of course, now that the secret's out, people will be clamouring to join, so best get your name in early ☺.

Of course, I'm not in this on my own. We have a wonderful executive team lineup for the next 12 months. Sara Hantz is vice-president and Sandra Hyatt secretary. Pat Snellgrove is both immediate past-president and treasurer (go, Pat!), Sue Knight will continue the sterling job she's doing as publicity officer, and Kris Pearson takes over membership. Huge thanks to all of you, I can't wait to work with you.

By the time you read this, conference will be over, and I'm sure we'll have had a fabulous time. The 2010 conference team is in place, as Pat has previously mentioned, and in just a year's time we get to do it all again. In the meantime, huge thanks to this year's conference committee and also to the former executive. Without your efforts, RWNZ wouldn't be the great organisation it is.

Abby Gaines

President, RWNZ

**Why do you love the Harlequin Romance line? Do you still enjoy writing those sweet, tender love stories as much as you did when you first starting writing them?**

Even more so! I love that Romance encourages its authors to take risks, to plumb the depths of unique, highly emotional and even sometimes controversial storylines. I love how I can get right into the heart of a character and cheer with her or him, fall in love, and feel their pain. I admit that part is not so fun – I truly believe in bleeding on the page and that's hard. But the payoff at the end is so worth it. I think Romance is so special because you're guaranteed to get a big story in a small format each and every time. And you'll come away smiling and a little bit happier with the world. I promise.

**You have recently signed with an agent. How did you find the process of finding an agent as a published author? What made you seek an agent at this point in your career?**

It isn't easy, even published. I decided now is the time for several reasons – the timing was good as I was in between contracts; I love the writing part and thought it might be nice to leave some of the business side to an agent so my editor and I can focus on crafting a wonderful story. I also hope eventually to spread my wings and try something new...in addition to writing for Harlequin Romance. An agent can help me with all of that.

But I wasn't having much luck until I went to RWA Nationals in Washington, DC. The very lovely Tessa Radley introduced me to my agent, Jennifer Schober of Spencerhill Associates. I really felt something clicked when I met her. I can't stress enough how much the face to face meeting really seemed to help. We ended up meeting a few times during the conference and then chatted after we were home again. I definitely owe Tessa dinner the next time we're on the same continent!

**Do you have a favourite book or favourite characters, or is that like asking you to pick a favourite child?**

It's like boyfriends, perhaps? The most recent is the favourite? But seriously, every now and again a character reaches out and grabs you right where you live. That happened with Noah, the hero in *Her Lone Cowboy*, which is out in March of 2010. He's physically handicapped, but he's also strong, determined and sexy. I have a happy sigh whenever I think of him.

**What keeps you motivated as a writer?**

Other writers. The romance writing community is so fun, so generous, so upbeat...part of succeeding is surrounding yourself with good people, and romance writers are some of the finest individuals I know.

I'm also a bit Type A (can one be "a bit" Type A?) so the drive to always do it better motivates me as well. I love telling stories, full stop.

**Do you have a critique partner or group, and if so, how does this help your writing?**

I have had a critique partner since 2003. I could not do this job without her. Michelle Styles lives in the northeast of England and writes for Harlequin Historicals. We are writing sisters. We critique each other's work honestly and mostly by pointing out where layers are missing or asking questions (motivation, motivation, motivation!). More than that, we vent to each other, support each other, go to each other for advice...about anything! The cool thing is, we've only met in person once! We need to change that.

**Any advice for unpublished writers, especially those targeting Harlequin Romance?**

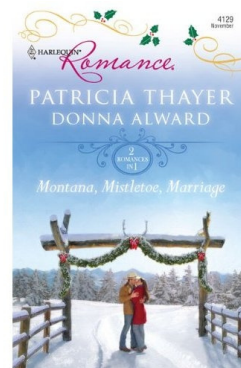
The most boring advice ever. Write, write, and write some more. Read what's current in the line you're targeting, and be honest with yourself if that is where your voice truly fits.

With the Romance line in particular, the focus is on the emotional and romantic journey of your characters, whether it be a quirky and fun love story or a weepy, tug-at-your-heartstrings read. It's all about the characters. Strong hooks and deep characterization go a long, long way. And for the record – don't scrimp on the sensual tension. You might have to leave the sex on the cutting room floor, but you can – and should – keep that sizzling attraction going!

**And finally, what stories can we expect to see on the shelves from you this year or next? Tell us about your latest release . . .**

My next release is my first Christmas story! Patricia Thayer and I teamed up to write 2 novellas about sisters at Christmas. The Hughes sisters run Rocking H Ranch (and it was fun to write a cowgirl!), but Christmas is a bit problematic for the Hughes family this year. The book is called *Montana, Mistletoe, Marriage* and my novella is *A Bride for Rocking H Ranch*.

In that novella you get a quick glimpse of a man named Andrew Laramie. Andrew's story is on the shelves in January, the first of my *Cowboys and Confetti* duet! The book is titled *One Dance with the Cowboy*, and the second in the duet, *Her Lone Cowboy*, is out in March.



Thanks for having me!



# SEARCH FOR THE HOLY GRAIL

## by Kylie Griffin (aka Kylie Short)

I'm sure we've all asked the questions – Should I get an agent? Where do I start? How do I know if they're reputable? Who do I aim for? What should I include in a query letter? Do I go snail mail or email? It seems a daunting process, and yes, hunting for an agent is time consuming. No bones about it, but I think you'll find the end reward satisfying.

The first question to ask yourself is - do I need an agent? Consider this, agents have a better idea of the industry and contract law not to mention the contacts and knowledge of wheeling and dealing – so unless you're prepared to learn the business side of representing yourself in detail then it's probably a good idea to find one.

There are authors in our organization who don't have an agent and deal with that side of the business themselves – the decision of “do I or don't I?” really is a personal choice.

So, what's next, if you do decide you need an agent?

**Step 1 - Research.** This is where the Internet comes in handy. Typing in a search for literary agents/agencies will get you a screed of sites to look through. Some are more helpful than others.

Personally, I found Agent Query excellent ([www.agentquery.com](http://www.agentquery.com)). Other sites you might like to browse include Absolute Write ([www.absolutewrite.com](http://www.absolutewrite.com)) or Preditors & Editors ([www.anotherealm.com/preditors](http://www.anotherealm.com/preditors)). They'll also give you information on whether they're legitimate agents/agencies.

\*Rule of thumb – agents never charge up front for their services. If you come across one that does, steer clear of them.

Alternatively, ask your critique groups or other writing friends about agents/agencies. Check out your favourite authors (the ones you most write like) and see if they have an acknowledgements page. They might thank their agent. It's simply a matter of then searching for them on the internet.

Most agents & agencies these days have a website and they tell you the genres they do/don't represent. They also have guidelines of what to send them and how they prefer it sent.

**Step 2 - Make a list.** Twenty's a good number to start with. Once you've trawled through agent websites, pick the ones you most like/want/dream of representing you and prioritise them in order of personal preference.

