

Writing A Christmas Themed Story....

Bronwen Evans



I've always been sceptical of Christmas or holiday themed romances. It sounds so 'commercial', which is funny coming from me, as I've always said writing is my career, the way I earn my income. Why

shouldn't we earn money off this time of year? Retailers do. What I hadn't considered is why readers love Christmas/holiday themed stories and are happy to read them all year round.

This year I've written my first Christmas themed story and I've learned from my readers why they LOVE 'under the mistletoe' romances. Christmas is such a 'family-centric' time of year and readers gravitate to stories that evoke sincere emotions reflecting family, heart and home.

As writers, we should take all the good things about Christmas and make them magical. We can even make things like snow and freezing temperatures sound enticing! If you're writing NZ based stories, you have a chance to give a reader stuck in below freezing temperatures, a chance to experience a Christmas where the characters are swimming and grilling on the barbeque.

This romanticizing the elements is what makes Christmas themed stories a fan favourite. Despite the often conflicting tumultuous or heart-wrenching storylines, or the heat level, or the sub-genre of romance, the writer needs to evoke an overall heart-warming feeling to have a successful holiday themed story that resonates with readers.

However, as it was my first time writing a Christmas themed story, A SCOT FOR CHRISTMAS which is in the Christmas in Kilts Anthology, I did make a few mistakes and I learned a couple of things along the way. I thought I'd share so you won't make the same mistakes

I made...

What's really important in a Christmas romance?

1. Set the scene using sights, sounds and smells

It is important to include seasonal references throughout the story, in every scene if possible, to surround the reader with these holiday stimuli. Think of the Christmas trappings, holly, mistletoe and, decorated Christmas trees. Christmas lights, sleigh bells, Christmas carols—what is going on in the world around the characters that keeps the readers grounded in the Christmas theme.

These evoke personal memories for the readers, which help to create a common world shared between the reader and the characters in your story. How the character reacts to the holiday stimuli is what will help create the mood and tone for the story. A character who loves sitting near a fire drinking mulled wine while snow falls outside, will evoke a different emotion than a character who is dreading the upcoming season because their mother died on Christmas day, or a character who views the holiday as just another way for stores to make money—which is so me...

2. Make the holiday play a part in the story line

Sounds obvious but sometimes you get so wrapped up in writing the elements of the relationship that you forget to make the motivation or behaviour relate to Christmas. Something about the holiday season needs to bring the main characters together. There are many tropes or plotlines that work well, each with a purpose of evoking a different response from readers. For instance, your heroine may be looking for the perfect gift for her sister, and tracking down this gift leads her into the arms of the hero who has also decided to buy that gift for his mother, and there is only one. Or friends have decided to set up the hero, a widower, so he's not alone for Christmas.

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Other more common tropes that can be incorporated into holiday titles include-mistaken identity or trapped together for the holidays. No matter which story writers choose to tell, the holiday season must play a part in the story's development and help create the high stakes, sense of urgency readers expect from a romance novel.

3. Show that your characters have specific thoughts about Christmas

We have to decide how our characters will feel about the season. Your character's viewpoint will help determine the feelings you aim to achieve in the reader. The way you describe the characters reaction to Christmas changes how the reader experiences your characters. For the heroine looking for that special gift for her sister, why is she trying so hard? Is her sister sick, or has she not seen her for many years because they have been estranged etc. Or like my widower, do they dread the holidays because of bad memories associated with the season or the inevitable feelings of loneliness if they are unable to spend it with the ones they love?

4. Use secondary characters to amp up the Christmas theme

Secondary characters work really well in Christmas themed stories, like the interfering Grandma, or the over excited children wanting to give Santa their wish list. They enrich the plot with even more heart-warming moments re-enforcing the feeling of family. The secondary characters that appear in these novels also tend to be those that resonate with readers. Children, parents, grandparents, close friends, co-workers- all who provide a familiar support system that readers can identify with in their own lives. Often these characters play a role in helping the hero and heroine realize their love for one another and they encourage the union, making it feel right on every level. Or sometimes they are the antagonist, keeping the two apart. Whatever their role and purpose in the story, secondary characters add a sense of realism and new twists to every plot.

5. Surround yourself with images of the season you're writing in

With the publishing industry cycles, often you have to start writing your story in opposite season to Christmas. Surround yourself with stimuli that remind you of Christmas. Everything from festive screen savers, to Christmas music playing can be inspiring and help create the mood we are trying to capture. What does a bough breaking from heavy snow sound like? What happens to your breath and nose when making snowmen? What smells and sounds does rubbing sunscreen on someone's skin create etc.

6. Make sure your cover screams Christmas

Select cover images of Christmas that fit your story. I love the reds and greens on backgrounds of mistletoe or

wreaths of holly or snowy scenes. Mistletoe kisses are tempting to every reader of romance because ultimately, what better time for romance than the holiday season? A time that in essence is the symbol of love and forgiveness. A time that is focused on family and community and time spent with the people who matter most. The holiday season embodies the true theme of any romance novel and provides a fantastic foundation for writers.

Writing the holiday romance is no different to any romance in that it has to be an emotional ride that resonates with readers and evokes that sense of heart-warming satisfaction that we've all come to love and expect from these kinds of stories. Readers love romance stories because they are uplifting and the promise of Happily Ever After on the final pages provides a feeling of comfort and hope. The holiday romance adds another layer to the magic as the reader connects and identifies with the stress, the struggles, and then the love and happiness that the season brings.

I'm now hooked and firmly believe that there is simply no better time for love than the holiday season.



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

The Cutting Edge

Daphne Clair de Jong



So your manuscript is finished, you've checked the spelling and made sure the hero's eyes remain the same colour throughout, and the heroine hasn't gone out in shorts and sandals five minutes before her tight skirt and pin-heels

stun the hero.

You have deleted her sweet chat with Grannie and the hilarious party where the hero gets blind drunk. You've even sent a few lovely, romantic descriptive sentences to the electronic bin.

But that little word counter in the corner tells you your manuscript is too long!

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This is fine toothcomb time. Look for:

Greetings and leave-takings. They can often be cut.

Journeys. If nothing vital to the story happens on the trip from A to B, enter a double-double space or cut the chapter there, and leap into the next scene.

Time lapses. Whatever the heroine or hero does between scenes only belongs if it furthers the story or casts new light on the story or characters. If it doesn't do that, cut. Start the next scene or chapter with "Five hours later..." or "Harriette next met Archibald at..."

Two (or more) sentences that say the same thing in different words. e.g. "Sally made a disgusted face and pushed the plate away. She really hated split peas." These are hard to spot, and they slow the pace and overload the word count. Sometimes repetition occurs in the same sentence.

Sentences that don't add new essential information.

