

We Are Not Alone: A Conversation With Kristen Lamb

Kendra Delugar



Kristen Lamb is an ‘Author, Blogger and Social Media Jedi’, and we’re fortunate to have her as our Friday speaker at RWNZ’s 2017 Conference. Kendra Delugar talked to Kristen about working as a teacher and a writer, discoverability, and what we can expect from her at conference.

Kristen, you worked in International Sales before making the change to work with authors—what were the reasons behind that change?

The answer is a tad embarrassing, but hey I have no shame. I was brain damaged. There you have it. Originally, I enjoyed sales because sales—at its heart—is about solving problems and serving others. But, I was in a near fatal speed boat accident and hit my head at 75 mph.

Initially, I didn’t fully realize how badly I’d been injured, but over time, I started having some serious cognitive issues due to right frontal lobe damage.

I was losing time, forgetting words and names of things, repeating myself, and was steadily developing severe agoraphobia and paralyzing social anxiety.

By the way, this is *not* a good thing when you have a nine state territory and have to regularly drive to Mexico.

My disintegrating health didn’t happen overnight. Initially, I was very good at my job but after a couple years, I was failing miserably due to my steadily deteriorating health. Doctors back then were not as skilled as they are today at rehabilitating brain traumas. I kept seeking out specialists and they just benevolently made my condition worse. Eventually I was diagnosed with epilepsy and that was the death blow to my career in sales.

My health got worse and worse. The agoraphobia was crippling. I refused to leave my living room. I couldn’t be out in public or even talk to people without having panic attacks. My weight plummeted because I was so terrified of being out of my house I wouldn’t even shop for food and I was too ashamed to ask anyone for help. I sank into a deep depression because I was “a failure.”

I lost everything and was evicted from the fancy apartment I’d been so proud of. Since I was too weak and broke to move, most of my belongings were left behind and I went to live with my mother. My mom had realized something was wrong long before this crisis point, but I was so embarrassed I’d lied about how bad things were.

Of course she was more than happy to be there for me and was really upset I hadn’t reached out sooner. I just kept thinking I could do it on my own, that I could pull myself up by my bootstraps. I’d always had a dream of becoming a writer and my mom was behind that 1000%.

Eventually I figured out that the epilepsy diagnosis was incorrect and the meds were my biggest problem. My mom (an R.N.) was a huge believer in cognitive therapy and she helped me do exercises to repair the damaged neuropathways. Writing actually did a lot to help my rehabilitation.

So I got my little laptop and wrote my first “novel”. It was 178,000 words long and no I am not joking. I was too dumb to know I was dumb. I joined critique groups and learned everything I could and initially I started teaching craft so I would better understand it myself. Then I found out I was actually pretty good at it.

When I started really being serious about becoming a writer, I was shocked at how many people were almost actively subversive. I was constantly told I needed to get a “real job”. I was ridiculed and even attacked and had it

continued on page 2

continued from page 1

not been for my mom (and a handful of other supportive people), I might have given up.

I remember feeling very alone and I never wanted another writer to feel the way I did. So I started reaching out. Serving, helping, teaching, supporting and mentoring because the sad truth is our world enjoys the arts, but it doesn't value them.

Creative people need a place they can learn and fail and grow and thrive and that was where I found my calling. Not every emerging writer had the blessing of a mom like mine, so I wanted to be there to pass on the gift I'd been given.

How did your work in International Sales influence your work with authors, and the advice you give them?

There is a *huge* misconception about sales, and this is what gives a lot of writers apoplexy. Sales really is about listening, *hearing*, serving others and then solving problems. Writers do that all the time. People need information and entertainment and we serve that need. We don't need to freak out about sales because we already do it.

There is also this myth that good salespeople are fast-talkers and good at being entertaining and impressing people, that they are super-mega-extroverts and that is not the case at all.

Truly excellent salespeople are superb listeners and highly empathetic. They know it is better to be interested than interesting.

This is what I work hard to teach writers. Social media is not about us bouncing around with jazz hands trying to get attention. It is about listening and empathizing and writers (and introverts) are actually pretty good at that. So don't be intimidated!

Sales also taught me that I needed goals. I say this over and over in my blogs: Plan your work and work your plan.

You also have to be self-disciplined. In sales, results are all that matter. Either you made your quota or you didn't. And if rubbing yourself in body glitter at midnight while wearing a unicorn horn helps you make more sales? No one cares. Results are all that matter.

Same in writing. Doesn't matter how it gets done so long as it gets done.

What is the biggest mistake you see authors make when it comes to social media and creating a platform?

They mistake advertising/marketing with platform and brand and they believe that spamming people and putting out a bunch of ads can take the place of the platform. No one wants to be spammed. We skip steps at our own peril.

This is the same as in sales. I did a lot of driving to facilities just for face time. Take someone to lunch. Listen. Check on them. See how they were doing. Ask about the kids. Then, when they needed my product, who did they call? Sure this required a lot of driving and activities that didn't look a lot like "selling", but it was in investment in rapport.

The other option? Cold calling a gazillion people and hoping I sold something before I threw myself off something high.

If you had to choose the three most important ways an author could increase their visibility, what would they be? (And don't say eat more carrots!)

First, write lots of books. Writing the books is the most important aspect of what we do. The more you write, the better and faster you get. The more titles are available and so there are just that many more points of discoverability.

Second, I'm a huge fan of authors having a blog. The blog plays to a writer's strengths. Writers *write*. The blog is the most stable form of social media and you get the help of search engines. Google will never deliver a stranger to my witty Facebook post, but it *will* send them to my blogs. This also can help with my first recommendation.

Write enough blogs and you can slap them together, edit them to make them pretty and put them in a book. There is yet another title with *your name* on it. And yes, people don't mind paying money for what was published for free. If they like your blogs, then they can just read them like a book instead of pecking through archives trying to find the one they liked or wanted to reference.

Thirdly? Participate. Find a social site you enjoy and interact regularly. I personally like Facebook. I do a writing sprint, then take a break. I scroll down my feed and hit *like, like, like*, then write comments like "Wow! Beautiful dress!" "Congratulations on losing weight!" "Looks yummy" or whatever. People are on social media to connect and they like that they are being heard.

Yes, we are more connected than ever, but we are also lonelier than ever. Workplaces don't encourage us hanging around chatting. Everyone seems to be on the go and we miss interaction. Humans are wired to be social creatures.

Also, once we become adults, no one gives us a sticker at the end of the day. "Your Kids Are Still Alive! Go YOU!" Most of the time our work doesn't give us an *atta-boy/girl*. We feel very invisible. So we post on social media because we never outgrow the need to feel we matter.

I also have a theory that we were all more than a bit ticked when we got to first grade and they got rid of

continued on page 3

continued from page 2

Show & Tell and we never got over the hurt. Trust me, if I spend three hours making a cake? I am showing that sucker off and I want likes.

Humans *like* sharing and connecting, so go share and connect. Simple stuff here. Small actions every day add up.

There seems to be a section of the online community that believes unless you've already built a strong following for a blog, it's hard to gain traction now in this crowded media market. What are your thoughts on that?

They said that back in 2008 when I started my blog. Every point in time has had unique challenges, but let's use a little logic here.

These people say that we should have started a blog back in 2005 when there wasn't the competition. Okay ... but there weren't the same amount of *readers*. Most people were not on-line. Social media was a fringe activity used solely by early adopters (Facebook wasn't accessible to anyone but college kids until 2006).

