

## How to be Hooky

Rosalind James



**Hookiness. It's what a good book is all about, really. When I look at the books I really enjoy, that I burn through, they're (a) pulling me in and (b) pulling me on. But how do you do that? How do you grab a reader? How do you KEEP the reader? How do you entertain a reader enough that she will go on to read the next book? How do you (I) consciously do those things better?**

A while back, I was writing a book, *FIERCE* (Not Quite a Billionaire) that was quite different for me. *KU2* had also just begun, paying authors for the first time by pages read. That meant you wanted, more than ever, to have people finish the book. I wrote that book thinking hard with every chapter about pulling the reader along. About making them want to turn the page. Here were some things I thought about:

Start strong. Chapter One really matters! Even though not all my books have lots of "action," I start most of the New Zealand ones, especially, with a more gripping scene. Since the book is called "Escape to New Zealand," that chapter is usually what the person is escaping from. Something pretty important should be happening in Chapter One. The reader has to be engaged from Page One.

Here's the first line of *FIERCE*:

*Have you ever noticed how, when you're around certain people, you seem to grow an extra thumb, and not in a good way?*

That hooks the reader, because she's immediately relating it to her personal experience (I hope). It also establishes the conversational, almost confessional tone of the book. *FIERCE* was my first book written in first person, and I wanted it to feel like your entertaining friend was telling

you a story about this guy she just met—the kind of story where you can't wait to hear what happened next.

My first book ever, *JUST THIS ONCE* (Escape to New Zealand), starts out,

*Wow. Welcome to New Zealand.*

And then the heroine almost dies. I honestly think that first chapter is what made my career. You want to say, "BOOM. Here is the book."

Last lines of chapters. Every chapter is a cliffhanger, even if it doesn't end with action or whatever. There need to be questions asked to which the reader wants an answer. In the case of *FIERCE*, it was mostly, "What will Hemi (or Hope) do NOW?" I realized that I always spend a lot of time on the endings of my chapters, trying to pull the reader along in the story.

Here are some last lines of chapters from *FIERCE*:

*So, yes, you could say I was at a low point that day I met Hemi Te Mana. But it wasn't as low as I'd go.*

*Nobody should be treating her like that. Nobody should be doing anything to her. Nobody but me.*

*"Be ready," he said softly. And he left.*

I pay attention to this on the paragraph level as well. If there's a new thought, a leap—that happens at the beginning of the next paragraph. If there's something the hero or heroine is going to find out, I don't telegraph it.

Story arc. This seems simple, but you really have to be building to something. It does NOT always have to be conflict. One of my best-reviewed books, *JUST FOR FUN*, has almost no conflict in the whole second half between the hero and heroine, but it has plenty of drama. When I first wrote it, though, it didn't have enough of a climax/resolution. My best friend said, "Something else has to happen." I called another friend and wailed, "But the whole POINT is that she trusts him! She isn't going to do one of those 'misunderstanding-run-off-things!'" She suggested something with their son that she'd wondered about—whether he wouldn't react strongly to the thing that had happened. BOOM. In another hour, I'd written three chapters of nail-biting tension, then resolution and weepfest, that totally worked and drove the story to the finish line.

Which brings us to . . .

Pacing. It's about waves. I shift mood a lot within the book. That's partly because romance is all about eliciting emotion. I want to make the reader laugh, cry, think, steam up, be scared, be excited, and sigh. So—different chapters will do different things. I actually think of my pacing sort of like waves. If I were to draw a diagram, the mood would go gradually up in a series of smaller waves, gradually increasing. The peaks of the waves aren't just sex (which for me happens about 40-65% through the book)—they're





also action, danger, or just strong emotion. But I want to have quiet, sweet, and funny times in between those. In JUST STOP ME, there's a really sexy chapter followed by a funny chapter where the hero messes up. Then a sexier chapter. I think the "rest periods" actually help intensify the stronger emotion periods—keep the reader from getting numb by it being all nonstop action. I don't like that Disney-movie thing where it's just racing, racing, racing—you know, when Cruella's chasing the dalmatians around all the corners until her car goes off the cliff.

The waves build to up to a great big wave at the end, and a fall down to a sweet, satisfying wrapup. The last 20% or so of the book should be building, building, building, with the reader pressing the "next" button on the Kindle pretty frantically and staying up late to finish. At least that's the goal! But again—not all the same emotion. I want there to be a buildup of suspense if it's suspense, then that climactic scary/action thing, then a big, sweet emotional scene, then a wrapup, then another sweet emotional scene. Suspense, fear, tears, satisfying tie-up-in-bow, tears, The End.

But that'll be different for different genres, of course. Just one example of how suspense might look. Like a conductor, like a piece of music. Building, building, building. The climax. And then the tailing off, the sweet finish.