Repeated information. So your heroine was bullied\failed\cheated\abused\slandered by one or more significant others. She's wary of love\loyalty\passion\trust, but if she wallows too much or the writer over-emphasises her hang-ups and the reasons for them, the reader will want to tell her to "woman up and get a grip."

Backstory gains sympathy with the characters. But big chunks of it stop the story momentum. Could some be cut?

Three-word phrases where one word will do. "She put on a pair of rubber gloves, and lifted..." could be, "She donned rubber gloves." Or "Using rubber gloves, she..."

How important are those gloves anyway? Is it possible to cut to the chase: "After examining the..."? You might cut a paragraph or two, depending on the importance of the scene.

Hunt down the usual weasel words: Suddenly, that, was, then, only, very, really. In fact anything ending in "y". He/she thought, Yes or No at the beginning of an answer. Delete, and while you are there, delete the "he/she answered" after it.

Find details that don't add anything to the dialogue or the mood of the scene. Sometimes less is more. A single sentence may describe a room or a building better than a detailed description of every piece of furniture or architectural detail. Choose one or two words that are specific, not vague descriptions. And use verbs.

e.g. "A picture of some bearded ancestor loomed over the fireplace." Or "The lush red velvet sofa promised sinful comfort."

Cutting may hurt but it can make a good book even better, not only shorter.



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 been a finalist or won in other contests in several writing fields. To learn more about Daphne visit

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Conflict and Christmas as opposed to Mistletoe and Magic

Em Lowe



There's something magic about Christmas. At least I've always believed so. It's all about family, fun and festivities. About love and romance. About being together. For those of us who have our faiths, it's about the

birth of Christ. For children, it's about Santa Claus and presents. For parents across the world, it's about seeing the smiles and hearing the shrieks of excitement as children find presents under the tree. It's even about a sneaky kiss beneath the mistletoe, or an engagement ring hidden in a Christmas cracker.

Everybody has different expectations of Christmas, and predominantly, they are positive. For the romance writer though, Christmas offers something more. Something that so many people want to ignore during that holiday season. Conflict. Whilst the festivities bring Christmas joy, conflict on so many levels is accentuated, giving some excellent fodder for us as writers'. Let's face it, we know how to put our characters through hell. Make them suffer as they travel the road to romance.

At any time of year' the following four emotions are painful. But at Christmas, they can be highlighted so much more, and as such offer some great ideas for the romance writer.

Grief

Losing somebody close is tragic. Heart-breaking. And it leaves us raw, exposed and vulnerable. So what happens when our hero/ heroine loses somebody at Christmas? They've forgotten how to enjoy it. Forgotten that Christmas is a time of love and happiness. How do they process that emotional wound? How can this be written into a story that has a strong emotional arc? There's so many ways to explore.

Guilt

Your hero/ heroine was involved in an accident. A tragic accident. They were the sole survivor, despite making every effort to save the other people around them. Survivor guilt makes for a painful conflict, not to mention a heck of a story to write. It's Christmas, your hero/ heroine still beat themselves up, possibly unconsciously. Sabotaging their route to happiness. At Christmas, it's a time that their guilt is accentuated. Particularly if the accident happened at that time. What's worse than living with the feeling that you should have died too. That in being alive you somehow wronged those who lost their lives. Wham bam, there's another story.

Betrayal

We've all been hurt at some time in our lives, but what if it happened right before Christmas? Our hero/ heroine was jilted. They were cheated out of their fortune meaning they can't provide their children with the kind of Christmas they deserved. He/ she is still raw, the hurt still fresh. Perhaps it happened at Christmas time a year before, but the wound is still fresh. Festering as our character fails to come to terms with what happened. How can the story arc help them move through, help our hero/ heroine learn to trust again? To enjoy a time of year that's been tarnished? How do they learn to trust again? Without doubt, there's a story there!

Loneliness

Your heroine just moved to the opposite side of the world leaving her family and friends behind. She's in a strange country, in an entirely different climate to the one she's used to at the time. With no friends around her, Christmas is set to be a lonely time. Enter the hero. What fun can he/ she introduce her to? Does he/ she challenge her to enjoy Christmas, set challenges along the way? Does he/ she invite them to a family Christmas in the sun? Somewhere completely out of her comfort zone. How does the hero help the heroine through that lonely time?

Well there's some fodder for thought. How mean can you be to your characters during the festive season? Grab a pen and have a go, there's fun to be had in finding their happy ever after.

Em Lowe is a member of the ChCh chapter of RWNZ. She writes sweet contemporary fiction. She is currently writing a Christmas novel as a part of a series.

A View From The Other Side

Catherine Robertson



Traditionally published contemporary women's fiction writers like me are a bit Billy No-Mates in the New Zealand writing world. We don't fit into the literary fiction community, and we're not part of the world of romance, either. We'll never be

eligible for writing awards: literary writers get the Ockhams, RWNZ has the Koru, the Sir Julius Vogel is there for sci-fi, fantasy and horror writers, and our crime writers have the Ngaio Marsh. Us women's fiction writers have zip.

Doesn't help that there are bugger all of us. There's me, Danielle Hawkins, Nicky Pellegrino, Charity Norman...now I'm struggling. Sarah-Kate Lynch has given up books in favour of script writing, and I'm not sure what Michelle Holman is up to these days – her website doesn't seem to be active. I don't count those who write literary fiction as well, like Tanya Moir whose commercial alter ego is Holly Ford, or Stephanie Johnson aka Lily Woodhouse. I haven't included Deborah Challinor or Jenny Patrick, as they're primarily historical authors.

Even if I did count those others, there aren't enough of us to make a writing community. I only got to know Nicky Pellegrino because we both appear on RNZ's The Panel. I met Danielle Hawkins for the first time this year, and was at an event with Sarah-Kate Lynch way back in 2011. I've said hello to Deborah Challinor and Jenny Patrick. We don't have a forum to chat and share our experiences the way RWNZ members do. My main writing community is RWNZ, and I count myself lucky to have it.

Do our sales make up for the lack of recognition? The Marian Keyes and Jojo Moyes of this world are mega bestsellers. My own sales are only just good enough for my publisher to want to keep me on, though I suspect they only took the latest one because the managing director really loved it! Dwindling sales is why Sarah-Kate Lynch moved away from writing books, and possibly why Michelle Holman's stopped, too. Too much work for too little reward. Nicky and Danielle have other jobs.

Why don't we self-publish? RWNZ has successful self-published contemporary women's fiction writers amongst its members – Andrene Lowe, Kate O'Keeffe and Maggie LePage to name just three. Felicity Price, who was with Random House, now self-publishes her own 'chook lit' novels.

It's a good question, and the only reasons I can offer

at this stage are: I like seeing my books in the shops, I like sharing the marketing and publicity load with my publisher, and I adore my agent. My agent's in London, and she works hard to get me overseas sales. Thanks to her, I've won contracts in France, Italy and Germany, but nothing that's propelled me into the best-seller stratosphere. That's not her fault – I haven't written the book to take me there yet.