The average person was still reading a newspaper or subscribing to magazines. Search engines *sucked* and you were more likely to land on a porn site than an actual blog.

And, if you had a writing blog? You were competing for the fifteen writers who were willing to use a computer.

This job is tough. It has *always* been tough. There is no easy way of doing this. Period. And anyone who says differently is lying or selling something or both.

I teach writers to work smarter, not harder. Sure the work is still tough but there will be results if you are consistent.

For you, what is most exciting thing about working with authors?

I love their raw enthusiasm. I enjoy watching them grow into professionals. I also took up teaching writers because there was a lot of misinformation that was scaring the crap out of them. It is very satisfying to watch the lightbulb go off and see them realize they actually have permission to have *fun*.

What can our members expect from your Friday workshop?

To laugh. A lot. Branding is way easier than writers realize and the way I teach it, it is also a ton of fun. People don't believe that I am actually an introvert. Shyness and social anxiety are separate from being an introvert.

Being an introvert merely means that being physically around people is draining and you need to retreat to quiet alone time to recharge. Extroverts are drained from too much alone time and need in-person interaction.

What this means is social media is very literally the domain of the introverted creative person. Before the digital age, the extrovert held the advantage. That is no longer the case.

The internet is ruled by content creators (creative people). Additionally, as I mentioned earlier, introverts tend to be better listeners.

Social media allows us to pace our interactions so we don't flatline ourselves energy-wise.

And what are you most looking forward to doing/seeing when you're in New Zealand?

Google will never deliver a stranger to my witty Facebook post, but it will send them to my blogs.

Hobbits. I am there for the *Hobbits*.

I have always wanted to go to New Zealand long before *Lord of the Rings*. LOTR just solidified it for me. It is a beautiful country and I've never seen a volcano.

Five Fun Facts About Kristen Lamb

1. *If you could bring one fictional character to life, who would it be and why?*

Eric Northman from the True Blood series because HELLLLLLOOOO? Eric. Sighs. And I would totally want to be a vampire.

2. *What is your favourite word (it can be a curse word)?*

Have you READ "Rise of the Machines"? *Paradigm*. I love that word and had no idea how much until about a year after publishing RoM and rereading. Seriously, if we used it as a drinking game everyone would die of alcohol poisoning.

3. *What word would you like never to hear again?*

Orientated. IT IS NOT A REAL WORD. STOP USING IT.

4. *What is your secret (or not so secret now) guilty pleasure?*

Jiu Jitsu. I really love grappling. Nothing helps relieve stress like choking people legally.

5. *Sneakers, boots or high heels?*

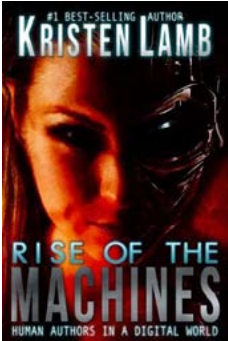
Flip-flops. I think I might be a Hobbit. I hate wearing shoes but ever since I cut my foot and got blood poisoning when I was 9, I won't go barefoot and flip-flops are

continued on page 4

continued from page 3

the closest thing. I can't stand my feet to be covered and even wear flip-flops in winter. Other than that? Boots. They make me tall.

Kristen, thank you for taking the time to talk to us.



Kristen Lamb is the author of the top resource for author branding in the digital age, [Rise of the Machines—Human Authors in a Digital World](#). She's also the #1 best-selling books *We Are Not Alone—The Writer's Guide to Social Media* and *Are You There, Blog? It's Me, Writer*.

Kristen has guided writers of all levels, from unpublished green peas to NY Times best-selling big fish, on how to use social media to create a solid platform and brand. Most importantly, Kristen helps authors of all levels connect to their READERS and then maintain a relationship that grows into a long-term fan base. She is the C.E.O. of [WANA International](#) and the founder of [WANATribe](#), the social network for writers.

RWNZ Conference Newbie?

Are you a newbie to the RWNZ conference? If you are, then fret not! Conference is a great place to learn and meet amazing people in a friendly and supportive environment.

Here's what some of last year's first time attendees had to say about their experiences:

"The friendliness of these amazing people who attended made me feel welcomed. I know others felt the same. I was nervous going to my first— 2016— conference, but this mind-blowing, wonderful, positive learning experience, was so, was so, was so ... what is the word I am looking for? ... WOW! I've booked for this year's 'occasion' with excitement as soon as I could ... why would I want to miss this again? ... besides meeting people from New Zealand there were Australians and beyond ... both attendees and presenters. I have booked for the next 2017 event. See you there." - Grant Bayley

"We both went last year and loved it. Coming back again this year and really looking forward to it."

- Australian couple Bob and Shelagh Martin

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"Stories may well be lies, but they are good lies that say true things, and which can sometimes pay the rent."

— Neil Gaiman

Diamonds In The Rough: A Conversation With Sue Grimshaw

Wilma McKay



LOL! Spare time? laughs Sue Grimshaw of Penguin Random House Publishing in this month's Heart to Heart. The veteran Editor At Large isn't likely to get much rest when she attends this year's RWNZ Conference in August.

She's on the lookout for pitches from fresh new authors!

Sue has been Editor At Large for Penguin Random House Publishing for the past seven years. That involves acquiring for the Ballantine, Bantam, Dell, Loveswept and Flirt imprints, she says. "Prior, I was the Borders Romance Book buyer. I work remotely in Michigan and travel to our main office in New York and various conferences throughout the year."

Why the Romance genre for you? What thrills you about your role? What keeps you interested?

Although I purchased a few other categories of books when I was hired at Borders Group Incorporated, I had always had an interest in the romance genre. I was a reader of the genre along with many others but once I became the romance buyer for the company I became more voracious and immersed in my job. I love to talk about books with readers and authors alike and enjoy seeing the pleasure and happiness on readers faces a good story can deliver. As an editor finding that 'diamond in the rough' is exciting for myself and the author too and I enjoy that shared experience.

What do you hope for when you open a submitted manuscript?

A good story with characters I can relate to and a story that makes me feel. A strong voice is key and today a millennial telling is important; readers enjoy the fresh and new approach.

What do you read in your spare time?

LOL—Spare time??—Romance and on occasion suspense fiction.

If you had to give budding romance writers advice, what would it be?

Let the characters tell the story. Love what you're writing and the reader will love it too. And be careful not to over-write and keep your story tight—be conscious of pacing.

In terms of writing style, describe your ideal romance writer.

Strong voice where the story clinches you from the start introducing the H/h within the first two chapters. Consistency from book to book is important as you build an author's career, so I look for an author who continually delivers that. The story should be told through the H/h, with a nice pacing and with just enough setting to keep us present in the storytelling. Using all of the senses is key and good dialogue and banter, even in darker stories, is important. Obviously having the same vision for their work is important to success and maintaining a good partnership.

Do you believe writing gatherings, like conferences, are beneficial to authors and others in the industry and why?

I do as I believe you learn from one another, find out about new trends which is especially important in this quick paced, evolving industry.

Apart from your speaking engagement, is there anything you'll be hoping to achieve at this year's #Love Romance Writers NZ Conference?

I'll be taking pitches, so, I hope I'll find some fun authors to work with. But I'll also be enjoying the South Island after the conference visiting various places within the beautiful country.

FIVE FUN FACTS ABOUT SUE GRIMSHAW

Now for some fun questions:

1. *If you could bring one fictional character to life, who would it be and why?*

Jamie Fraser (Outlander by Diana Gabaldon)—just because . . .

continued on page 6

continued from page 5

What is your favourite word? (It can be a curse word.)