Oh, and . . .

Take out the boring stuff. If nothing really important is happening in the scene, it probably doesn't need to be in the book. If there are lines or emotions or information that are necessary, maybe they can go at the beginning of the next chapter or something. [Of course, people who don't like your book will always say it is "boring." My most common negative review is "slow and boring." (Well, that and "too much sex.") But lots of times, you can spot your boring passages/chapters and remove them.]

BUT—it's personal. Your personal voice and style. That thing that turns some people off, but what turns others ON. That first group? They're not your reader. You're writing for yourself, and your reader. My books don't gallop along at breakneck speed, nope. Because if I'm going to read about two people falling in love, I want to SEE them falling in love. And that means, yep, talking, not just thinking, "He's so hawt." I'm pretty darned leisurely for a romance author—but I try to make sure every scene is moving the story along.

When I say "boring," I mean this. Originally, in JUST STOP ME, I wrote this whole thing showing what the Iain's house/neighborhood was like, where the beach was, how you got to the grocery store, etc. Editing the book, I thought, "Gah. Rosalind. Who CARES?" I could show the reader how you got to the beach when the bad guy was chasing Nina there. A little more interesting in that context!

Instead, I put Iain and Nina in the grocery store already having their intense conversation while Iain stares at the pink lamingtons (squishy coconut thingies . . . never mind). Take out whatever you realize your story doesn't need. Whatever isn't advancing character or plot or story. Which YOU will be able to determine for your own story.

And finally . . .

End strong. The ending sells the next book. Think back

to some books with "blah" endings. Even if the rest of the book is good, it doesn't make you want to buy the next book. For me: I want readers to cry! In romance, you want a happy sigh at the end, that lingering feel-good hum that makes the world look a little brighter.

Another common criticism I've had is that my endings are "rushed." I write terrific epilogues if I do say so myself, but I've been told that my final action scenes could allow more time for savoring. My loyal readers have also mentioned that they want it ALL. They WANT the proposal. They want the wedding. They want the dress. They want the ring. That's what they're reading for, and dammit, they WANT it. So in this latest book, NO KIND OF HERO (which by the way, yep, is done and ready to release!), I gave them the works. That doesn't mean everything wraps up in a perfect bow. Not every conflict will be solved. You will feel sad for one character (if you don't, I haven't done my job). But that is life too.

For a thriller, you want a nice solid recap that reminds you that Good won. I swear, one my favorite parts of the Lord of the Rings trilogy is the epilogue, where you find out who married whom, that Sam is with Rosie and they have a daughter. Where you get to savor that it worked out, and you get to linger in the book a little longer before you say goodbye. If it's good, you don't want it to be over. Not quite yet.

Those are my tips. What are yours?



#### KIWI RULES

*Afghanistan hadn't quite killed me. Karen Sinclair just might.*

*You don't find many too-pretty rich boys in the New Zealand Defense Force. Turns out there's a reason for that. Fortunately, you can find your true self in the oddest places. Of course, you can lose yourself in those places, too—at least some pieces of you.*

*Since I was back home with a new leg, some facial alterations, and time on my hands, I might as well help out my sister. Showing a potential buyer around some of New Zealand's quirkier ecotourism sites, having a few adrenaline-fueled adventures? Fine. It wasn't like I'd never been camping, unlike the walking tornado that was Miss Karen Sinclair. Unfortunately, Karen had never heard of the phrase, "Let me get that," let alone, "We don't have time." She'd definitely never heard, "There's no more room in the car."*

*And then there was the sexual frustration.*

Buy *Kiwi Rules* [here](#)

*I met my husband Rick at UC Berkeley when I was 21, so I really do believe in True Love and Happily Ever After—which helps a lot in writing about them! We renewed our vows a few years ago with the help of our two grown sons. Our home base when we're not having our own adventures is in Berkeley, California, where the summers are foggy and the food shopping is the greatest.*

*My husband's job as an engineer, and mine as a marketing consultant, have given us the opportunity to live in many different wonderful places in the U.S., Australia, and New Zealand. During the latest stint, 15 months living and working in Auckland, I fell in love with New Zealand: the beauty and diversity of the landscape (not to mention the seascapes), the Maori culture and its integration into the country's life, and, perhaps more than anything, the people: modest, good-humored, unfailingly polite and hospitable, and so very funny. I wanted to share what I loved so much about the country with everyone I knew—and didn't know!*

# Authors, Here are 20 ideas for promoting your backlist.

Steff Green



**When I speak to writing groups about what it takes to become a full-time indie author, I like to give this number. “All it takes is selling 1000 books a month at \$3.99 to make an average NZ wage.” It’s that easy, and that difficult.**

If you’ve got 1 book out, selling 1000 copies every month is going to be really hard. But what if you’ve got 5 books out? Or 10? Or 30? Suddenly, that number stops sounding preposterous. Everything gets easier once you build a backlist.