Divide them into email and snail mail submissions. Obviously, email is going to be more cost effective for you and a lot of agents are now using this environmentally friendly method (it may not always be “quicker” in terms of a response but there is that slight advantage to email submissions).

This begs the question – do I target a big agency/agent or a small one? After asking some of my friends who have agents (yes, there's networking for you), there are pluses to both.

The big name agent of a large agency will always be difficult to crack, their lists are usually full. That doesn't mean you cross them off your preferred A list just because you're a new up-and-coming author (case in point, Gracie O'Neil recently signed with Nephele Tempest from The Knight Agency). Don't take it personally when they pass on your query. Move on to someone else.

Junior agents at large agencies could also be a great opportunity - they're learning from the best, and they have to build up their experience and contacts before they open lists of their own. Once they do then they're going to be keen to build them. Larger agencies also have staff - they've got more time for tasks like doing their website, promotions etc. from which authors can benefit.

Smaller agencies are often run by an agent who used to work for a large agency before going out on his/her own. So it's a matter of researching the agent's history to determine their level of experience. Newly formed or smaller agencies can be a good choice because the agent will be building up their client list and willing to take on new clients.

Whether you give preference to a big name agent/agency or a small one, what seems to matter is the agent's track record, reputation and resources; how well connected they are and what kind of experience they have etc. These are things to consider when deciding on your list.

Once you have an agent interested in signing with you then the all important compatibility factor comes into play - personal chemistry (in that initial phone call to discuss representation), the alignment of goals concerning your work, how you hope to operate within the parameters of the author/agent relationship etc.

**Step 3 – Write a query letter** and/or collate appropriate sample pages/partial as per the guidelines for each agent. Some will want only the query letter, some a QL and 5/10 pages of your work, some a QL & synopsis.

When you start this process only work on 5 submissions at a time. Too many and you run the risk of confusing specifics and there's nothing more unprofessional than sending the wrong thing to your "dream" agent and it's a sure way to be culled.

Check the guidelines. Double check. Then check again. How easy is it for an agent to disregard your query when you haven't adhered to them?

\*Some advice for query letters, no fluffy stuff. Agents don't have time to read waffle, not with 50 to 100 queries a day (and that's a conservative estimate, I'm sure). They want to know what your book is about, the conflict, the idea - think back cover blurb, and any relevant info about you. Keep it brief, no more than an A4 page. The details about characters and your more complete bio can come later once you've hooked them with your story.

Agent blogs sometimes address what makes a good query letter. Two blogs with good examples include BookEnds Literary Agency ([www.bookendslitagency.blogspot.com](http://www.bookendslitagency.blogspot.com)) and Kristen Nelson Literary Agency ([www.pubrants.blogspot.com](http://www.pubrants.blogspot.com)).

**Step 4 – Keep track of your submissions.** Whether you create a database on the computer or on paper you stick to your office wall, know who you sent a query to, when you sent it, what manuscript you pitched, the timeframe they suggest contacting them if you've haven't heard from them, what response you got etc., any information that tracks your progress in your search for an agent.

Send out 5 queries at a time. As one comes back, send out another to the next agent on your list. And so on.

I highlighted any agent who sent back something more than a standard rejection eg. personal comments about the manuscript. It meant they were interested enough to take the time to do that, and they're the ones to target with a new pitch and new manuscript next time. Just refresh their memory about your prior contact with them in any subsequent QL.

**Step 5 – Celebrate your successes.** When you get a request for a partial or full, pat yourself on the back, even if they're eventually rejected. Share the good times with your friends. It keeps the batteries recharged and makes the slog worthwhile.

Also note down on your database the agents who requested partials or fulls – again they liked your voice enough to possibly request and read other work by you.

Just remember:

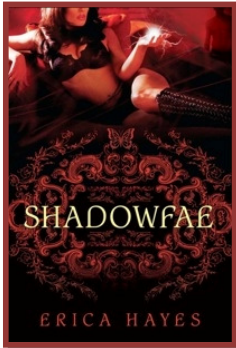
1. Aim high – agents can only say no, but they might also say "I'd like to officially offer you representation."
2. Research your agents carefully – if they offer you representation you want to know you're signing with someone you can work with.
3. Maintain a professional & polite attitude – rudeness will come back to bite you. If you end up with several agents requesting fulls have the courtesy to tell the others there are "X" number of agents also reading your work (no need to name them specifically). It lets them know others are interested.
4. Persevere – (and I'm getting a t-shirt with this emblazoned on the front of it) - anyone with an agent will tell you they didn't give up looking for one after getting a rejection or two.

Good luck in your hunt for an agent!

**Biopic:** Kylie Griffin spent the better part of 5 years searching for the Holy Grail...umm, agent. She found and signed with a wonderful and enthusiastic agent, Jenny Rappaport of the Rappaport Literary Agency, in March this year. She isn't an expert on the subject of agents (hence the networking), but wanted to help out fellow writers journeying along the same worn pathway she did. Kylie writes sf/f/paranormal romance and is a multiple finalist/placegetter in RWAustralia & RWNZ competitions such as the Emma Darcy Award, Emerald: Single Title, Valerie Parv Award and the Clendon Award. Disclaimer: No agents were harmed in the writing of this article.

# NEWBIE AUTHOR

*Erica Hayes (St. Martin's Press) interviewed by Kylie Short*



## **A little bit about myself...**

I'm a full-time writer, based in Canberra for the moment with my long-suffering (and income-earning!) partner. I write urban fantasy and paranormal romance, and I've just sold my first manuscript to St Martin's Press.

## **How authors are "discovered" is as diverse as the brands of chocolate we consume. Please tell us your CALL story.**

I've been writing since high school, and I finished my first halfway-decent manuscript back in 2007. Since then I've written four more, including the one that sold. I've been involved in a mixed-genre online critique group called

Dreaming in Ink since 2007, and those guys really encouraged me to finish pieces and get submitting. I joined Romance Writers of Australia in late 2007, and the knowledge and support offered by everyone is incredible.

I started out writing fantasy, and I managed to get my first manuscript read by a friend's editor at Samhain Publishing. Looking back, I owe that editor a gargantuan debt of gratitude. She was very kind to me (probably kinder than that horrid novel deserved!) and offered me a lot of great feedback, but the novel didn't make the cut.

Next I tried her with a sci-fi/romance novella, same result: useful and positive feedback but eventually a rejection. My writing was technically competent, but my voice just didn't shine. It wasn't special enough to stand out from the crowd. So I took that kind lady's feedback on board, and determined that for my next manuscript, I'd hold back nothing — if I thought it, I'd write it, and chance the consequences.

My writing mantra became three simple words: TIGHT, FRESH and most importantly, FEARLESS. TFF, folks ;) The result was a steamy paranormal romance I called WANT YOU DEAD, about the trials of a reluctant succubus in fairy-infested Melbourne.