Kerfuffle—it is just FUN to say!

What word would you like never to hear again?

Actually, it's a phrase for me—haunted me for years—'on the same page'. *shiver*

What is your secret (or not so secret now) guilty pleasure?

It's a new one for me—my husband and I have become birdwatchers!!

Sneakers, boots or high heels?

Boots!

Thanks so much for taking the time to speak with us Sue!

From The Editor



We all have our favourite authors—the ones who make us feel like we're not reading a book, but are actually living a life.

For me, it's Ilona Andrews. I found her (*them*, actually, it's a husband and wife writing team), scarfed up all her backlist, read every book fifty times (not much of an overstatement either), bought the audio versions of my favourites, and stalked the poor darlings online as I—and the rest of her fans—jonesed for the next one.

This week, *White Hot*, the second book in her Hidden Legacy Trilogy came out after a two-year lead time. Was it worth the wait? Let me just say a resounding “yes, yes, a thousand times yes”! (And Book Three comes out in in July! Two months! How can I stand it?)

But there are other writers out there that I'll read, finish, put down, and never think of again. Why is that? What is the secret ingredient that makes one author's book blow your mind while another's only blows your bank account?

If I knew the answer for sure—and could reproduce it—I'd be a wealthy woman. But I can tell you what I *think* is the key. It has nothing to do with genre, and everything to do with gripping characters.

Ilona's heroes and heroines have pasts that have formed them into deeply flawed people. Even so, from the first page, you see the possibility of their redemption, and

recognise the fact they are worthy of a better future than their present indicates they'll receive. You're rooting for them right from the start. For the duration of that book, your world—the one where your body lives—doesn't exist. You're someone else, riding an emotional white-water raft through the river of another woman's life. You inhale when she breathes, duck when things fly at her. Your heart aches with her pain, lifts with her joy. You fall for her hero, yearn for her secret needs to be met.

I think the secret sauce is this identification with the heroine—her past, her pain, her struggles, her desperate desire to grasp some impossible dream, and ... ultimately ... her victory.

We live every day in the real world. As writers, let's take our readers on the kind of journey that will make the real world feel false, and the world between the pages, the truth.

Gracie

“The villains were always ugly in books and movies. Necessarily so, it seemed. Because if they were attractive—if their looks matched their charm and their cunning—they wouldn't only be dangerous. They would be irresistible.”

— Nenia Campbell, *Horrorscape*



Words Work

Daphne Clair de Jong



Words are the writer's tools. Writers use them to inform, excite, inspire, or move their readers.

Fit words to tone and mood. In playful or humorous scenes or stories, words with light-hearted or amusing connotations are appropriate. In intense

scenes or books, words with emotional resonance are preferred over the sprightly or bland.

Think of the difference between taunt/scoff/tease, chortle/chuckle/laugh, probe/scan/peer, ogle/scrutinise/survey, chase/pursue/hunt, catch/capture/snare, dainty/delicate/fragile, hot/heated/sizzling, snigger/sneer/deride, smile/smirk/beam, smug/self-assured/arrogant. Which word best fits the emotional climate of your story, the character you portray, and the present scene's mood?

While editing your first draft, look for phrases and sentences that are slack and pedestrian instead of taut and rhythmic, and words that are vague rather than specific. "She was beautiful" isn't enough. What makes her beautiful? Smooth, creamy skin? Eyes the colour of a summer sky? Hair that glowed golden in the sunlight?

A dark, brooding hero in a stormy, dramatic tale will seldom chuckle, ogle, peer or smirk. A next-door nice-guy hero in a book with a humorous vein may occasionally do all of them.

Keep emotionally loaded words for emotionally explosive situations. Trying to raise the emotional temperature by using dramatic words inappropriate to the situation merely convinces the reader that the protagonists are overreacting or even neurotic. If you want to write a very intense romance, ensure your central tension or conflict would realistically cause deep emotional stress, so that the words used to describe the reactions of the characters fit the dramatic demands of the story.

Be sparing with generic code-words, understood by regular readers as shortcuts. By innuendo and allusion a writer can deftly turn the familiar to a fresh facet, or invite the reader to bring her own knowledge of language and nuance to bear on the text. If a hero 'prowls', 'purrs' and 'snarls' there is no need to state that he reminds the heroine of a tiger. The sophisticated reader is already seeing him that way.

Readers enjoy a new twist on a well-used phrase or image. 'She'd thought his kind was an extinct species. He belonged in a jungle, preying on those smaller and weaker than himself. But she didn't relish the role of tethered goat.'

The correct use of the exact word gives a keen edge to the writing and produces a sharp, clear image. Does the house squat, brood, loom or sprawl? Are the hero's words kind, indulgent, or pleasant? (And is that tone ironic?) Is the heroine white-hot angry, merely annoyed or only disturbed? What is the right word for her mood?

Describing emotion is often best done obliquely. (The famous 'show, don't tell.')

Rather than 'She was disturbed by his words' write 'Her hand clenched in her pocket, and she looked away from him.'

Most grammar and style books have lists of commonly confused words. Browse them now and then. It is chastening as well as educative to discover that a word you have confidently used many times does not mean exactly what you thought!



Daphne Clair has written over seventy-five romance novels for Harlequin lines. As Daphne de Jong she has published many short stories and a historical novel, both critically acclaimed in her homeland. She has won the prestigious Katherine Mansfield Short Story Award, has been a Rita finalist and has either finished or won in other contests in several writing fields. To learn more about Daphne visit <http://www.harlequin.com/author.html?authorid=920>

"Revenge is a dish best served published!"

— Lisa Kovanda

From The Executive: Myth-Busting RWNZ Executive Positions

RWNZ Executive

On 23rd June, the call will go out for members to nominate themselves for positions on the Executive. If you've been thinking about it, now's the time to put your hand up.

RWNZ depends on volunteers for its survival, those willing to donate their skills, time and effort. Compared to other organisations, we're a relatively small boat and we need everyone to pull together if we want to stay afloat.

And the more nominations we get for each role, the better! Elections are important in order for RWNZ to remain healthy. We need new blood coming through, and we need members to take an interest in how their organisation is run. You can do this by standing, and by being an informed participant in the voting process. There's no shame in not being elected—there are plenty of other roles you can put your hand up for, and there's always next year, too.

So here's the lowdown on what it means to be on the Executive. If you're interested, you can see where your skills fit. If a position on the Executive is not for you—or not yet—you can see what other volunteer roles are available, and how you can support the members who do volunteer for these roles.

What the Executive is—and what it isn't:

RWNZ is not a hierarchical organisation, so the Executive are not the 'bosses' of RWNZ. Executive officers are volunteer members like any others, with no higher status.

However, they do have official, legal positions as elected officers of an incorporated society. This means the Executive takes on full responsibility for ensuring that:

- RWNZ meets its legal and financial obligations (e.g. health and safety, tax, bills)
- Members' money is protected and used wisely
- All activity undertaken by the Executive and other volunteers is in the best interests of all members

The Executive is there to make sure RWNZ runs like a professional organisation, albeit one that has no paid staff! It's there to ensure RWNZ has robust systems and processes, transparency, sound financial management, that it abides by its Rules, and fulfils its promise to members as stated in its Mission, Purpose and Aims. Reading and understanding the Rules of RWNZ is a key prerequisite for the job! (It's on our website.)