However, I do kick myself for not keeping the e-rights. Penguin prices my e-books far too high – only friends overseas and those devoted to their Kindles will buy them. Yes, my agent and I have asked. Our request to lower the price was denied. If I'd kept the e-rights, I might now be a happy hybrid author. Too late. C'est la vie.

The other reason I keep going with traditional publishing is an ever-optimistic hope that the next book will be the breakthrough. I wrote *The Hiding Places* to branch out from chick lit, as I felt I'd gone as far as I could go with that genre. It did OK. Nice reviews. Got published in France. And Quebec (who knew?). Then in 2015, I did my Masters in Creative Writing at the IIML at Victoria University, mainly to see how I felt submerging myself in that very literary world. As it turned out, I had classmates writing sci-fi, fantasy, and experimental fiction (split-screen novel, anyone? It was genius!), so it wasn't purely literary at all. *Definitely* wasn't snooty, either; we had a Terry Pratchett fan club.

It was a super fun year, and when it was over, I had to decide whether to work on my manuscript and write my first literary work, or move on to something else. Something else won. I learned a lot doing my Masters, including what I'm good at: characters, dialogue and humour. (I suck at plotting.) I realised that I love humour too much to rein it in, so last year I wrote a funny book about a bunch of characters in a small, made-up New Zealand town. It's called *Gabriel's Bay* and it's out on January 2nd.

Could it be my breakthrough book? I hope it appeals to a wide audience, but I can't make it do that. I can't control how it's received, who likes it and who doesn't. Can't make people pick it up off the shelf.

If *Gabriel's Bay* falls flat, then I'll do what I always do – write another book, and hope it will be the one. As it happens, I've got a proposal in to Sue Grimshaw, at Penguin Random House US, for a series of romance novels – funny ones, set in a small town. She thinks I can do it, so let's see. If it comes off, I'll still technically be traditionally published, but I figure my e-books will be priced a *whole* lot better.

I have to admit I approach the possibility of moving into the romance world with some trepidation, because I know how hard all of you work, at writing, marketing and building connections with your readers. So far, I've only had to work a little bit hard at that. But thanks to being

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part of RWNZ, and being privy to all your generous knowledge and experience, I feel prepared to give it my best shot. And if I don't succeed, there's always another book to write.



Catherine Robertson is a number one New Zealand best-selling author. She lives beside the sea in Wellington, New Zealand, with her husband, two rescue dogs and two Burmese cats. Catherine Robertson has written three novels that have all been #1 bestsellers in New Zealand. She appears regularly on Radio New Zealand's The Panel with Jim Mora, a current affairs discussion show. She

is Chair of the Wellington branch of the New Zealand Society of Authors and a member of the Romance Writers Association of New Zealand. Find out more by visiting Catherine's her website: <http://www.catherinerobertson.net>

Top Holiday Reads

There are some wonderful reads spread through this month's *Heart to Heart*. In our *Woo's and Hoo's* and on *The Book Shelf*. Aside from those here are some of our member's top reads.

Em Lowe: I'd read the Karen Rose - *Philadelphia and Baltimore* series. They are crime thriller/ romances - quite gritty, but with the love story threaded through. Also I enjoyed the Marie Force - *Gansett Island* series; Nalini Singh's *Psy-changling* series - and that's just for starters!

Judy Mohr: For me it has to be books about explosives, forensics and poisons. But I'm just weird like that.

Lianne Melekhina: I'm re-reading some old school Nora Roberts novels for inspiration.

Jamie Sands: My recommendation, *Carry On* by Rainbow Rowell

Amanda Gray: Have a look at these: *Close Quarter* by Anna Zabo; *Ruin of a Rake* by Cat Sebastian; *Lost and Found* by Lucy Lennox and Sloan Kennedy; oh and *Hush* by Tal Bauer.

Kura Carpenter: Well if we are looking at the classics then I'd love to know what else to read besides my favourite *Pride and Prejudice*.

Mollie Smith: For the more adventurous among us in terms of romance (or what constitutes romance!): *Simon Says Mine* by Cherise Sinclair; I believe it's a Christmas-themed novella.



Woos & Hoos

This month we celebrate more fabulous woos & hoos from our members to celebrate! Well done everyone!



Gillian St Kevern's free paranormal romance, *DEEP MAGIC*, rocketed to number one in several kindle categories.



Gillian also saw her first release, *THE BIGGEST SCOOP*, in French.

Brynn Kelly's romantic suspense novella *FORBIDDEN RIVER* has been released by HQN Books. It's set in rugged bush on the West Coast.



Lizzie Tremayne's *Once Upon a Vet School 7, LENA TAKES A FOAL*, previously published in a boxed set, has now been released as a standalone in paperback.

M Greenhill's debut paranormal novel, *MASKED*, was released 31 October.



Jean Drew w/a Gina Blake received her third contract for *TENDER LUSTING CARE*, in her *Good Girls Do* erotica trilogy.

One Word Resolutions

Melissa Climo



In the spirit of the rapidly approaching year end, what are your New Year's resolutions? Yes, really. I recognise I may have lost a few readers already. All those in blissful denial of the impending Christmas season and all things 2018. Plus, those who

despise the whole idea of making resolutions. I hear you. But, bear with me a little longer. What if you could just pick one word? Yes, only one word, as the overarching theme for the entire year.

In reality, our lives are a series of choices, big and small. One word can become a touchstone, a compass, we refer to when making decisions. That's what resolutions are about after all - choosing where to spend our time and energy, our most important resources.

I am a list maker, but my resources never stretch as far as my original intentions predict. Long lists of goals get scrapped. A lot. I blame a short attention span, reality, and not particularly good willpower.

But one word.....I can do that.

Before I go any further, a caveat: this is not a new concept, and I didn't invent it. Ask Google and you can find numerous followers of the one word resolution movement.

Some examples please?

My word for 2014 was Consolidate. 2015 was Positioning – as in getting my proverbial ducks in a row. 2016 was Adventure, we spent six months in the US. In 2017, I forgot about choosing a word, but in hindsight it probably was Survival. We have had a big year of change, moving from small town to city, and North to South Island, plus sorting out new jobs, house and schools. And in the middle of all that I decided to actually start writing, after years of planning to do it one day.

Now I am pondering my word for 2018. So far, I am indecisive and idealistic. I'm looking forward to a new year with less change and more time.

Choosing one word is all about intention and commitment. Luckily, while January marks a fresh start, there is no rule that says the chosen word has to last all year. Nor be applied to the entirety of your goals and choices as a pan-life resolution.

What about you? If you were to just focus on writing and publishing: what one word might direct the next few months, or year?

Perhaps you want to Focus. You have too many projects on the go and choices must be made.

A close relative of Focus is Finish. Completing projects before starting new ones, closing series, delivering on promises to readers.