The manuscript baffled me, and kind of scared me too, because it was so unlike anything I'd ever written before. It was this naked warty monster, smirking at me from the corner of my office. It was like having punk rock blaring from the speakers when you're used to easy listening. But my crit partners at Canberra Romance Writers loved it, so after much scoffing on my part I entered the partial in RWAust's 2008 Valerie Parv Award. To my astonishment, it made the final. Months later, to my utter incredulity, it won. (I can't say enough good words about Valerie's mentorship, but that's material for a different question!)

In the meantime, the same partial totally bombed in three Romance Writers of America chapter contests. It didn't even come near the finals. I got pinged for my hero not being heroic enough and my heroine being too matter-of-fact. One judge marked me down because my characters swore too much. OMG, I thought, Americans hate it. They don't get my punk rock voice. I'll never get published.

But I'd also been flinging out queries. One helpful agent who rejected it told me what I didn't want to hear, which was that the manuscript was ten thousand words too short to be a single title. I didn't crumble. I just added ten thousand words and sent out more queries, and the week before it won the VPA, I accepted representation from an agent in the United States.

My call, when it came, was an email. Interest from St Martin's had been in the wind for a week or more, so when the offer finally came it was a relief to my shredded nerves. I was home alone when the email arrived. I believe I stared, and giggled for a while, and then I cried :)

It was everything I'd ever wanted. I still don't really believe it. I don't think I will, until I hold the book in my hands.

The moral of the story? Listen to industry feedback. Don't strangle your voice through fear. And don't ever give up.

**I just have to ask the-chicken-or-the-egg question. What happened first – agent or an editor? How did you go about finding one/both?**

For me — aiming at single title — it was the agent first. I found her the old-fashioned way, with a query letter and sample. I didn't have a recommendation or contacts in the business, and I didn't have any publishing credits to speak of. I hadn't finaled in the Golden Heart (or the VPA, at that stage) or made friends with any agents or editors at conferences. But I figured the query letter should be like the manuscript — TFF — so I based it on an imaginary cover blurb, none of this wishy-washy thematic or logline stuff.

If an agent didn't like flashy adjectives, they sure weren't going to like my manuscript, so might as well get it out there up front. I think this is what they mean when they say 'make your query reflect your voice' :)

Targeting was easy. Australian speculative romance market? No such thing. Australian agents with open slush piles? You're being funny, right?

So I compiled a list of agents in the US who represented my genre, from Google and websites such as Publishers' Marketplace and AgentQuery, and I was methodically querying them all by email, five at a time. When a rejection came in I send out another query. I got thirteen straight form rejections before my agent (the wonderful and enthusiastic Marlene Stringer) took me on, a whirlwind process that still makes me gulp. She read my query on Monday, the partial on Tuesday, the full on Wednesday, and by Friday I'd accepted representation. Just goes to show, it pays to have the manuscript ready when you query!

After that, it took Marlene two months and at least four rejections (as well as plenty who hadn't gotten back to her in that time) to sell my manuscript. She has access to many editors that don't accept slush from authors. I probably wouldn't have sold to St Martin's without her.

**What's the name of your book scheduled for release and can you tell us something about it?**

My first book, now titled Shadowfae, is scheduled for an October 2009 release. It's a sexy urban fantasy with lashings of hot romance. Fairies, vampires, banshees, incubi, you name it, it's wandering the streets of Melbourne. So if you like urban fantasy or paranormals, give it a try!

Stalk it on the web at <http://www.shadowfae.com> :) you can see a trailer, an excerpt and some other goodies (or you will be able to by the time of this article!)

**What's the most exciting thing about writing for you? The most boring?**

The most exciting thing? Oh, there are so many exciting parts. Typing THE END — nothing better than the prospect of a finished draft, waiting to be hacked at. A close second would be the epiphany you get when you realise your outline is going to work, and that one day soon it'll be a manuscript. Opening a new document to start the new manuscript is also a favourite. Oh, I'm just excited about the whole damn thing :)

For me, there's nothing boring about writing. I love it all, the outlining, the drafting, the editing. There are some parts I don't look forward to — synopses, for one, are not my friends — but it isn't because they're boring. It's because they're hard :)

**At the chat sessions during conferences we hear favourite authors telling us that things really change once you publish. What differences, good or OMG (oh my goodness), have you experienced since getting THE CALL?**

I've had to make two really big adjustments since I got the call.

The first is that I don't own my manuscripts anymore. I mean, legally I do, but they're no longer mine to craft as I see fit. The publisher has expectations about theme and style that I have to meet — luckily, they've coincided with mine so far, so it isn't a problem. But ultimately, what they say goes, and sometimes I find it hard to let go.



The upside of this is that my editor and everyone else at the publishing house are firmly and enthusiastically on my side — they have to be, because if my book doesn't sell, they wear the hurt. It helps to remember that, when the time comes to bicker over titles and covers and so forth :)

The second adjustment is related to the first — I now have deadlines. I have contracts to fulfil. Writing, unfortunately, has become work. And while I still love it as much as I ever did, days come when I just want a holiday. That never used to happen when I was 'just doing it for fun'. You really have to self-motivate.

**Is there any other advice, "lightbulb" moments or comments you'd like to share about getting/being published?**

1. Agents get rejected too. They're querying on spec just like we are, just with a bit more insider knowledge and a few more contacts. So be prepared to lose before you win.
2. The first thing my agent asked me when we were discussing representation was 'what are you working on now?' Be prepared to pitch other projects, and if they're similar in tone so much the better. And prospective publishers want the same. I've written more synopses and two-paragraph pitches since getting representation than I ever did before. And I've had to learn to do it for books I haven't even written yet. So that part doesn't stop, damn it ;)
3. The second thing my agent asked was 'how long does it take you to write a book?' Figure this out, and be honest. Be realistic. Publishers have fearsome schedules, and they have enough pains in their butt already without you missing your deadlines. You don't want to make promises you can't keep.

**Thanks for your time, Erica!**

**Shadowfae back cover blurb . . .**

Steal souls.  
Live in hell.  
Never die.

In a city infested with psychotic fairies and run by sadistic vampire mafiosi, life as a soul-sucking succubus rarely involves lacy lingerie, hot guys or great sex. Instead, Jade must spend her nights seducing gangsters and murderers, or simpering as a trophy girl for hell's minions. So when she discovers a forbidden ritual that promises to break hell's thrall and set her free, she's got nothing to lose, even if it involves seducing the four most repellent souls in town. But when you're cheating hell, there's always a catch...

**STRICTLY SINGLE CONTEST**

**Deadline:** Entries must be postmarked no later than Friday, 25 September 2009.

**Eligibility:** Entrants must be RWNZ members unpublished in, and unaccepted or uncontracted for, a work of fiction (print or electronic) of more than 30,000 words in the past five years.

**Open to:** Single title romances, including YA, aimed at any single title publisher.  
NB: Two entries per entrant may be submitted.