So, yes, it's a big commitment with a lot of responsibility. Ideally, members taking on these roles will have experience in governance, people management, running businesses, project management, marketing and communication, and financial management. Not necessarily all of the above, obviously, but those are the kinds of skills that will be of most benefit to RWNZ.

You also need a genuine love for RWNZ—because you'll have to feel it's worth donating so much of your time and energy. A good Executive puts the best interests of RWNZ first at all times, and sometimes that means making hard decisions and creating extra work for yourself. You need to be up for it.

Executive roles—where do your skills fit?

The Executive roles are: President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary, Membership Secretary, and Publicity Officer.

President: chairs Executive meetings, ensures the Executive functions well as a team, is the main point of contact for RWNZ, leads communications to members, ensures the Rules are adhered to, that RWNZ meets its legal and financial obligations, and that all decisions are in the best interests of members. They will also step in to cover various jobs when necessary.

The President is not 'Queen Bee' who makes all the decisions! The President can make the casting vote if there's a deadlock, but otherwise they are there to 'steer not star'.

Vice-President: is point of contact for chapters and local groups, stands-in for the President when needed, and provides support for all the other roles.

Treasurer: manages all RWNZ finances using our Xero system, sends and pays invoices, refunds expenses, prepares clear and thorough financial reports for the Executive and members, completes tax returns and pays any taxes owing.

Secretary: prepares and circulates minutes of all Executive meetings, maintains the filing system and archives, is responsible for communications and election processes for the AGM, files required documents with the Register of Incorporated Societies.

continued on page 9

continued from page 8

Membership Secretary: is responsible for the membership sign-up and renewal process (via our website), answers questions about membership, prepares the new members pack, and keeps an eye on the online member database and automated mailing list.

Publicity Officer: builds the reputation and raises the profile of RWNZ, publicises member successes and key events, such as Conference, maintains RWNZ's social media presence, develops strategies to attract new members. Works with the Web Mistress and Editor of Heart to Heart.

How does the Executive function?

As a team, with a shared vision. This is essential, and we hope that the strategic plan we've created will clarify the vision for all members of RWNZ, and become a roadmap for subsequent Executives to follow and build on.

We follow an agenda provided in advance by the Secretary, discuss and vote on each proposed action point, and go with the majority decision. Constructive debate is encouraged, but there should never be any dominating or bullying behaviour. The minutes will record and reflect the agreed actions in enough detail for members to understand how that decision was reached, and who voted for what. Executive members can ask for their comments not to be minuted, so everyone can feel free to speak openly, but the minutes must reflect a true account of the decisions made, and why.

The Executive meets monthly. As it is unlikely that all Executive members will live in the same place, RWNZ subscribes to a phone conference system that is free for Executive members personally.

What happens if I find the commitment too much?

Everyone who stands for an Executive role should be sure they can commit to it. However, we all know circumstances change, health, work and family issues arise, etc., that can make it impossible to continue. If this is the case, there's no shame in stepping down! And the sooner you notify the rest of your Executive team, the better, so we can find a replacement.

What other volunteer roles are available?

If you're not yet up for a role on the Executive, there are lots of other vital roles you could consider, such as:

- **Contests:** Overall Co-ordinator, Individual Contest Managers, Judges
- **Conference Committee:** various roles
- **Web Mistress**
- **Heart to Heart:** Editor, Contributors, Design/Production.

You'll find more info on volunteering on our website:

<https://www.romancewriters.co.nz/about-us/rwnz-executive/>

And soon we could be looking for new volunteer roles—so keep an eye on the news ...

What you should expect from your Executive

Overall, you should expect your Executive to:

- Ensure RWNZ meets its legal and financial obligations
- Ensure RWNZ fulfils its promise to members
- Protect members' money and use it wisely
- Put the best interests of RWNZ first at all times
- Function well as a team
- Abide by the Rules and follow agreed processes
- Be transparent about its decisions
- Consult with members on larger decisions, e.g. financial outlay, proposed changes to policies, etc.
- Communicate regularly with members
- Engage constructively with members who have concerns
- Recruit other volunteers, and provide them with guidance and support.

Quite a lot! All the more reason we get people with the right skills and attitude on the Executive, and members take an interest in how RWNZ is run.

And how you can give support in return

Key point to remember: members of the Executive are volunteers:

- They get no perks or financial incentives because such things undermine the integrity of the volunteer model. (Actually, this has not always been the case, but we believe it should be, and we will be addressing this in remits at the AGM.)
- They are not 'the bosses'—they are the volunteers who've put their hands up to take on a lot of responsibility, and like every other volunteer, they deserve your support.

We're all in this together. Let's work together in the most constructive way possible.

Here's how you can do that.

Supporting RWNZ as a volunteer:

- You can do your bit by giving that role 100% and by following RWNZ's processes, which have been developed in everyone's best interests.
- If you can't continue with a role—or you're struggling—sing out immediately to the Executive. We can provide temporary support or find a replacement.
- If you have personal issues with the Executive or other volunteers, then share the responsibility for resolving those issues. Communicate directly with the person or group, via email or phone. Go into the discussion with the best interests of all members in mind, which generally means putting personal grievance aside, and always means aiming for a positive resolution—which means whatever is the best outcome for RWNZ as a whole.

Supporting RWNZ as a member:

- Consider taking your turn as a volunteer. There are lots of small tasks as well as the bigger roles.

continued on page 10

continued from page 9

Think about sharing a volunteer role with a friend and therefore halving the workload. Ask what you can do to help. Experienced members are always willing to mentor and support new members.

- Tell all volunteers, including the Executive, when you feel they're doing a good job. Positive feedback can really keep you going when the workload gets tough. You can communicate in private or on our public forums—either is welcome!
- If you have issues or criticisms, raise them directly and in private with the person or group concerned. Having a go at people on a public forum is unproductive and destructive. It solves nothing, it's disrespectful, and worst of all, it puts other members off standing for roles. RWNZ's survival depends on having willing volunteers for all our vital roles, so let's make sure all our volunteers feel safe and supported.

So—are you up for it?

We really hope you are. And when the call for Executive nominations comes round on 23rd June, we want as many of you as possible to stand. We'd love to get a heap of names for our other volunteer roles, too.

We also want members to be engaged in the voting process—to vote and think carefully about who you're voting for. Don't be scared to ask the nominees questions, either directly or on the RWNZ Members Only Facebook page, but remember to be respectful. Stimulating an engaged membership is how RWNZ will thrive and grow, and continue to be the great organisation we all love being part of.

Daphne Clair de Jong First Kiss Contest Results



I am happy to announce the finalists of the inaugural Daphne Clair de Jong First Kiss Contest. Throughout March and April, our team of volunteer judges have been hard at work reading, pondering and scoring entries, and I am delighted to share the results.

In no particular order, the finalists are:

J.C. Harroway
Bronwen Evans
Becky Watts
Emma Bryson

I'm sure you'll join me in congratulating the finalists and wishing them well in the next round of the competition.

Thank you, judges, for making this possible!

Yours,
Gillian.

First Kiss Contest Manager.

The Welcome Mat

We're rolling out the red carpet this month for another lovely group of new and returning members. Welcome, ladies. It's great to have you as part of RWNZ!