Perhaps you embrace Challenge. This might mean leaping outside your comfort zone. Increasing word count, pitching that story, changing POV, entering a competition, trying a different genre, writing that racy sex scene.

Or your theme might be Connect. With readers, other writers or perhaps with your characters better. Seek other tribes. Get online, network in person, join that group.

So, where do you want to go in 2018?

Whether you prefer a hot cuppa or a glass of wine, a pen and paper, or a screen, take a moment. Or an hour. Identify one word that sums up where you want to go and how you want to live. It might be for your writing goals, or could apply to the entirety of your life.

Here are some more ideas to get you started: Balance. Diversify. Grow. Bigger. Efficient. Upgrade. Simplify. Learn. Consolidate. Savour. Pace. Braver. Trust. Consistency. Enough.

I am still Undecided. Or perhaps Procrastinating. But I have a few more weeks yet to decide.

One Word. What's yours?

Melissa lives in Christchurch. She is an emerging author who reads widely and so is still deciding on her genre(s). She is trying to write as much as possible, including NaNoWriMo 2017, without getting too distracted by all the other stuff.

‘Just like any woman... we weave our stories out of our bodies. Some of us through our children, or our art; some do it just by living. It's all the same.’

- Francesca Lia Block

From the Editor: “Caution: Novelists At Work, Bystanders May Be Written Into The Story”



This month has been all about ‘the Book’... and the 50,000 words. What do you do when you have no money and have to use your time owing, or lose it? The answer for any writer, new; or second hand,

you take your leave and sign up to NaNoWriMo. For those who are wondering what I am talking about NaNoWriMo is an international writing challenge where writers from all over the world sign up to write 50,000 words for the month of November. There are online competitions, forums, and workshops. And then there are the write in’s. In Canterbury, this has manifested in daily write-ins in cafes and libraries across the region where folk, weird and wonderful, gather in support, to wrestle a few author demons, and to write, write, write.

So I have planned a writing holiday, and every day packed the bag and headed off to write: in a library overlooking the ocean, in a rural café where you journey through lush countryside to the reward of fantastic coffee, to a mall coffee shop bustling and alive, and to my Tuesday library hide away complete with Children’s singing program at 11am which reminds me to embrace the power of the Jelly Wobble Song and the significance of Bubbles Pop.

Writing in the world has at times been a challenge, yet it has allowed me to bring my writers eye to the world with ease. To glean inspiration from the sights and sounds around me, rather than rely on recall. It has also meant that the wider world has been able to interact with the secretive and illusive writer outside of their natural habitat – *make no sudden moves*. To be fair the sign that sits on the table stating “Caution Novelists at Work Bystanders May be Written into the Story” has done a good job at keeping people at a distance.

Of course it hasn’t all been about writing in public; something that I know would drive many people into a state of apoplexy. Some folk only interact with a word count on line. In addition to my hours writing in the outside world there has been a lot of alone time breaking in my new office.

As someone fairly new to writing communities this challenge has been inspirational. As I write this (ten days left

in the challenge) I am sitting on around 36,000 words. I may, or may not make 50,000 words. But what I have learned from the NaNo challenge has been far more valuable than a word count. So how has NaNo helped me as a writer?

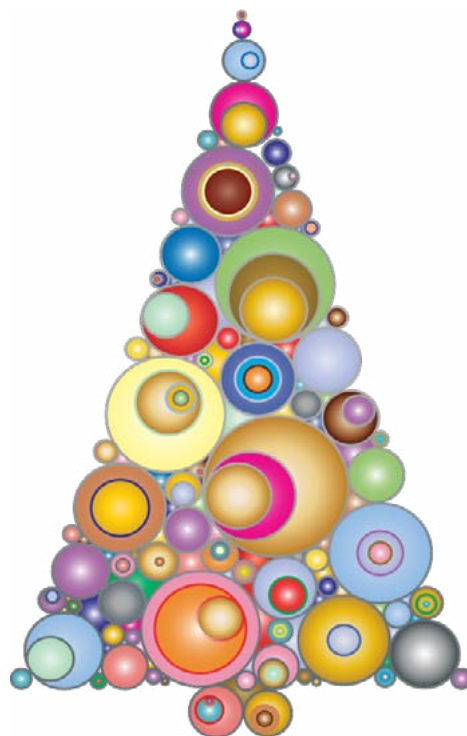
- I have become disciplined; *an almost unheard of anomaly for me*, to write daily. I am not sure how this will go as I return to work for the busiest year in my working life, yet I am already planning to do a couple of hours first thing.
- I have also met some extraordinary people from across various the writing genres. Many who have been encouraging and shared their knowledge freely.
- I have also learnt about my style – pure pantser I am not! And that’s ok. Note to secret plotters masquerading as pantsers’ STORY BOARDS ARE SEXY.
- Which leads me to one of the most satisfying learnings, I now know how my story will end. Huge Relief! Having the ending has freed up my writing so that now I can focus on the fun of getting there.

So would I do NaNoWriMo again?
ABSOLUTELY!

Will I make the word count? I don’t know and actually don’t care – much, well I do a bit, well more than a bit. Did I say I’m a tad competitive? For me the gleanings gained about who I am as a writer and how I create have been well worth the journey. You never know I may end up with my book in the Woo’s and Hoo’s Column yet!

Happy Writing

Megan



RWNZ Writers On NaNoWriMo

Meredith Reece: Here's my wee poem I posted for our C2C group on the NaNoWriMo forum:

*Flowers bud and birds will sing – this how I know it's
spring
Words sprint and fingers run – this how you'll get this
done
Time passes keep on track - make sure you don't look
back
Abandon edits, just move on – till the end you come
upon
Don't stop there, get it finished – so all your efforts not
diminished.*

Melissa Climo: Funnily enough I was also thinking about poetry. But this is where I am currently up to in my NaNoWriMo journey.

Fifty thousand words
flying start, sagging middle
procrastination

Judy Mohr Municipal Liaison NaNoWriMo, CHCH, NZ:
I have taken part in NaNoWriMo and Camp NaNoWriMo every year since 2014 and every year I have learned more about how my brain works. For me NaNo has never been about words but about creating the stories that my brain wants to write.

Cheryl Phipps: Planning, commitment, celebration!

Gillian St Kevern: This is my seventh NaNo, but my first time attending live write-ins and I am amazed at how much being part of an active writing community makes a difference. I hit my usual 'this novel sucks am I wasting my time' moment (an inevitable hurdle in any writing project), but instead of setting me back days, I was over it and writing again the next day.