**Final Judge:** Meredith Giordan, Berkley Publishing

**Agent Judge:** Holly Root, Waxman Literary Agency

**Submit:** Up to 18 pages in ARC format only (see entry form for instructions).  
Plus a 5-page double-spaced synopsis.

**Entry Fee:** NZ entrants \$NZ30; Australian entrants \$A30; Other countries \$NZ35.

**Coordinator:** Kate Buchanan: [katebuchanan@ihug.co.nz](mailto:katebuchanan@ihug.co.nz)

Entry forms can be downloaded from the website [www.romancewriters.co.nz](http://www.romancewriters.co.nz)  
Alternatively, they can be obtained from the coordinator  
**ANY QUESTIONS—PLEASE EMAIL THE COORDINATOR**

# CRITIQUE PARTNER SCHEME

*Kamy Chetty & Tyree Bidgood*

*interviewed by Barb Jeffcott Geris*



The new RWA/RWNZ Critique Partner Register has been up and running for four months. Many very successful matches have been made using the new “self selection database”, including our first Kiwi-Kiwi pair, Kamy Chetty and Tyree Bidgood.



Please explain the steps you took to obtaining a CP on the RWA/RWNZ CP register.

Partner service but didn't find a match **K:** I had used the original Crit that way. When the process for being on the Crit Register changed, I was asked to submit a sample page of my work, as well as answer a few questions about my writing and these details were put on an anonymous database available for all members to view.

**T:** I followed the same process as Kamy, filling out the questionnaire, then viewing everyone's details. I found this really good because it got me to focus on what my strengths were (what I could offer someone else) and what I really needed. At the beginning I thought, “I need everything”, but after a bit of reflection I realised I needed help with certain areas.

**What was it about your CPs details on the site that made you think you might be a good match?**

**K:** It helped that Tyree was from a medical background and we were both at the point in our writing, where we were serious about improving our work. We both wanted honest and constructive feedback. We also wanted to exchange work at a rate I could cope with.

**T:** Can I say ditto?

**Did you view a sample of your CPs writing on the site? How helpful was this in helping you choose a partner to trial?**

**K:** I did read Tyree's work. I liked her voice and her style. Being an eclectic reader meant it didn't matter what genre my crit partner wrote, as long as we were able to get something out of the partnership. When you read a page of someone's work, it gives you a better insight into that person and you can tell whether you'll gel with them. Compatibility in choosing a crit partner is very important to success.

**T:** Actually, I must have missed 'CP site 101' because I didn't realise I could. Kamy had listed her strengths and also her target markets on the database. These were my tick boxes.

**What made you feel you needed a CP?**

**K:** I was at the point in my writing where I wanted to improve. I needed someone to read my work and tell me what I was doing wrong. I also wanted the motivation of having a deadline.

**T:** I desperately need to get these stories out of my head because they're driving me nuts. Having a CP partner motivates me. It's great to kick ideas around with Kamy. We both recently stopped everything and kicked out a short paranormal each. It had a tight deadline and we HAD to do it. Great motivation, great test of craft and we couldn't fob it off because then we would have had to explain!!!

**Have you had CPs in the past?**

**K:** Yes, but I've found that unless you're on the same level in your writing, it's difficult to form a long term partnership. Often if someone is serious about their writing, they need someone who's just as committed to their work. Critiquing should be beneficial to both partners.

**T:** Yes. When I first started on the original scheme I had the three tryouts. All three were lovely – and diverse – but in the end I was at a different place with my writing than they were and didn't continue.

**How many trials did you go through before settling on a CP?**

**K:** I went through a few on the original scheme before I found someone on the new register who was able to help me. Compatibility in crit partners isn't easy. When you find someone you can work with, it's like winning the lotto. Tyree is right about the sharing as well. When I finalled in my first contest, I couldn't wait to let Tyree know. And when I found out she was Highly Commended in the Clendon - I was over the moon. I couldn't wait to tell her how thrilled I was.

**T:** I had three from the old scheme and I'm glad I tried the new system and found Kamy. Kamy seems to have a similar sense of humour, a similar busy lifestyle, a supportive husband who probably sits up in bed like mine and says "yes dear" when she reads out her latest...I also think we're both motivated to MAKE IT. The critiquing is a partnership towards our individual goals. It's fantastic to have a buddy to share with.

### **How do you and your CP go about critiquing each other's work?**

**K:** We set a deadline as to when we're going to exchange work i.e. one chapter per week. It's usually a Monday. So I try to get the critiqued chapter back to Tyree before the weekend so that changes can be made before we're ready to exchange the next chapter.

**T:** I pretty much take on board all of Kamy's suggestions. She may write something in a way that differs to my style so I'll look at how I'd rewrite the same bit, but there's a very good reason she's highlighting those changes and I know my writing is stronger because of it. When I critique Kamy's work I read the whole chapter through first without making any notations, sometimes I put it aside and do the same thing the next day. Then, I try to work out what her motivations for the chapter are and read through line by line.

### **Has using the CP Register made you want to trial more CPs? Why/why not?**

**K:** At the moment I'm happy with just Tyree as I work full time and have limited time for my writing. Critiquing someone's work is just as important as writing your own. When I critique Tyree's work, I want to be able to do a good job. This takes time and I love doing it because I learn as well. But being able to do this for more than one person will limit the time I spend on my

own writing. As I said before, finding the right person is like winning the lotto. I'm not sure I'll continue buying lotto tickets if I won thirty million dollars. But then, that's me.

**T:** Why break a good thing? One is definitely enough in my busy lifestyle – which sometimes does take over. I wouldn't be able to keep up with another and then the writing could suffer. A scary thought which keeps me happily where I am.

### **What have you gained from using the RWA/RWNZ critique register?**

**K:** Before the RWA/RWNZ Crit Register I knew I needed to have a crit partner if I wanted to improve my writing, but I didn't know where to start or how to go about it. I can honestly say that I wouldn't have had my recent contest successes without the input of all the wonderful writers who've read my work and given me feedback. When you make the decision to become serious about your writing and say, 'this is it, this is my time,' you do whatever it takes to get there. And the most important thing to remember is it's not just about critiquing. Critiquing is just part of it. It's also about motivation and bonding. I hear some people say that they outgrow their critique partnerships. Tyree and I will never have that problem because we're both committed to our work and we're both going to make it- TOGETHER.

**T:** A buddy who is ON-TO-IT! She's talented, straight up, and exciting to be partnered with. I can almost imagine in ten years that people will want my autograph just 'cause I'm Kamy's critique partner. Seriously. I really believe in Kamy's writing and it has motivated me with my own. It's difficult to quantify, but I trust her judgment and am now more confident of my road to success than I was without her.

**If you'd like to join the RWA/RWNZ Critique Partner Register for either Beginner, Intermediate or Advanced writers, all the details, including articles on how to crit and a downloadable application form are available on our website: [www.romancewriters.co.nz](http://www.romancewriters.co.nz) or you can email:**

**[applycritpartners@romanceaustralia.com](mailto:applycritpartners@romanceaustralia.com)**

# HOW TO TACKLE REVISIONS

by Nalini Singh



It finally happens. You open that envelope with a feeling of intense disappointment, expecting yet another rejection but lo and behold, it's something else. A revision letter!