Alison Barrass—Whitford

Joanne Dannon—Australia

Jennifer Ensor—Dubai

Gail MacKenzie—Featherston

Grainne McAnnalley—Orewa

Olivia Thomson—Christchurch

Alice Whale—Lower Hutt

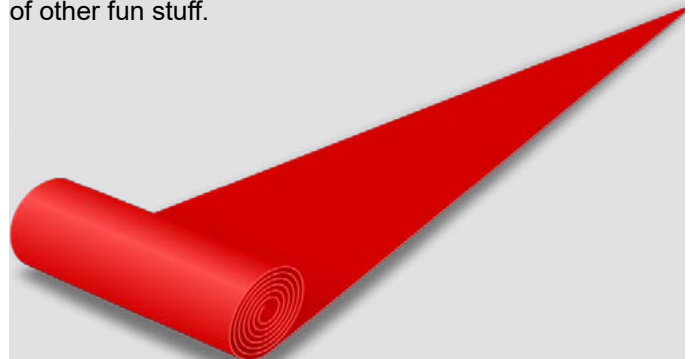
It's lovely to have you with us, ladies.

You should already have your username and password for the RWNZ site. If not, give Gracie a shout at membership@romancewriters.co.nz and she'll sort you out.

Don't forget to read the INFORMATION FOR NEW MEMBERS page on our website:

<https://www.romancewriters.co.nz/membership/information-new-members/>

Of course, you'll need to login before you can access the members' area, but you'll find information there about how to join up with our Members Only Facebook page and the NZRomance Yahoo loop—along with a whole lot of other fun stuff.



A Holiday Romance

Nelson Romance Writers present: A Romance Short Story Competition 2017



Open to: Published, Self-published & Non-published writers plus Senior Students within New Zealand

Launch: Thursday 1 June 2017

Deadline: Friday 1 September 2017

The winner in each category will get a basket of romantic goodies.

The Supreme overall winner will get one year's membership of Romance Writers New Zealand (RWNZ) plus a certificate.

Judge: **Angela Bissell** - A NZ Romance Writer published by Harlequin Mills & Boon.

Posters and flyers printed by
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Seifried's Winery
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Paper Plus Richmond
Guthrie Collision Repair
Parnwell Painting Limited
Jeanine Taylor
Jean Gorman
Harley's Pharmacy
The Warehouse
McCashin's Kitchen & Bar
Pomeroy's*

For more information and entry form: Email: Annika Ohlson-Smith on nelsonromancewriters@xtra.co.nz or phone Annika on 03 548 5561

Fresh Voices in Traditional Publishing: A Conversation With Allison Carroll

Kendra Delugar



Allison Carroll is a Montana transplant who once upon a time packed all her belongings in a U-Haul and drove cross-country to NYC.

Her introduction to publishing began at Dorchester

Publishing in 2009 and continued at Macmillan's Heroes and Heartbreakers. Allison joined the Harlequin family in 2012 as part of the Desire and Romantic Suspense Series teams, before transitioning to HQN and Graydon House, where she's worked with such authors as *NYT* bestseller Jeaniene Frost, *NYT* bestseller Brenda Jackson, *NYT* bestseller Gena Showalter, Golden Heart nominee Brynn Kelly, *USA TODAY* bestseller Christie Ridgeway, *NYT* bestseller Kasey Michaels, and more. Allison is actively acquiring for HQN and Graydon House. Feel free to follow her @AllisonPCarroll.

Allison was kind enough to take the time out of her busy schedule to speak to Kendra Delugar and answer some questions about herself and her upcoming trip to New Zealand for RWNZ's 2017 Conference.

Allison, when you packed up your U-Haul and headed to New York you initially wanted to work in publishing, and yet you've definitely found your place in the world of romance publishing. Was that a surprise to you at first? And what about it keeps you excited and fulfilled every day?

It was absolutely a surprise. Growing up, I didn't have that older sister or cool relative whose romance novels I snuck. I'd never really read the genre before landing an internship at Dorchester. On my first day, I was given a manuscript to proofread. *Divorced, Desperate and Deceived* by Christie Craig and, to be melodramatic, it changed my life. I remember thinking, where has this been all my life? I was hooked.

And I remain hooked to this day. In addition to the stories themselves, I'm constantly blown away by the romance community. It's energizing, supportive and badass, and definitely keeps me excited every day.

What do you enjoy most about working with authors?

I love the collaborative nature of it. Acting as a sounding board for an author and helping her develop a story is the best part of my day. And, discussing cover models with them isn't terrible, either. ;)

Unlike Harlequin Series, Harlequin HQN and Graydon House Books do not accept un-agented or unsolicited submissions. Do you find authors in other ways (one who aren't necessarily agented)? And if so, how?

In addition to working with agents, I've also had success through judging contests. In fact, I read RW New Zealand's own Brynn Kelly in a contest and later signed another project of hers to HQN. Pitches at conferences are also a great way to get on multiple editors' radar. If a project's not right for me, I'm always thinking of who else at Harlequin might be the right fit.

As authors we so often hear from agents or editors that they're looking for a 'fresh voice.' From your perspective, what does that mean?

Lol, we do love that phrase! And it is difficult to define. It's one of those things that you know it when you read it. But let's see if I can be slightly less ambiguous. I think of it as a book's personality, and every personality is unique. In a genre that loves tropes, a fresh take on a classic hook will set an author apart and excite readers, and voice is one of the most effective ways to do that.

Self-publishing is the latest catch-cry (and has been for a few years now), but what benefits does traditional publishing offer that self-publishing does not?

Broadly speaking, traditional publishing offers a team with which to partner, with everyone leveraging their various expertise and relationships—from editorial to copyediting to packaging to cover copy to distribution to marketing and PR—to build and grow an author's readership. Drilling down to the editor's role, echoing what I said earlier, it's about collaboration. The editor acts as a champion and cheerleader for an author (and even offers a bit of tough love if required).

It's a relationship built on trust, and for editors, we're there to not only make suggestions and offer feedback about an author's story and the writing from proposal to galley stage, but also have career conversations. These conversations happen when an author is just starting out,

continued on page 13

continued from page 12

in transition, when things are going well and, unfortunately, when they're not going so well. It's about having someone in your corner, and whether you're a traditionally published author, hybrid, or just starting out, a publisher is just that.

If you could give our members any tips about what makes a good pitch, what would they be?

I think of pitches as a conversation. I love talking about books and am always pushing my favorites on people, whether professionally or in my personal life. And so this is just another opportunity to talk about a book that someone loves and has put their heart into. A couple of practical tips: start with the basics—title, subgenre, word count, comps. Hopefully that will settle any butterflies, and then dive in to your elevator pitch knowing the person across from the table loves books just as much as you and wants to find their next perfect project to push on people.

At the RWNZ Conference, what lines will you be taking pitches for?

I will be taking pitches for HQN Books, Harlequin's flagship mainstream romance imprint, Graydon House Books, Harlequin's new boutique women's fiction imprint, as well as across all Series imprints.

What are you most looking forward to doing/seeing when you're in New Zealand?

There's so much! My plans are still in the works, but I am going to be the ultimate tourist and go to Hobbiton. I'm also hoping to make it to the southern island. I'd love to hang out in a hot springs and watch the southern lights.

And what was the last book you read and couldn't put down? (It can be a book you read purely for fun.)

I recently finished the last Temeraire novel by Naomi Novik, which I've been saving for about a year since it came out because I just didn't want the series to end. And then I've been re-reading Nalini Singh's Psy-Changeling series in anticipation of Silver Silence coming out this summer. I'm always amazed at her brilliant plotting—she's a master strategist!—and revisiting the series has me noticing all sorts of things I didn't catch the first time around. I've also been listening to a lot of audio books—a first for me! Mostly celebrity memoirs because they're narrated by the authors themselves, which is such a treat. Mara Wilson, Amy Poehler and Alan Cumming have been standouts (see—I can't help pushing books on people!).