Em Lowe: I've been a WriMo for five years now. Five years through which I've travelled an interesting journey. Each year has been a steep learning curve. The desire to write as many words as possible my primary driver. However, this year changed things for me. It became less about the word count, and more about the time spent writing. The goal of NaNo in so many ways is to give writers the opportunity to chase their dream of writing a novel. However, for me now, and for many others, it's about that habit. About putting my backside in the seat and writing. Not moving furniture, doing housework, checking Facebook, getting distracted by Netflix. It's about saying 'No, this is my writing time, and I'm using

it.' Every single day. What's more, it's been about taking what I learned at the conference this year and applying that to the National Novel Writing Month. Treating my writing as a 9-5 job. I've managed to average seven hours a day writing to date. My goal, by the end of November, is to actually have my backside in a seat and be writing, editing, re-writing, and researching in there too, every weekday. So that I'm achieving forty hours a week. If that doesn't move me closer to my dream of being a published romance author, then I don't know what will. For those of you who are doing NaNo for the first time this year, embrace it. Lose yourselves in your story. It's the best feeling in the world to complete a manuscript. Even if it's only first draft. Imagine what it's like to finish that final draft.

Strictly Romance: The creation of a no books barred reading group

Elizabeth Price



"I loved your quote in last month's issue by Ursula K. Le Guin:

"The unread story is not a story; it is little black marks on wood pulp. The reader reading it makes it

live; a live thing, a story."

The characters in my book 'Choices' are alive to me, I fell in love as Earth and Robin fell in love; I got a little hot under the collar (and other places) when I wrote the sexy bits. I agonised over Robin's ex-wife's unwanted pregnancy, Robin's confrontation with Abby's 'toy' made me laugh out loud.

Yes my story is a living thing to me, but as the above quote says, my unread story is just little black marks on wood pulp. *And so it is with every book ever published.*

Recently I overheard a conversation; two ladies in discussion about a reading group. One lady wanted to join, but it was full. Membership was by invitation only. To me, it sounded like she had a lucky escape. The books mentioned were dryer than dust and as much fun as sticking pins in your eyes. I had an epiphany! It took me years to build up the confidence in the company of the reading literati to admit my favourite read was a raunchy romp. What if other people felt the same? What if there were a whole host of people out there who'd never read a great romance other than the 'worthy classics'?

continued on page 10

continued from page 9

With tongue firmly in cheek, the invitation went out.

If you are not embarrassed to admit you enjoy reading a raunchy romance every now and again, you might be interested in a new group I am hoping to set up in the very near future.

'Strictly Romance' is the working title. From Jane Austen to E.L James, from Charlotte Bronte to Barbara Cartland, nothing will be deemed out of bounds. Please note, the bedroom door will be well and truly breached.

Why Romance...because it's pure escapism, it's uplifting and it's fun. Numbers will not be restricted, the more the merrier.

I'm not sure my message was absolutely clear (an email from Alfonso made me realise he was expecting a different group altogether.) But that aside, a great bunch of prolific readers turned up, some of whom had never picked up a romance in their lives.

As a lifelong romance reader and now a romance writer I've found great passion in promoting not just my book, but all works of romance. I'm particularly thrilled to be introducing 'romance' to book buying individuals who take their reading seriously and are willing to 'let their hair down.'

Yes the Strictly Romance reading group takes me away from my computer. My latest heroine Lily has been between the sheets so long I'm in danger of getting bed sores. But how great to create debate and discussion about excellent romance reads, how great to remind people that in romantic fiction there is something for everyone.



Born in Blackpool (UK) Elizabeth gave up her day job in 2005 to work and travel with her husband Andrew. They now divide their time between New Zealand, Cyprus and the UK. Writing has become an important part of her nomadic lifestyle. 'Choices' is Elizabeth's first novel in a series of three, exploring similar themes of life love and personal growth.



The Welcome Mat

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

Rachel Armstrong - QLD Australia

Elaine Casey - Wellington

Emma Cunningham (Emma Sea) - Palmerston North

Ayesha Davis - Auckland

Philippa Dobbs - Dunedin

Susan Holt - Wellington

Sara Dawn Johnson – Wellington

Cherelle Murphy - QLD Australia

Tracey Osborne - Wellington

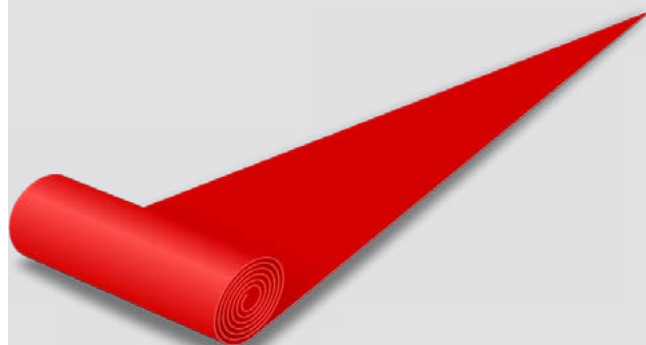
Clare Tanton - Hawkes Bay

Tong Wang - Auckland

You should already have your username and password for the RWNZ site. If not, give Andrene 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.



Nelson Romance Writers' Short Story Competition

Winning Stories

We hope you enjoy the Nelson Romance Writers' Short Story Competition Winning Entry in the Category of Unpublished Writers (18+) *'Frozen In Time'* by Louise Bramley. Louise is from Wairoa. Angela Bissell the final judge in the competition noted the story had: *"A lovely depiction of setting in the beginning which sets the scene for romance, and an equally lovely surprise twist later in the story."*

Frozen In Time

Louise Bramley



A lot has happened to me in 20 years. Lord knows I've changed from a skinny, bouncy 15 year old to a plump, tired Mum of two in what seems like a blink of an eye. But this part of the Lake? Well, it is frozen in time. The bush covered hills stretch as far as I can see, embracing the lake like a giant protector.

This time of year not a soul ventures out besides myself and I snuggle deeper into my jacket, loving the cold isolation of my surroundings. My "dragon's breath" hovers in front of me and I wonder if it will make its way over the glass water to join the mist lazily settling over the lake.

Lake Waikaremoana in the Urewera's has been a part of my life forever. Family holidays in both summer and winter dot my childhood and my children's. But for this vacation I have left my 8 year old twins, probably still sulking, at their grandparent's. I've come alone to keep a 20 year old promise. A promise I'm not sure he even remembers. But I remember very clearly.

It was a day just as cold and misty as this one. I'd taken my rod and sought solitude from my noisy family and over-heated, over-crowded cabin. I liked to pretend I was an expert fisherman and smiled smugly watching my fly dance over the crystal water. He'd startled me, bounding over the rocks with an ease that matched his grin. "You've got good form, for a girl," were his first words to me. I'd blushed, not at the back-handed compliment but because he was the cutest boy I'd ever seen.

I soon found out he was 16 and from Wellington, here on a winter holiday with his parents. From that point on any time we could get away from our families we spent it together. It was a brief but blissful week until I'd said a tearful goodbye to the boy who had fast become my first love. We must have known neither of us would be any good at writing or keeping in touch because a solemn

promise was wrought in that painful parting. I grimace now at the memory of that dramatic moment when we each made our pledge. 20 years from now, if we still felt the same, we would meet at this very spot on this very date. Why we decided 20 years I have no idea, I think perhaps it was simply the tragic romanticism of a teenage girl.