## Stage 1

You stare at the letter in shock, check that they sent it to the right person, stare at it some more and perhaps start to giggle a little hysterically.

## Stage 2

Wild jubilation. You ring your writing friends (the only ones who understand the monumental importance of a revision letter), tell your mother, your dog and maybe even the postie who's used to seeing you crumple in tears every time he hands you another envelope.

## Stage 3

You're calm and ready to begin work. You start to read the letter instead of just picking out the magic word revision.

If you're super lucky, the letter requests only minor revisions: e.g. Maybe the editor wants you to change the name of your hero, or asks that you flesh out a scene or two. In this case, you do it and all ends well.

But...in most cases, that very first revision letter is likely to be a little bigger and require a lot more work. In which event...

Your heart thuds, your brain freezes and you gulp. Panic hits. The once magical two pages now appear to be an axe looming over your head. How do you do this? There's so much! Lines and lines and even more lines. You go take a bath/have a margarita/bake a cake/insert own procrastination tool here.

## Stage 4

You're *really* ready to begin work – this is the time when the following tips may come in handy.

- (I) Read the letter carefully, without letting your own beliefs about the stupendous wonderfulness of your manuscript as it is, get in the way.
- (II) Make contact with your editor via email, phone or regular mail to thank them for their suggestions and to let them know that you're beginning revisions. This is basic good manners. Make it polite and short.
- (III) Make three lists (mental or on paper).
  - i. On one list, place all the 'easy' revisions. These should include things such as: overusage of particular words (all writers have their favorites), changes of character/place names, correction of any grammatical errors pointed out, expansion of scenes already in the manuscript etc.
  - ii. On the second list, note all the stuff that looks impossible at first glance, including: changes to the motivations and personalities of the characters, fundamental changes to the storyline, addition *and* deletion of entire scenes and any changes that relate to the underlying conflict(s) etc.
  - iii. On the third list, make a note of any changes you feel compromise the manuscript or don't work. This should be a fluid list that changes as you write.



- (IV) Begin revisions by completing the changes in list (i). This will not only get you started, it will make you feel like you're accomplishing something (which you are).
- (V) Once the changes in list (i) are complete, you should be more than ready to tackle the changes in list (ii). Now, you *know* you can do these revisions, because you've already managed to tick off several things in the list the editor sent you.  
Each writer is different, so at this stage, you need to find out what works for you. For the tougher changes, I prefer to do them one at a time. For example, if I had to change a character's motivation, I would go through the entire manuscript and implement the change, then start all over again at the top for the second big revision. You might prefer to do several of the big changes simultaneously ie. change character motivation(s) at the same time that you're revising the plot.  
Choose what works best for you. This might involve some trial and error.
- (VI) You now have a revised rough draft. If you can, set it aside for a few days and then come back and reread it with fresh eyes. Check things like whether any deletions have left crucial gaps in the story, whether scenes have become redundant and whether the story reads smoothly. At this stage, you have to rely to a large extent on your own knowledge of what the story should be – you may decide to add/delete things that aren't in the revision letter. Put any such changes on list (iii).
- (VII) If an editor has taken the time and effort to write you a revision letter, they want you to succeed. To this end, they're not going to be mad if you ring/email them with any questions, though try and keep it short – editors are very busy people.  
I'd suggest contacting the editor at this stage because by now, you've almost finished the story. Therefore, your list (iii) should be fairly complete. In most cases, it shouldn't be huge – if it is, ask yourself whether you're truly revising at all or just trying to sell the same story that has already been responded to.  
Talk to your editor about any changes you feel uncomfortable with or are unsure about. This is your story but editors know what works in their marketplace, so this should be a dialogue. You might convince them, they might convince you, or you might reach a happy middle-ground. The important thing is to always, always, act like a professional.
- (VIII) Go over the manuscript again in light of your discussion with your editor. Refine the revisions.
- (IX) If you're like me, then give yourself a couple of days off then read it one more time and check for simple spelling mistakes etc.
- (X) POST IT! 📧 Yes, really, you have to let go now. It's tough but you gotta. I would suggest getting the manuscript back to the editor a month to six weeks after you receive the revision letter. This gives you enough time to do a good job but it also shows that you're reliable and can work under pressure.
- (XI) Start another manuscript if you haven't already. Acceptance or rejection, you want to be able to present the editor with another story – once again, it's all about professionalism.
- (XII) Wait for the phone to ring...Okay, you shouldn't really be doing this but who are we kidding? 📞

Nalini Singh is a USA Today and New York Times bestselling novelist. Find out more about Nalini and her books at [www.nalinisingh.com](http://www.nalinisingh.com), or go to her blog at [www.nalinisingh.blogspot.com](http://www.nalinisingh.blogspot.com).

# SOURCES OF INSPIRATION

## By Helen Kirkman & Maree Anderson

### HOW ON EARTH DID YOU COME UP WITH *THAT* IDEA?

#### Intro - Where do we find ideas?

**HK:** In my own experience, when I first started writing, ideas seemed to come out of the air, no problem at all. But after a while, I had to work harder for them and this is when we come to the interesting part.

#### Becoming Observant

**HK:** How did I find the ideas? Something Julia Cameron said in her book *"The Artist's Way"* really struck me and that was her advice on becoming more observant. I really started looking at things, partly as a book plotter – is there a story in this? And partly *really* looking at things to get at the deeper layer of what they are and what they mean.

**MA:** Absolutely! I got my start in writing by reading—no surprises there! I read a series I'd already read before, only this time, I flicked to the back of the book and read the author's afterword. Normally I wouldn't have bothered, being too eager to get on to reading the next in the series.

The author, Stephen Donaldson, talked about another well-known writer's process, how he begins with an idea about something "familiar" and impacts it with something "exotic", usually some SciFi setting. Whereas Donaldson does the exact opposite. He starts with the "exotic" idea and impacts it with the "familiar". For some reason, that statement just clicked with me and, don't ask me how, spawned a fantasy trilogy about a blind Seer. So be observant, open your mind and perhaps read something you normally wouldn't. Who knows, there could even be an entire trilogy waiting to pounce!

#### Cultivating a Sense of Fun and Adventurousness

**HK:** The other thing that helps inspiration is keeping a sense of fun and adventurousness in your thinking, allowing a sense of unlimited possibilities. It's easier to find inspiration if you let your mind explore initial possibilities without censoring them. We're at the stage of discovering an idea and asking the "what if" questions. My best inspirations have come when I have not thought whether an idea fits the expected mould. At the initial stage of a story, I try to allow myself to think of any possibility which can be put forward without fear of its being criticised or rejected.

I can be critical later. Sure, not all these initial ideas are going to work, or be suitable. Or if they are suitable, they will probably need modifying, but this is a different part of the creative process I can save for later.

My story is a work of imagination. My characters are not me. They can do anything and be anything and to explore those possibilities, I need my sense of adventure.

If inspiration has not magically appeared at exactly the moment I've wanted or needed it, I've sometimes descended into despair, desperation or teeth gritting. This does not help. Trying to force an inspiration does not work with me.