Allison, thank you for taking the time to answer these questions. It's greatly appreciated.

If you want to see Allison's personal wish list, it can be found on the [2017 Conference Agents and Editor Pitches page](#).

The Bookshelf



Writer On A Budget
Sarah Lentz

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B06Y5CVLPL>

Amazon Review from Barbara Mojica

Lentz makes suggestions to coach the prospective writer. She provides links to websites and makes suggestions. While her advice is carefully presented, she allows the reader to make the decisions about how to proceed. This book is easy to read and fairly comprehensive. I enjoyed the approach.



The Psychology Workbook for Writers
Darian Smith

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0143K2MNU>

Amazon Review from Tar Heel

This book is written specifically for authors. It is not a self-help guide. I found it insightful and to the point regarding creating characters. The author never lost touch with the topic or the intended audience. The overviews of several therapies will be helpful with character building. Additionally, the author addresses character conflict. What writer doesn't need more character conflict? This is a book I've added to my reread list. I suspect I will reference it on a regular basis.



Block Buster Blueprint
M L Welker

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01MYBOQCM/>

continued on page 14

continued from page 13

Amazon Review from S. K. Murphy

I loved this book. My writing career has spanned forty years to date, and I have a master's degree in literature, but I have to confess that I learned more than there is space here to record by reading this book. Yes, I understood plot structure, conflict, character development and interaction--but not to the depth and detail that is covered in this easy-to-read but invaluable piece of research.



Standout Characters

Mary Lynn Mercer

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B00QAK0PHW>

Take your writing to the next level by learning how to deliver the kind of fantastic emotional experiences readers crave. This book empowers you to craft your story with the reader in mind, and capture their hearts with exciting and emotionally involving characters.



Writing Magic: Creating Stories That Fly

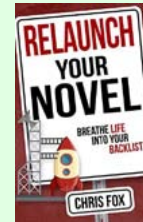
Gail Carson Levine

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B00BATB3V0>

Amazon Review from Erica M. Ruyle

Where to start?! I cannot say enough great things about this book. Full disclosure; I am NOT the target audience for this as I'm well over the age this was written for. However, this is one of the best books on reading that I have come across. As an adult you'll likely whiz through it in one sitting but the advice provided is absolutely invaluable. After reading, I passed the book along to my teenage son to read, I'll likely even give it to my 17-year-old daughter as well.

The book offers practical, sage advice along with writing assignments to tackle along the way. While I didn't undergo the writing assignments I believe that they would be very useful to any youth reading this book as it provides a structured way of writing and helps them put advice into motion.



Relaunch Your Novel: Breathe Life Into Your Backlist

Chris Fox

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B071HVZD1G/>

Available for Pre-order. Delivered 30 June, 2017

Have you launched a novel, or many novels, only to have them land with a whimper? Have you had a great selling book or series slowly fade away to obscurity? What if you could relaunch those books, turning your backlist into a great source of income?

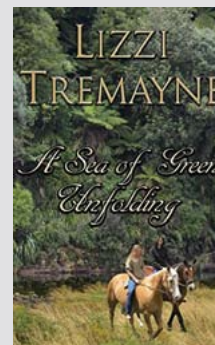
You can. This book will teach you:

- How to analyze your previous launches to determine failure points
- How to turn your backlist into an automated system that feeds readers back into your other book
- What types of relaunched exist, and which is right for your book
- How other authors have successfully relaunched. What worked, and what didn't

*“People are not born heroes or villains;
they’re created by the people around
them.”*

— *Chris Colfer*

Woos & Hoos



Lizzi Tremayne's novel **A Sea Of Green Unfolding** released on 27 May.

Hands Up For A Small Conference Job!

Kris Pearson

Our 2017 conference is racing toward us at the speed of light, so it's time to start sharing some of the volunteer jobs around to make sure everything runs like clockwork.

Our registrar and hotel liaison is Lyn Rasmussen (and her daughter Angie.) The registration desk at conference is always open for several sessions. This is where you claim your goodie bag, lanyard, etc.

As I need to draw up a list of volunteers, let's start with people willing to take on the important task of **manning the registration desk**. Please don't assume that because you've done it before, you'll be doing it again. I'd be thrilled if you'd like to, but I need to know you're going to be in Rotorua so I can be sure I've finalised the task of setting up the table and issuing the bags. Email me at kris.p@paradise.net.nz to claim your place.

Catherine Robertson and Lyn Rasmussen are co-ordinating goodie bags, lanyards, posters etc. It could be they'll need some help with **goodie-bag stuffing** on Thursday afternoon, but I'm sure they'll put the call out in good time, if so. If you're going to be around, offer your services to lynrasmussen@xtra.co.nz

Raffles co-ordinator is Megan Herles-Mooar. Who'd like to help Megan with **raffle prize wrapping and ticket selling**? If that sounds like you, contact her at MegHM@gmx.com If you're bringing a raffle prize from your local group, or as a personal donation, it would be appreciated if you brought it wrapped – or at least brought paper and ribbon so you can assemble it on arrival.

The Cocktail Party organiser and Awards Dinner organiser will be building their own teams for these glittering events, but in each case I need **a couple of volunteers to be greeters/ticket-takers** at the door while people arrive. It's a fun job if you're a new member because you get to say a brief hello to everyone but don't have to

strike up long conversations! If you and a friend would like to be our greeters at either of these, please let me know. (You do need to be attending the event.)

Would you be interested to **help decorate the rooms**? I'll pass your names on to the appropriate organisers. Who's an electronics whizz? We'll need someone for **AV set-up and support**.

Prize runners—these are the people who dash around handing out spot prizes and raffle prizes to save the lucky winners struggling up to claim them. Nice job—you'll need to be fast.

Judy Knighton and Marija Jukich—I already have you on my volunteers list.

Here's something we can't finalise until later in July: **the introducers and thankers for all the breakout workshops**. If you've already booked your workshops and would like to introduce and thank someone in particular, please let me know. Usually I get a list of all attendees closer to the date and email you with a request when I can see who will be where, but if you want a special person, I'm waiting at kris.p@paradise.net.nz

'Cold Reads' readers. These are the sessions where the first two pages of members' books are read out in the presence of our visiting editors and agents for comments. It's always interesting to hear those comments, and it's great to hear what others are writing. We need several people with good clear voices to read out these pages. Please let me know if this sounds like you.

And that's it for now – but there might be more later.



Writing The Perfect Villain

Bronwen Evans



Perfect villain, there's an oxymoron for you! I write historical romance, but most of my stories have a suspense element to them. Whether it's an overarching villain as in my *Disgraced Lords* series, or individual villains as in my *Wicked Wagers* series.

Nothing makes your hero more heroic than a worthy opponent!

A good villain can wreak havoc on other characters, and help to generate plot and character conflict. They can be a foil to play off against your hero, or a means to show how strong your heroine is. A villain can be truly evil or merely the old lady next door who keeps stealing your paper. It's how you want to use said villain to drive your story plot and character growth that counts.

The villain is often portrayed as the bad person, representing evil and darkness in the story. The struggle between the hero and the villain sets up the major conflict in traditional stories, with the hope that the hero wins and the villain fails.

But I've found in romance stories, that the villain in one book, can be made the hero in the next.

We don't have to *like* the villain. In fact, most readers root for the hero to destroy the villain. But to have the most emotional impact, your reader should be able to understand the **motivations of the villain**.