But here I stand, waiting. Feeling like an idiot but unable to stop myself from hoping. Ashamed to admit that all through several doomed relationships I never stopped thinking about my first love. I know it is ridiculous to expect him to remember a promise he made at 16, let alone keep it but it does not stop me from hoping.

I am just about to give up. He's not coming and I let out a misty sigh of disappointment. Then there he is. He stands on the rocks and gives me the same easy grin I remember. "You've got good form, for a girl," he says as he manoeuvres confidently over the rocks toward me.

My heart thumps in my chest and I grin back at him. "You've changed," I say. But he hasn't really. He still has the same thick brown hair and almond shaped green eyes although his face is more angled now, more mature of course and his body has filled out.

"You haven't," he lies and I am about to snort and tell him so but he looks so earnest I can't.

He reaches me. Almond eyes seem to drink me in and I feel like he knows me better than anyone on this planet. I feel 15 years old again. "You're taller," I tell him sounding breathless.

"You're prettier," he takes my hand.

"You're smoother," I giggle. He looks down at me and lets out a chuckle. And then we just stare, our eyes assessing the changes 20 years have wrought. I can't find any fault in that beloved face. Even the fine lines around his eyes and mouth simply belong there. I wonder how I look to him?

As if he reads my mind, he cups my cheek with his hand and I feel his warmth instantly, welcoming it. "It's true, you were pretty at 15 but now you're beautiful."

"I didn't think you'd remember," my voice comes out as a whisper.

"How could I forget my first love?"

continued on page 12

continued from page 11

Then I ask him the question I've been burning to ask. Surprisingly, I am no longer afraid of the answer because he is here. "Do you still feel the same?"

He takes both my hands in his and raises them to his lips in such a gallant gesture I have to smile. I look up at him and his eyes shine down at me. "I can honestly say that I don't."

I don't understand. I feel my face pucker into a frown. Why is he here if he doesn't feel the same?

And then he adds, "I love you more now than I ever could at 16."

I let out a breath and the vapour mingles with his. "No regrets?" I ask.

"Only that it took me 10 years to contact you," he replies. "But it was the smartest thing I've ever done, tracking you down 10 years ago and begging you to marry me."

"I never stopped thinking about you in those 10 years we were apart," I tell him but he knows that because I've told him a hundred times before. Just as I know he never stopped thinking of me. And here we stand today, 10 years of wonderful marriage under our belt and two beautiful children. "I wasn't sure you'd remember today."

"How could I forget? When I got home and found your note saying the kids were staying at your parents' but you never said where you were, well, I guessed you'd remembered too." He holds me in his arms, warming me with this body heat and his words.

I snuggle deeper into his chest and my voice comes out muffled. "Who would have thought that a teenage holiday romance could last decades?"

"I knew 20 years ago today when I first laid eyes on you," he tells me with a cocky grin. Then he kisses me. His familiar lips touch mine almost reverently but I deepen the kiss and pretty soon my heart is beating fast and I'm breathless again.

I break the kiss and look up at him with what I hope is a sexy smile. "No kids and a warm cabin all to ourselves. What say we get re-acquainted?"

He grins back at me because by now we know each other's bodies so well, there is no need to re-acquaint anything. "Good idea, it seems forever since I saw you naked." He's lying of course - it was only last night. But I'm certainly not complaining.

We take one last look at the mist-covered lake and turn toward our future.

THE END

From The President

I hope 2017 has been productive for you, and that you've had fun with your writing. Because that's what we have to remember, we write for the joy of it; *tee-hee*, mostly!

The beginning of December finds me in Auckland meeting NY Times bestselling author, Jayne Ann Krentz, and recording our first webinar. We have Elizabeth Hoyt booked in for the second webinar in February; her topic is one that I still constantly have to stay focused on — emotion. Readers want to feel it in every word.

It's Just Emotion

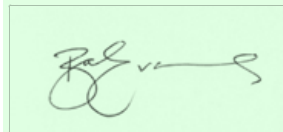
Emotional depth is the key to an unforgettable romance. Learn how to set up characters and plotlines to create scenes with maximum emotional impact and make your romance stand out from the pack.

The Executive are looking forward to bringing you more webinars from overseas speakers and also from within our member authors in 2018. If you have an idea for a webinar you could give to the membership, please drop me an email, president@romancewriters.co.nz. You will be paid for your time. The ZOOM licenses we have paid for have no limits on how often we can run a webinar and we have plenty of budget set aside.

Before the end of the year, I will be putting a call out for a 2019 conference committee. RWAustralia are well on the way to planning 2019 and already have a fabulous speaker if we want to share. I have not committed us yet as it's the fun of those stepping up to run the conference that they get to choose the speakers. If we have no volunteers there will be no 2019 conference, so if you'd like to run a conference or talk to me about it, let me know.

Finally, I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. I'm looking forward to sharing our writing journeys in 2018. See you in February.

Happy writing.



Bronwen Evans
RWNZ President



Get To Know Our Authors



Joanne Dannon
www.joannedannon.com

Joanne Dannon, an Australian author, writes to give her readers the experience she loves to savour--indulging in a sigh-worthy-happily-ever-after, being swept away from the everyday by diving into a delicious romance novel. She can be found on social media chatting about reading, writing, cooking, vintage-inspired dresses and all things romantic.

Sara Kingsley
www.sarakingsley.com

Sara Kingsley was born in Seattle, USA but now calls Wellington home. She lives on a sailboat with her husband, two daughters and a cat named Mouse. The first book in her young adult fantasy romance trilogy, *Fortissima* – The Woman King Book 1, was released August 2017, with the second book, *Bravura*, to release February 2018.



Steffanie Holmes
www.steffanieholmes.com

Steffanie Holmes is a USA Today bestselling author of dark and steamy paranormal romance. Her books feature clever, witty heroines, wild shifters, cunning witches and alpha males who get what they want. She lives on a lifestyle block in South Head with her husband and a horde of cantankerous cats.

Leanne Pearson

Leanne Pearson recently relocated from rural Rotorua to bustling Auckland with her husband and two boys. Leanne had a flair for creative writing from a very young age and some of her short stories were published in school magazines. A human interest feature article she penned was published in the newspaper before she embarked on her self publishing journey.



Peter King
<http://www.changels.info>

Confronted with his own kids' ignorance, journalist Peter King started out to write a mind expanding sci fi adventure for young adults to explain the harsh realities of the global refugee crisis. Some 660K words later he discovered RWNZ and his own ignorance about global publishing, and its harsh realities.

To be featured on this free page, please email **EITHER** one cover **OR** three, **PLUS** bio, **PLUS** buy links to: heart2hearteditor@romancewriters.co.nz by the 20th of the month deadline.