Yes, if I need that inspiration now for my deadline, I can grit my teeth and use determination and fortitude, but I try not to let the subconscious, creative part of my mind know that I am doing this. This is a feat that requires double think. Everyone is different, but my creative self does not work well if it is harassed by business considerations. It wants its adventurousness to be supported by an underlying sense of safety.

**MA:** I like that analogy: my creative self going into hiding if it's being harassed by "real life" concerns. Boy, can I relate!

And I've never been able to censor my ideas to "fit" a mould...which is probably why I'm not yet published in full-length fiction! But let's go there, coz this isn't a workshop about getting published, it's about ideas and inspiration. And for me, writing is all about the idea and the characters running round in my head, keeping me awake and night and demanding to have their story written. Or maybe it's about getting it down on paper before I go nuts!

Anyway I don't censor myself and wonder whether anyone's going to like my idea. I just write it and hope it'll eventually find a home. As Helen said, I can be critical later. I can cut it to bits and tighten it, play round with the pacing, tweak it to make it more appealing to a particular publisher later. What's important for me at the beginning of the process, is the "fun" bit. Having that initial inspiration, writing like a mad-person and seeing where the story takes me.

And often, I have my "exotic" idea, I have my beginning and my ending...and no freaking idea what's gonna happen in between. How much fun is that?

You get that I'm a pantsier, huh? I generally write the story and then struggle with summarising it into a coherent synopsis. But going with the flow is not to say I can't plot if I get stuck and inspiration has ground to a halt. If—

when—that happens, I find it useful to quit struggling with the manuscript and write the damned synopsis. Having that done, knowing the story is plotted and I can fall back on it if I need to, tends to coax my inspiration from the hole it's crawled into and give it wings again.

### Places to look

**HK:** So, becoming more observant and seeking inspiration means I no longer look at the newspaper or the TV news and documentaries just to know what was going on, I look for the human interest angle, the angle that gives a good, gripping, emotional story, because that's what our stories are about, especially romances—the emotional experience.

This has been a journey of new experience for me, as I'd never been a great reader of human interest stories. But, different things started to trigger different responses than what I was used to. Sometimes this was serendipity, just luck. I'd be browsing the local paper, for example, and there was a story about a young lad with muscular dystrophy who has a "mobility dog" that can pick up items he drops, tug slipping blankets back onto his bed and press the TV remote for him.

I'd never have read that story three years ago and it's not the first thing I would have thought of for a historical, but now it was triggering the "what if" questions. Suppose I had a heroine with some kind of disability and a mystical, almost witch-like affinity for animals? I haven't written that story yet, but I have the idea, and the newspaper cutting.

I've learned to broaden my interests. Watching sport bores me to sobs, whereas other family members love it. So there's always sport in the house and a couple of seasons ago when they interviewed one of the rugby players, I was more interested than my husband. Why? Because this person leapt off the TV screen to me as an example of a boy who started from a hard background and became a success—and that's one of the archetypes for a romance hero. Little bits of his experience inspired a different creation in my imagination—the hero of "*Captured*". Objects and images can be good, too. It might be a beautiful image you like to look at. For example, the hunt for the sceptre in "*A Fragile Trust*" was inspired by a real Anglo-Saxon sceptre I saw at the British Museum.

Or it might be a place and its romantic atmosphere.

Maybe it's some aspect of love/life, some particular emotion you feel you want to explore.

**MA:** Ooooh, where to find ideas! Let me count the ways. It can be a phrase which speaks to me. An article in a magazine. A non-fiction book. A fiction book. TV programs. Movies. A snippet of conversation overheard. An object.

Okay so I've told you about how the first book in my fantasy trilogy got started, the whole blind seer thing. The second book was inspired by a saying:

*"Power corrupts. And absolute power, corrupts absolutely."*

What if my Seer's daughter hasn't inherited her mother's powers? What if she craves power so terribly she gets everything she wished for...and it's a curse, not a blessing?

The 3<sup>rd</sup> book was inspired by a phrase I found while surfing the Net.

*"From every human being there rises a light that reaches straight to heaven. And when two souls that are destined to be together find each other, their streams of light flow together and a single brighter light goes forth from their united being."*

That triggered the whole concept of "soul-mates" and a hero who has to choose between the love of his life and the lives of his people.

My *Crystal Warriors* were inspired by a book called *The Crystal Bible*. Some of the crystals had such wonderful masculine-sounding names—wulfenite, kyanite, malachite—I thought it'd be fun to write about warriors named for their crystals and imprisoned in them.

*When Lightning Strikes:* I read one of those travel articles in a weekend paper about slick-rock bike tours in Utah. It mentioned Utah has the second highest incidence of lightning strikes in America. Yeeha! Aliens who ride lightning and prolong their lives by healing the bodies of people who've just died in a lightning strike, and merging with their departing soul. What would happen if the victim didn't die and the alien was stuck sharing a body with the victim?

*Scent Of A Man:* a photo of a woman in a magazine, cuddled up to a guy and blessed out on his scent. The article is about men's fragrances and its by-line is: "*In a world of equal opportunities, men are smelling as good as women—well, nearly*". So I ended up with a hero who exudes pheromones which make him irresistible to women. All women. Even his mother and sisters. Which is horrific, to say the least, and not at all what you'd expect.

And of course, the sum of everything I am right now, every experience and emotion and the people I've met, are all inspirations for my stories...much to my friends' amusement when they understand my upcoming Red Sage novella is an erotic romance!

### Specifically Historical (and Paranormal/Fantasy) Places

**HK:** Now, being a historical writer, I can also browse through historical sources, which can be history books, or biographies, perhaps letters from the time period. I know Sophia James has been inspired by a Keats poem for one of her rich emotional stories.

We're looking on two levels again, looking at events and facts and also looking in a more playful and imaginative way for something dramatic, quirky, romantic or interesting that reeks of story—something I can use straight, or adapt. For example, I've used a straight historical event—the siege of Wareham—for the plot of *"Untamed"*. Whereas for *"A Fragile Trust"* I've used a romantic legend about King Alfred disguising himself to infiltrate the enemy camp and adapted this to spark something my hero does.

Books on historical daily life can be good to browse, because often some quirky difference between the way things were done then and the way things are done now, can inspire ideas. Daily life is interesting because in some ways it's so different and in other ways it's remarkably the same, remarkably 'modern' because people's wants and desires and the trials of daily living are something a reader relates to.

It's much like flipping through newspapers and magazines and watching TV and films for contemporary writers.

**MA:** Because I mostly write "fantasy" worlds, I'm not obliged to be historically accurate, but I do have to set rules and stick to them, so my readers don't have to suspend belief. And I sometimes surf the Net and find well established "New Age" ideas which I can make my own. Like my seers being able to "see" auras and tap into life-energy to boost their own powers. Or my Crystal Warriors having personalities and qualities which match their crystals. I often find my first draft contains a veritable info dump, as I struggle to explain my concept. And of course, I eventually have to cut it down and retain the essence of the idea, so I don't bore my readers to bits and beyond.