So, how do you build your villain?

Like any character in any of my books, I try to make my villains believable and multi-dimensional. To do that, you have to understand them as well as you understand your hero and heroine.

The key to writing a believable and impactful villain is backstory.

- What shaped and molded the villain's character?
- What is it the hero wants?
- Why do they want it?
- What is standing in their way?

- And how are they going to achieve their goal?
- What will they sacrifice to achieve it?

Most often the villain's goal is in direct conflict to the hero's goal.

A villain who is as developed and as detailed as the hero in your story will keep the reader engaged in the conflict and build tension. Taking the time to craft a well-developed villain will only help your story become stronger and more memorable.

Who is your villain?

Before I write the villain's backstory I almost always decide right up front whether the villain is identifiable from the very beginning, or whether I want their identity to be a surprise. Then I ask myself if the villain redeemable or not. Do they become the savior at the end, or do they die? The conflict between hero and villain is built around the outcome. There is no point getting to the end of your story and find there is no way to tie all the threads together.

- Does the villain have to die at the end?
- Is the villain going to start off likeable?
- Will the reader know he/she is the villain or will it be revealed at the black moment?
- Are they redeemable?
- Do they turn from villain to savior?
- Will their identity remain hidden throughout the story?
- Do we know who the villain is from page one?
- Or, when is the best time to introduce the villain?

Determine how and when the villain turned to the dark side.

How can you introduce a fully fleshed out villain without knowing what shaped and molded his character? Many of the more popular and successful villains in literature have engaging backstories, where they have a history of bad deeds due to a pivotal event in their lives. Determining what event or moment made the villain turn dark can help to create a more fleshed out character. It can also help with the black moment, history repeats and all that. Having a fully fleshed out character sheet for the villain also allows you to avoid creating a one-dimensional villain who only appears evil for evil's sake.

For example, you may have a villain who witnessed or

continued on page 17

continued from page 16

experienced trauma at a young age, such as violence, abuse, or abandonment. Or, you may have a villain who stumbled into a bad situation and made a poor moral judgment. This may then have led the villain down a dark path.

Outline the dark things done by the villain in the past.

None of this has to end up in the story, or it can as backstory (no dumps) but it helps you understand and get into the villains' psyche. It can even be revealed through other characters in the story.

Add to the villain's backstory by outlining their bad deeds. This may be a progression of smaller bad deeds to bigger bad deeds, or one or two awful things done within a certain period of time. Try to be detailed about these deeds, as this will help you build the villain into a living, breathing character whom nevertheless makes choices and decisions just like everyone else.

Give your villain humanizing traits.

Good villains will cause readers to question their own moral judgments as they may end up sympathizing with the villain, despite the bad things they have done. A villain who is sympathetic and evil is way more interesting than a villain who is just pure evil, as readers will be quick to dismiss him and unable to relate to him. Giving your villain humanizing traits will prevent him from becoming a one-dimensional character.

For example, in my *Disgraced Lords* series my overarching villain is out for justice for a terrible thing that was done to them. Readers can empathize with my villain seeking justice, but it's how they went about getting the justice that makes them the villain, and pulls at my readers' heartstrings.

... to have the most emotional impact, your reader should be able to understand the motivations of the villain.

A good rule of thumb is to make sure your villain is as detailed and defined as your hero. This way, the showdown between the two of them at the climax of the story will feel that much more exciting and engaging.

Decide if your villain will have special powers or abilities.

What kind of power may depend on whether you are creating a villain for a paranormal story, or a fantasy story, or if your story is based more in reality or the thriller genre. However, remember the movie *Rain Man*? The special power was his ability with numbers. So you can use the concept for your villain in any genre. Your villain

may have special powers or abilities that allow them to get a leg up on the hero and do incredible feats of evil. Giving your villain a specific power or ability will deepen their character and raise the stakes of the story.

Determine the conflict between the villain and the hero of your story.

How does the goal of the villain conflict with the hero's goal? Once you have given your villain a convincing backstory, you should think about the nature of the con

flict between your villain and your hero. What is it they both want and why and how will the villain stop, cross, or keep the hero from achieving his goal?

Give the villain a distinct voice.

A distinct voice is needed for all your characters. I do like it when a villain's voice confuses the reader. This is a good idea if the villain is unknown. If the villain's identity is known, then their voice should match their actions or you may confuse the reader and your character may not be believable.

Does the villain have an accent when they speak? Do they use different wording or phrasing that indicates their evil nature? Many villains will speak with menace and use words to manipulate weaker characters. Maybe your villain is skilled at wordplay and uses words to confuse or trick other characters.

Create a master plan for the villain.

Often a story has the villain's goal changing and growing over the arc of the story. For example, they might have wanted to only stop the hero from signing a document, but by the end of the story they may want the hero dead. Obviously, the hero must cause the villain so much trouble that the conflict escalates.

Build to a showdown between the hero and the villain.

This is where the villain finally unveils his true intentions to the hero. A perfect villain requires the ultimate showdown between good and evil. Your story should have a plot outline that builds up to a face off where the villain and the hero battle in some way. This should be the high point of conflict and tension in the story, and usually happens around the 'black moment' where the hero thinks they have lost everything.

Here is the ultimate Perfect Villain checklist that I use. (I borrowed it from fellow author Jerry Jenkins.)

- He's convinced he's the good guy
- He has many likeable qualities
- He's a worthy enough opponent to make your hero look good
- You (and your reader) like when he's on stage
- He's clever and accomplished enough that people must lend him begrudging respect
- He can't be a fool or a bumbler

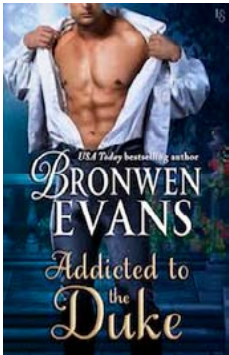
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- He has many of the same characteristics of the hero, but they're misdirected
- He should occasionally be kind, and not just for show
- He can be merciless, even to the innocent
- He's persuasive
- He'll stop at nothing to get what he wants
- He's proud
- He's deceitful

The deeper you delve in your villain's backstory and the more you know about him, the more you will fear him or hate him, and the better he will be on the page.

If your villain scares you, they will scare your hero and your readers, and that will make them memorable. And if your hero bests him, how memorable will it make your story!



USA Today bestselling author, Bronwen Evans grew up loving books. She writes both historical and contemporary sexy romances for the modern woman who likes intelligent, spirited heroines, and compassionate alpha heroes. Evans is a three-time winner of the RomCon Readers' Crown and has been nominated for an RT Reviewers' Choice Award. She lives in Hawkes Bay, New Zealand with her dogs Brandy and Duke. You can keep up with Bronwen's news by visiting her website www.bronwenevans.com

Pitching For Newbies

Joanne Harris

So you've finished your manuscript, you've bought your ticket to conference, and now ... the dreaded pitching looms.

Of course it sounds daunting. It involves selling yourself and your story—something that doesn't come naturally to many of us introverted writers—and it often leads to a dead end. Rejection Alley.

The above scenario certainly describes my first experience of pitching at RWNZ 2015 conference. So why do it? Why not just submit your story via the less terrifying anonymity of the internet? No face-to-face contact. No questions. No risk.

My second experience of pitching at RWNZ 2016 Conference still scared me, but I'd learned from the previous experience it wouldn't kill me. The worst that could happen was my story would be rejected. And it was—it just wasn't right for the line and didn't excite the agents.