What To Do With Your Baby: Traditional Or Self-Publishing?

Ann Neville



Letting go of your baby is the hardest part of writing a book. Authors now have a choice as to how they publish and get their books into the hands of readers. I have done both and, of course, you don't have to choose between

them either. Many authors are now hybrids, using both forms of publishing for different projects. This article aims to compare the two main publishing options so you know you are doing the best for the birth of your miracle.

Traditional or Self-Publishing?

Pros of traditional publishing:

- Prestige, kudos and validation.
- Print distribution in bookstores is easier.
- An established professional team is provided: editors, cover designers, formatters, marketers, promoters.
- There are no upfront financial costs. (NEVER pay to have your book published – there would then be no incentive for the 'publisher' to sell your book.)
- Literary prizes and critical acclaim are more likely. Many literary prizes aren't even open to self-published authors.
- The author is taken more seriously by stores, by some readers, and by the media.
- Potential to become a brand-name author. Well, you never know!

Cons of traditional publishing:

- It is usually a slower process.
- Loss of creative control of your precious baby (though some publishers involve the author in all decisions).
- Lower royalty rates.
- You still have to be involved with marketing.

Pros of self-publishing:

- Total creative control over content and design.
- Faster time to market.
- Higher royalties.
- Opportunity to sell by any means in any global market, as you retain the rights.
- Use it to get into 'the game'.

Cons of self-publishing:

- You need to do it all yourself, or find suitable professionals to help. Obviously, you still have to do the writing and marketing, but you also have to do the publishing - find an editor and a cover designer to work with, decide on the title, get your work formatted into ebook, print and any other format you want, and find suitable professionals to help. This isn't such a big deal but, for some people, this is a negative because they just don't have the time to do everything, or they don't enjoy doing it, or they'd rather be writing/sipping champagne at the beach...
- There's no prestige, kudos or validation by the industry.
- You need a budget upfront if you want a professional result. You will need to pay to get your book assessed, edited, illustrated, designed, promoted, reviewed, and distributed – maybe not all of these but at least some.
- It's difficult to get print distribution in bookstores.
- Many literary prizes don't accept self-published books, and some mainstream media literary critics won't review them. Grrrr!

While not everyone is accepted for traditional publication, there are exciting options in our digital world today for writers who want to see their work as e-books and/or print books. Anyone can create a book. BUT, not everyone can create a quality book, or even a good read. For most of us that requires professional help from an assessor, an editor, a proof-reader and, probably, a designer. So, yes, anyone with the means to handle or pay for the many tasks necessary can create a quality book. Don't sell yourself short by skipping the processes.

Remember, a publisher is investing in you as a writer by providing (and paying for) professional editing, design, copyediting/proofreading, preparation for different formats, publicity and marketing. They also put their own credibility and good will on the line when adding an author to their list. Having said all that, being published by a traditional house is no guarantee of major media coverage, great sales or a perfectly satisfying experience either!

Would I take a traditional publishing deal? Absolutely - for the right project and for the right terms and conditions.

Would I self-publish? Definitely – I'm not spending all that time writing the monster for it to languish in the back of the wardrobe! But I would have my baby assessed and edited before publishing. And I'd try for a traditional publishing deal first.

Ann, in previous lives, has been a nurse and a secondary school teacher in New Zealand and the UK. She has produced a number of resources for the education sector, including Anti-Bullying Guides for teachers, parents and children. Her fiction book 'Batjack', for 9 to 13 year olds, was shortlisted for the Tom Fitzgibbon Award in 2011, and 'Suspicion', a young adult novel, was released in 2017.

Create Books

Ann Neville (see article above) is the Managing Director of the boutique publishing company, CreateBooks. CreateBooks is a boutique publishing company specialising in award-winning books for children, young adults and education purposes. All books published by Create Books emphasise its philosophy of respect for self, others, property and the environment.

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- Biography Services
- Writing Workshops for Adults
- Writer in Schools Programme
- Workshops for children on writing and illustrating a book

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“The greatest feminists have also been the greatest lovers. I’m thinking not only of Mary Wollstonecraft and her daughter Mary Shelley, but of Anais Nin, Edna St. Vincent Millay, and of course Sappho. You cannot divide creative juices from human juices. And as long as juicy women are equated with bad women, we will err on the side of being bad.”

- Erica Jong



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Heart To Heart Christmas

Theme Scene Challenge

Who doesn't like the beginning of a good story? Add a little Christmas magic to it and we are on our way! This season we challenged our members to enter into a 300 word Christmas pitch challenge. The premise being that you pitch a Christmas story to inspire. The only problem is, now that we've read these teasers we have to wait for our competitors to hopefully write the book to go along with it! Congratulations to Kris Pearson and Nicole Bishop our Christmas Speed Challenge WINNERS. A Christmas stocking is coming your way! (Note the titles were not supplied by the authors. I simply couldn't resist!) Merry Christmas – Megan.

A Chocolate Covered Christmas Fairy Kris Pearson



Laura smacked the roof of her poor old Mini and tried not to cry. Home was only forty kilometres away, but she was stuck on this stifling country road with oil leaking from the sump after hitting a rock that had bowled down a cliff-face like the wrath of God.

No cell coverage. No air-con. "Merry Christmas," she muttered to break the humming silence. "Just what you were hoping for – some peace and quiet."

She left the Mini's doors open to let any possible breeze blow through and remembered the chocolate. It would run out of its wrappers in this heat. Grabbing the rug from the back seat, she took the soggy packs across the road to a patch of shade, hoping that sooner or later someone would happen by.

* * *

"Hello? Are you okay?"

Laura lurched awake. A tall silhouette stood against the lowering sun.

"I feel sick," she groaned, trying to hide the chocolate wrappers under the rug.

He laughed. "I'm not surprised if you ate all of that."

"There was nothing else."

"Hmmm - have you been drinking?"

"What? No – I must have dozed off because of the heat."

He squatted, bringing his alert brown eyes much closer to the level of hers. "I meant water."

Laura shook her head and then wished she hadn't. "I finished it. Home's only half an hour away."

"Dan," he said, thrusting out a big hand for her to shake.

"Mine's only five minutes away. There's cold water, a landline and a bed for the night if you need it."

She stared at him and swallowed. She couldn't possibly. "Mum'll look after you," he added. "In case you were thinking I was hoping to." He tilted his head and grinned. Stood, and effortlessly pulled her up. "Come on, Christmas fairy."

Kris Pearson is a life-long writer, a keen gardener, an advertising copywriter, a decor specialist, and a prolific author of contemporary New Zealand Romance. You can find out more about her and her work at www.krispearson.com.

* * *

Love On A London Street Nicole Bishop

Julie walked along the icy London street carrying plastic bags with her dinner and a decent bottle of Bordeaux. Christmas dinner for one.