But with *Scent Of A Man*, I sat down and did actual research before I began writing....from a book and everything, LOL. I used *Georgette Heyer's Regency World* as a basis for my hero's world. I love reading Regency novels, so I envisioned my hero as a rich young Regency-period Lord. And I painted his world accordingly. Then I twisted it by having all the females subjected to strict rules about behaviour and dress. They're forced to dress like Quakers and cover themselves completely. They're not even allowed to wear perfume.

Do your research to come up with something quirky or a different take on something that might have been done before. Devise your world and the rules and then have fun putting your characters through hoops, testing them and stretching them in ways that your reader can relate to, regardless of the fantastical setting... or the neighbouring werewolf pack.

### The right mindset

**HK:** So to me, it's about developing the right mindset. Part of the inspiration is conscious. For example, I went out of my way to watch and read President Obama's inauguration speech because he's a good orator and I want to write a character who inspires people to follow him.

Part of the process is subconscious. Things that used to pass me by now leap out and hit me at unexpected moments because I've become more receptive. Part of me is now subconsciously looking at the world in a different way. I watch events and people in a different way.

**MA:** I totally agree. Now, even when I'm submersed in a fantastic book, often something will just jump out and smack me right between the eyes. And now, even if I'm in the middle of writing, some little germ of an idea will bite me and niggle away so much I'll have to scrawl it down on a piece of paper and pin it to my notice-board before it'll give me any peace and let me get back to my current wip.

In fact, my notice-board is full of little scraps of paper scrawled with sayings and phrases and poems and notes and such. Even a couple of quotes from *The Economist* are pinned up there. I don't try to figure out why they caught my attention, I just know they did. And one day, I'll need them.

### What does inspire us individually?

**HK:** Personally, I'm more of a character based writer, so I usually come up with a character and his/her inner conflict and an opening situation and work out my book from there. Others may be inspired by a plot point. It's interesting to think about the kinds of things that inspire you and to make sure you have an open mind to them. But nothing is a hard and fast rule. Different things will inspire you at different moments.

**MA:** Whatever kind of writer you are, don't sweat it. Just read and watch and listen. Be open to whatever catches your attention. And if you haven't got a photographic memory and are prone to having "grey moments" like I am, then ALWAYS carry a notebook and a pen so you can jot down your inspirations as they hit you.

**HK:** We did an exercise with an 'inspirational item' when we gave this workshop at the March RWNZ Auckland meeting and we found that the same item triggered different responses in different people because our minds are running on different tracks, depending on what we like to write and how we think. The aim of this workshop was to inspire us to tap into our own individual creativity and nurture it and free it to do its job for us.

**MA:** So go forth and be inspired!



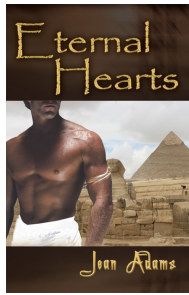
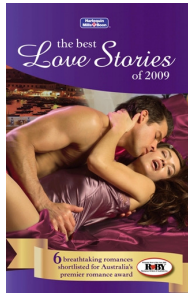
# MEMBER SUCCESSES

Compiled by Tyree Bidgood

## Official Releases

### September New Releases

**Angel's Judgement** (novella, part of Must Love Hellhounds) by **Nalini Singh**  
**A Mother in a Million** by **Melissa James** The Best Love Stories of 2009 – HM&B. Featured story  
**Eternal Hearts** by **Jean Drew** (Highland Press)  
**Cat Nap** by **Shelley Munro** (Ellora's Cave - ebook)  
**Murder at Play** by **Yvonne Eve Walus** (Echelon Press – e-book & print)



## Member Successes - Competitions and Accolades

### R\*by Award Winners

**SHORT AND SEXY - The Italian Boss's Mistress of Revenge** by **Trish Morey**  
**SHORT AND SWEET – His Island Bride** by **Marion Lennox**  
**LONG ROMANCE – The Stolen Princess** by **Anne Gracie**  
**ROMANTIC ELEMENTS – Beneath the Surface** by **Suzanne Perazzini**  
(Emerald and Valerie Parv Award winners to come next month.)

Hitting the September Romantic Times Book reviews list are:

**Abby Gaines** as a *Top Pick* rating for her September Superromance **Her So-called Fiancee**; and

**Nalini Singh** as a *Top Pick* rating for her story in **Must Love Hellhounds**.

**RWNZ Great Beginnings contest. Winners judged by Kimberley Young, HM&B, London.**  
**These are our winners Folks!**

1st - **Kamy Chetty**

2nd - **Kendra Delugar**

3rd - **Rachael Blair**

Congratulations also to the other finalists . . .

**Rachel Collins**

**Bronwen Evans**

**Barbara Jeffcott Geris**

Please email submissions to this page to, Tyree at [rocker.t@xtra.co.nz](mailto:rocker.t@xtra.co.nz). by 13<sup>th</sup> of each month.

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

*Compiled by PDR Lindsay-Salmon, aka Patrika Salmon*

Check out the new Harlequins

**Skirt!.com** is the website of *Skirt!* magazine which is devoted to women and their doings.

Details: *Skirt!* Magazine, (USA) E-mail: [submissions@skirt.com](mailto:submissions@skirt.com)

Website: <http://www.skirt.com>; Writer's guidelines: [http://skirt.com/contributor\\_guidelines](http://skirt.com/contributor_guidelines)

**'Emerald Tales'** is a new themed bimonthly journal of poetry and short fiction

Details: *'Emerald Tales'*, Editor: [diana@scribblersandinkspillers.com](mailto:diana@scribblersandinkspillers.com);

E-mail: [submissions@scribblersandinkspillers.com](mailto:submissions@scribblersandinkspillers.com)

Website: <http://www.scribblersandinkspillers.com/emeraldtales.html>

Writer's guidelines: <http://www.scribblersandinkspillers.com/submissions.html>

**Dark Tales** erotica and dark fantasy e-books

Details: Damnation Books

Website: [www.damnationbooks.com](http://www.damnationbooks.com)

**Underwired** buys one-time rights for US\$100.

Details: E-mail: [editor@uwmag.com](mailto:editor@uwmag.com)

Website: <http://www.uwmag.com>

Guidelines: <http://www.uwmag.com/submission-guidelines-mainmenu-39.html>

**'Hips and Curves'** is a female site based around a 'generous body' lingerie company's website.

Details: Website: <http://www.hipsandcurves.com/plus-size-lingerie/info/steamy>

E-mail: [editor@hipsandcurves.com](mailto:editor@hipsandcurves.com)

**The Imperfect Parent'** is a zine looking at the world from a parent's perspective

Website: <http://www.imperfectparent.com>

E-mail: (Editor) [prescott@imperfectparent.com](mailto:prescott@imperfectparent.com)

Guidelines: <http://www.imperfectparent.com/submit>

## INTERNATIONAL CONTEST NEWS

*Compiled by Lisa Elkind-Gardiner*

**Lisa's Pick - The HARLEQUIN "I HEART PRESENTS" WRITING COMPETITION 2009**

**Enter:** First chapter and synopsis of a Harlequin Presents or Modern Heat novel.

**Deadline:** November 2nd **Prize:** The services of a Harlequin Mills & Boon editor for one year! (Two runners up will win an editorial consultation!)