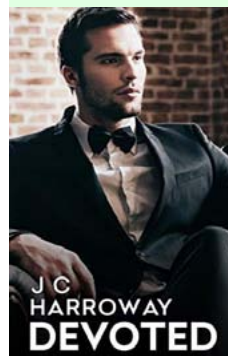
But I learned a lot from my pitching experiences:

- **PREPARE**—Thinking about how to describe your story into a concise pitch a couple of minutes long and then trying to convey that to someone else helps you to pin down what your story is really about—the high concept. Choose three words that encapsulate the message of your story and build your pitch around those words. And remember to practice!
- **SLUSH**—Pitching is like jumping the queue. Why allow your story to wallow in the slush pile when you can fast track it to an editor's attention by Pitching. They've asked you to send them your work. This allows you to add those magic words—requested manuscript—to the email.
- **HUMAN**—In my experience, the editors and agents were ALL polite, friendly and respectful—exactly the sort of people I want to work with, but I wouldn't have known this without taking that leap and rocking up to pitch my story. And they may be nervous, too. We're all human!
- **PROFESSIONAL**—Pitching tells editors and agents what kind of a person you are, too. So be punctual, friendly and respectful in return and don't be afraid to let your personality show—yes your story has to be good, but pitching can also be the beginning of a working relationship, so show them who you are.
- **QUESTIONS**—Pitching is a BRILLIANT opportunity to ask an industry expert a question or two. You have a golden, one-to-one ten minutes with them, so have one or two questions prepared—what kind of stories are you looking for? Where do you see the trends in Romance leading? How can I improve my pitch for next time?

Despite the story I pitched being rejected, it was the questions I asked and the relationship I built with the editor during pitching and the informal chats over the conference weekend that eventually led to 'THE CALL', securing me a three book contract with Harlequin's new-for-2018 line, DARE.

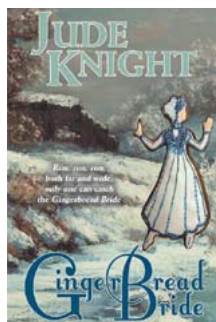
So be brave, be prepared, and give it a go—you've got nothing to lose but a golden opportunity.

Oh, and good luck!



Joanne writes as J. C. Harroway. Writing is a far cry from the medical career she once had, but it provides an endless source of inspiration. From her home in New Zealand, and inspired by her travels and Welsh roots, she creates stories with strong, independent heroines and the compelling, three-dimensional heroes worthy of them.

Get To Know Our Authors



Jude Knight

Jude Knight's writing goal is to transport readers to another time, another place, where they can enjoy adventure and romance, thrill to trials and challenges, uncover secrets and solve mysteries, delight in a happy ending, and return from their virtual holiday refreshed and ready for anything. Her published books include a novella and two novels in *The Golden Redeppening*. Visit Jude at <http://judeknightauthor.com/>

Cassandra Dean

Cassandra Dean is a best-selling author of historical and fantasy romance. Cassandra is proud to call South Australia her home, where she regularly cheers on her AFL football team and creates her next tale. Visit Cassandra at <http://cassandradean.com/>



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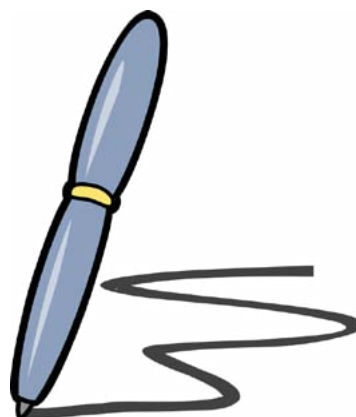
*"Nobody is a villain in their own story.
We're all the heroes of our own stories."*

— George R.R. Martin



*"Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it
is the courage to continue that counts."*

—Winston S. Churchill



Regional Round-Up Reports

Auckland

Convenor: Pamela Gervai (pamelagervai.com)

We had a fascinating presentation at our May meeting on side saddles. A big thank you to Jacinda Baundreg who gave us a Power Point presentation, and to Louise Williams who thought to persuade Jacinda to give us this seminar with all the trappings. You can see photos on the RWNZ Face Book Members only site. Twenty-one attended. I took notes furiously but I wasn't fast enough to capture all the information. However, I have enough to be able to present a convincing character with a side saddle riding background—and yes, that includes males.

Our June meeting featured a fascinating and detailed presentation about *Villains* by Camilla Urdahl. It prompted much discussion amongst members.

As usual we meet at the Three Kings Tennis Pavilion from 12.30 until 3.00. Please bring a plate, a gold coin donation, and change for the raffles.

Coast to Coast

Convenor: Vivienne Matthews
(vivienmatthewswriter@gmail.com)

Many thanks to Mollie who opened her home to the seventeen of us who were able to attend this month's meeting. Much appreciated, Mollie.

The topic was Plotting, and we were fortunate to get a good all round view of different options with three people sharing.

Khushi started the ball rolling with telling us about being a Panster. She recommended the book 'No Plot? No Problem' by Chris Baty. Catherine followed on with an in-between view—a bit of pantsing, a bit of plotting. Like Khushi, she's read books on how to plot but didn't find anything that worked for her ... till she discovered *Story Genius* by Lisa Cron. Jenny wrapped the day up with talking us through her process of plotting her stories—building a file of ideas, creating a Pinterest page for each book, and using Runes or different cards to find out more about her characters. She recommended *Book of Runes* by Ralph Blum.

Our next meeting will be on Saturday, 10th June in Waihi at Liz's place. Deborah Challinor will be presenting an interactive workshop about outlining so you don't get lost (and do get contracts), building convincing and compelling character/motivations, POV, editing, and little tips and tricks she's learned.

Hawkes Bay

Convenor: Kendra Delugar
(kendraonthemove@hotmail.com)

Our May meeting took place at Kendra's. After an around the room catch-up, including a talk about rights and how, if possible, to get them back, we read the first two pages of our current works in progress. Our June meeting will be about Amazon adverts.

We meet on the first Saturday of the month at 1pm, and new members are always welcome. In our July meeting (venue still to be announced) we'll be covering the topic of Character Development.

Wellington/Kapiti Coast

Convenor: Kris Pearson (kris.p@paradise.net.nz)

Our May meeting once again took place at Anna's lovely beachfront home at Paekakariki, and it was a big one. We welcomed new members Emma and Helen, and hopefully didn't frighten them off with our very wide-ranging discussions of all things writing. Indeed, we had so many people so keen to chat that managing to hear everything we wanted to follow was the major problem.

Gudrun showed us her possible next cover, Kris talked about launching sweeter editions of some of her current books, and Jane showed us how she's rebranding her time-travel series. Anne said that self-publishing was more time-consuming than she expected, and some of us laughed. Hmmm...

Nelson

Convenor: Annika Ohlson-Smith
(nelsonromancewriters@xtra.co.nz)

We met on the 6th May to continue planning our short story competition. We now have a final judge—Angela Bissell, who's currently working on her fourth novel for Harlequin Mills & Boon. We are so grateful she is willing to take the time to do this for us. We're also very busy getting sponsors for the three prize baskets, as well as getting the poster ready for the launch.

We confessed our weaknesses as writers, and then brainstormed how we could help each other overcome them. Procrastination was the most common one, but also 'editing while writing', creating conflicts, and creating villains were up there too. We decided to have a mini workshop on the matter at our June meeting, as by then we will have the competition launched. With our cuppa we indulged in orange and coconut cake—along with detailed sex scenes we'd encountered in romance novels.