"Millions of people are alone on Christmas," she muttered. "It's fine." Her parents in Auckland had gone to the beach after Christmas lunch. Julie lacked the money this year to return home.

She flicked on Spotify Christmas songs on her phone and trudged along the street. Passing the local pub, the Royal Oak, she smiled absently at a good looking man in a wool coat who walked to her tube station every morning.

"Merry Christmas," she said. Forgetting to focus on the street, she slipped on a patch of ice and landed on her tailbone. Her bags dropped. The food bounced but the bottle smashed. Julie blinked back tears. Could this day get worse?

"Can I help?" The man in the wool coat reached for her elbow.

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"I can't believe this. That was a nice wine." They both looked at the red stain on the pavement. She swept the glass mess into the plastic bag.

His smile warmed his light brown eyes. "I've seen you walking to work. I'm Rob." He glanced at her other bag, the dinner for one clearly visible. "It's more the merrier at my sister's house at Christmas. Would you like to come?" She frowned, uncertain.

"I'm a complete stranger."

"Full confession, I had a date to bring until she left me two days ago. You could be my date and save me from awkward questions."

"I don't know you."

"I'll say we've just had one date." It was hard to resist his uncertain smile.

"Um, maybe?" He looked at the pub. "We could have that date now. Care for a drink?"

She smiled. "Why not?"

Nicole Bishop is a writer based in Auckland. In her spare time, she tutors English, looks after her two teenage daughters and walks on the local beaches every day with her Labrador. For more information, visit Nicole on her website: <http://nicolebishopauthor.com/>

The Bookshelf



Blueprint Your Bestseller Stuart Horwitz

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B00AR2RZFE/>

Blueprint Your Bestseller introduces the Book Architecture Method, a tested sequence of steps for organizing and revising any manuscript. By breaking a manuscript into manageable scenes, you can determine what is going on in your writing at the structural level—and uncover the underlying flaws and strengths of your narrative.



Damn Fine Story Chuck Wendig

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B075FXP591/>

What do Luke Skywalker, John McClane, and a lonely dog on Ho'okipa Beach have in common? Simply put, we care about them. Great storytelling is making readers care about your characters, the choices they make, and what happens to them. It's making your audience feel the tension and emotion of a situation right alongside your protagonist. And to tell a damn fine story, you need to understand why and how that caring happens.



Violence: A Writer's Guide Rory Miller

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B00CWGH46I/>

"Novelists need to be experts on storytelling. For everything else, we need to fake it convincingly. If you want to become a real expert on violence, you can spend years in a dojo, and in a jail, and on the street, and in Iraq, and in conferences and libraries analyzing your real-world experiences. Or you can borrow the expertise of someone who's done all that. Clear, concise, invaluable. Sgt. Rory Miller has written the best book on violence I've read." ~NYT Best-selling author Brent Weeks



How To Write Pulp Fiction James Scott Bell

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0771SP274/>

Type Hard. Type Fast. Make Dough. That was the formula of old-school pulp fiction—plot-driven, popular and gobbled up by a reading public hungry for more. And it produced many writers who hammered out a living selling "cash-and-carry" stories and novels.

Regional Round-Up Reports

Auckland

Convenor: Pamela Gervai
(pamelagervai.com)

As usual we had a wonderful meeting in spite of the inclement weather - and some of our regular attendees sick with a nasty tummy bug. Twenty-one attended. Jackie Ashenden www.jackieashenden.com was our speaker and her information on the book publishing market was extremely useful. Other published authors present were able to add useful information as well and much discussion was engendered.

This was our last formal meeting for the year. We can now look forward to our end of year party from midday on 9 December. This will be at Julie McKechnie's home which is at 60 Robinson Rd, Coatesville. Please bring a lunch plate and a drink to share. Also bring a wrapped surprise gift (spend no more than \$15) so everyone can go home with something to put under their tree. Some people have already kindly donated raffle prizes so remember to bring some change for the raffle tickets and if you have a prize to donate, please bring that too.

We already have a great line up of speakers for next year. I will send out the list of speakers and topics for next year after the party.

Hawkes Bay

Convenor: Kendra Delugar
(kendraonthemove@hotmail.com)

Our November meeting was held at Jackie's and we got to welcome a brand new member, Clare Tanton. We spoke about what we were all up to, the changes that seemed to be taking place in the market and the publishing houses in the US, we had a quick chat about the upcoming NZ Book Fair, and we spoke about the shift by many to Women's Fiction.

Our Christmas meeting will be held on the 3rd of December at Bronwen's, it will be a pot-luck shared lunch, and we'll each be bringing our goals for 2018.

Wellington/Kapiti Coast

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

Wow – a really big meeting! Fourteen of us gathered in Holly's lovely sitting room in Island Bay and talked our heads off. Kris passed around sheets with a brief goal/motivation/conflict exercise and everyone took a turn at describing their current WIP in those terms. Some light-bulbs definitely went on.

Peter talked about the progress of his LITKIWIS marketing app, and promised us an on-screen demo at our

Christmas lunch.

Jane led a Round Robin to get our imaginations going – with fairly hilarious results.

Our Christmas meeting will be an hour earlier and a week and a day later – i.e around noon on Sunday December 10th. Venue: Giovanna's home, 61 Marine Parade, Paraparaumu. Email will be sent so we can co-ordinate food. We'll talk about how we can help each other promote, and find out more about Peter's app.

Nelson

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

At our November meeting, we started with a creative writing exercise that Annika had learnt at a Writers Retreat. The participants wrote about their first love affair for 10 mins, during which Annika told them to add one word every so often. The words can be anything, like a colour, a fruit, a river, a street, etc. It was amazing to see how the story changed by the added words.

After that, we were busy making paper hearts with quotes about Love written on them. They are now folded and put into a basket to be under our Christmas Tree in the Cathedral. Visitors are invited to open a heart and read the message. All according to our theme this year – Open Your Heart. A chocolate banana-cake went down a treat.

We will have our Xmas Lunch at the Grape Escape on Saturday 9 December. There will be a 'Secret Santa'. After that, we will have a well-deserved break over summer and reunite in February 2018. Until then, we wish all the wonderful romance writers in RWNZ a very Merry, Relaxing and why not Romantic Holiday Season!

Christchurch

Convenor: Jane Madison-Jones
(maddiejane@xtra.co.nz)

A group of nine local writers met for our monthly catch up. Several of the group are participating in NaNoWriMo, making good gains on those word counts with still half the month to go. Others are preparing manuscripts to enter the Pacific Hearts contest in March.

We are undertaking review of the group and what we want to get from our monthly sessions in 2018, so expect a short survey heading your way.

There is no December meeting at the library, but we are meeting on Tuesday 12th December for our Christmas meal, venue to be confirmed—all welcome. Merry Christmas and Happy romance writing in the New Year!