<http://www.iheartpresents.com/>

**Kathryn Hayes Love and Laughter Contest**

**Enter:** Any scene in your novel between the hero and heroine which illustrates humour and romance. **Deadline:**

October 1<sup>st</sup> **Eligibility:** Unpubbed <http://www.rwanyc.com/Love-LaughterContest.html>

**First Coast RWA Beacon Award**

**Enter:** 1st 30 pp of romance optional synopsis **Deadline:** October 1<sup>st</sup> **Fee:** \$25US **Eligibility:** Unpubbed

[http://www.firstcoastromancewriters.com/contest\\_un.htm](http://www.firstcoastromancewriters.com/contest_un.htm)

**Inland Valley RWA Bad Kitty Contest**

**Enter:** First 15 pages of 15 to 16K werecats manuscript **Deadline:** Nov 1<sup>st</sup> **Eligibility:** Pubbed or Unpubbed

<http://www.ivrwa.org/contest07.htm>

**Writer's Digest Popular Fiction Awards**

**Deadline:** Nov 2<sup>nd</sup> **Enter:** 4000 word short stories (as many as you want.)

**Cash prizes Fee:** \$15.00 <http://www.writersdigest.com/competitions>

# RWENZ NEWS AROUND THE REGIONS

## Regional convenor contacts

AUCKLAND – Frances Housden  
email: [fhousden@xtra.co.nz](mailto:fhousden@xtra.co.nz)

CHRISTCHURCH – Sue Knight  
email: [sueknight@ihug.co.nz](mailto:sueknight@ihug.co.nz)

HAWKE'S BAY – Ginny Suckling  
email: [ginnysuckling@xtra.co.nz](mailto:ginnysuckling@xtra.co.nz)

NELSON – Cherie Skinner & Sally Astridge  
email: [bruceastridge@aol.com](mailto:bruceastridge@aol.com) or  
[cheriesk@hotmail.com](mailto:cheriesk@hotmail.com)

WAIKATO, BAY OF PLENTY & KING COUNTRY – Sarah Hamilton:  
[craigandsarah@clear.net.nz](mailto:craigandsarah@clear.net.nz) or Lynne Rasmussen: [lyn@lynrasmussen.com](mailto:lyn@lynrasmussen.com)

WELLINGTON – Ellie Huse  
email: [elliehuse@yahoo.com](mailto:elliehuse@yahoo.com)



## Wellington

Our August meeting was made memorable by the gorgeous goodies donated for the Wellington-area conference raffle prize. If you're a coffee-chocky-holic, it'll be worth buying tickets.

We also had a change of venue – to Meryl's lovely home in the Plimmerton countryside.

Our exercise for the month was supposed to be practicing conference pitches, but no-one seemed game. We enjoyed the first chapter of Meryl's book instead. We discussed e-books, and Julie-Ann showed us a few pages of 'Pride and Prejudice' on her i-phone. Joan told us a little about the column she's writing for a local newspaper. Mig talked about NaNoWriMo – National Novel Writers' Month. Some of us might use this to get a good start on next year's Clendon. (Speaking of which, Kris finalled and Rachel and Giovanna are on the highly commended list.)

On Saturday September 5th at 1pm we'll meet again at 250 Airlie Road. Turn into Airlie Road off SH1, 4kms north of Plimmerton. Go over the one-way bridge and it's the second entrance on the left – Homelands Kennels. It's the house at the very top of the driveway.

## Waikato/B.O.P/King Country

Our July meeting saw us gathered at Sheila's home where we enjoyed the relaxing ambience of a toasty fire, delicious homemade soup and as always fabulous kinship.

Colin D. Peel, international thriller writer and author of twenty-five books was our guest speaker. Colin armed us with a wealth of information on publishing, entertained us with his stories and inspired us to keep at it. His key message being, if you want to be successful you've got to put the work in!!

September's meeting will be at Netta's home in Waihi on the nineteenth. All welcome.

## Nelson

We welcomed a new prospective member to our August meeting and completed some exercises on fresh ways of write clichés and emotion. We also discussed motivation and setting goals. No-one from our chapter is attending the conference this year.

September's meeting is on Saturday the 12th @2pm at Annika's home. Phone 548 5561 for details.

## Christchurch

Planning underway for a Sunday Workshop in October or early November.

Details in next Heart to Heart. For information [sueknight@ihug.co.nz](mailto:sueknight@ihug.co.nz)

## Auckland

The September meeting takes place on Saturday the 5th. By popular demand, Annie Featherstone w/a Sophia James will be repeating the workshop on the way to add layers to your plot. As usual the meeting will be held at Three Kings Tennis Pavilion, corner of Mt Albert and Mt Eden Roads, at 12.30 p.m. Bring a small plate for lunch and your best conference story!!!

## WEB SURFING

*Compiled by Nalini Singh*

Author Lilith St. Crow talks about what writers *should* do on social media: <http://tinyurl.com/mak8zr>

For historical fiction writers - you need to check out Google Timeline (you really do): <http://bit.ly/1a8PO>

Those of you who write erotic romance will want to have a look at this - Agent Laura Bradford talks about the State of the Erotic Romance market, with information from all the major imprints: <http://tinyurl.com/mvsw8c>

Bloggers Justin Taylor and Eva Talmadge are creating a library of literary tattoos. More info at mediabistro: <http://tinyurl.com/ktmm97> (As an aside, which book do you love enough to go under the needle for?)

Author Shiloh Walker talks about what writers should be looking for / the questions they should be asking when considering submitting to an epubliher: <http://tinyurl.com/nv4rp3>

And since we're all romantics, I think you guys will love this couple's unique kickoff to their wedding (YouTube video): <http://tinyurl.com/mxhtlw>

*Nalini Singh, New York Times bestselling author and web junkie: [www.nalinisingh.com](http://www.nalinisingh.com)*

## BITS AND PIECES

*Compiled by Soraya Nicholas*

### Did you know . . .

- An estimated twenty-seven Nora Roberts books are sold every minute around the world. In 2004, Forbes magazine estimated that Roberts grosses sixty million dollars a year!
- Danielle Steel has been married five times. Among those five husbands, one was a convict, one a recovering heroin addict, and one a French banker.
- When Nicholas Sparks sold his first book, The Notebook, he was earning around \$40,000 per year. That year, he found an agent who loved the story. She sold it to Warner Books for a whopping one-million dollars. Sparks, true to his romantic heroes,

### Don't Forget . . .

To enter the The Instant Seduction Writing Contest run by Harlequin Mills & Boon – details at [www.iheartpresents.com](http://www.iheartpresents.com)

### Love to read about romance authors?

Try [www.pinkheartsociety.blogspot.com](http://www.pinkheartsociety.blogspot.com) for fun daily updates from an assortment of published authors.