For most indie authors, including myself, backlist forms a significant percentage of our income. I consider backlist to be any books that aren’t part of the series I’m currently working on. As soon as a series is finished and I release book 1 of something new, that previous series becomes part of the backlist.

Other authors consider backlist to be anything outside the 90-day cliff (the 90 days following publication on Amazon, when the algorithms stop giving you so much love). This might be useful to you if you only have one long-running series.

In 2018, my backlist sales were around 60% of my total book royalties. My backlist is wide, with thirteen Steffanie Holmes books, 3 box sets, and 4 S C Green books published on Amazon, Kobo, iTunes, B&N, and Google Play. Some of those books earned ... not a lot. Witch Hunter netted \$106.65 on Amazon for the entire year. But with so many backlist books, it all adds up.

You’re not screwed just because a book doesn’t earn \$10k in its first month. I don’t think I’ve had a single title that’s done that. You’ve put the work in to create those books, so you might as well squeeze as much profit from them as possible. Ebooks are forever – they don’t go out of print.

As long as you continue to release great books and promote your backlist, you’ll eventually hit an income number that’s good enough for you to quit your day job.

Here are some ideas and techniques I use to get you

thinking about promoting your backlist.

1. Create a backlist that funnels readers through your catalogue. By that I mean, think carefully about the branding of your author name and the way you do series. Readers are series-loyal first, genre-loyal second, author-loyal third. By creating huge, interconnected worlds and linking your series, and by writing tightly-branded books in the same genre, you make it much easier for readers to stick with your work.

Also, the longer your series, the more you can afford to spend advertising book one (as you’ll make that money back in sell-through).

2. Promo a backlist title once a month if possible. Throw \$100 at sticking it into a newsletter. Use your KU free days or stick it on sale for \$0.99. Drop it into a Kobo promotion if it’s wide. Run some FB or Bookbub ads. Try and do one activity every month to stimulate backlist sales.

3. Rebrand old work. When cover trends change or you want to try a new blurb style, rebrand a series and use advertising (FB ads, AMS ads, newsletters) to push it to a new audience. You don’t need to tell your current readers every time you get new covers – focus on using each rebranding to reach new readers.

4. Bundle backlist titles into box sets. Experiment with different box set sizes and lengths. You can bundle the first three books in a series, all books in a series, even a “series starter” set of the book 1s in all your different series. Try releasing limited-edition box sets – I do one in December every year, which is a combo of 10+ books with bonus content. It comes down January 1st.

5. If you’re running constant series 1 ads, give them a rejiggle every month or so. Stop the ads, tweak the audiences, refresh the copy, etc. This helps them to constantly find new people. There’s some evidence out there that CPC ads like AMS or Facebook go “stale” after a few weeks.

6. Apply for Bookbub Featured Deals. Always. I pretty much always have a book either being considered by them, in line for an ad, or I’m waiting for the 30 days post-ad to run so I can submit again. They aren’t as effective as they used to be, but for stimulating backlist sales they’re still hard to beat.

7. Got a FB reader group? Most authors focus all their conversation/promo in their reader groups on their current series. Remember that as more people join your group they probably haven’t read all your books, so try to introduce them to your other worlds and characters with fun snippets and games. (Here’s my reader group if you’re not a member – Books that Bite).

8. Ditto for your newsletter. If you don’t have a new release to send out one month, then let your subscribers know a backlist title is on sale. You’ll be surprised how many newsletter subscribers won’t have read all your books.

9. If you run an automation sequence for new subscribers, add emails talking about your different series and directing readers to the book 1s. Many of your readers won’t have read your other series, so give them a chance to rectify that!

10. Do you have a series that doesn’t sell as well as others, and you think it has a weak book? Consider a rewrite.





The first three books in my Crookshollow Gothic Romance series (Art of Cunning, Art of the Hunt, Art of Temptation) were the first romance books I ever wrote. They had flaws. Sooooo many flaws.

In 2016 I rewrote them, adding 15-20,000 words per book, including the hero's POV, and just making the quality higher. It took me about a month to do all three, and it was worth it, as those are the lead-in to my longest series and biggest world.

11. Set up the backmatter in your books to push readers to buy the next book. I include the buy-now link underneath THE END – not on the next page. I always include an excerpt of the next book in the series or book 1 in a backlist series.

12. On your website, create a “series order” page. List all of your books in their series with their buy links, as well as notes about what each series includes and which series readers should try next if they enjoyed that one. Here's my series order page. This is insanely useful and I link to it ALL THE DAMN TIME.

13. Release a novella, short story, or free short in that series world. This will often bump sales of the series, especially among your current readers. I particularly like writing alternative scenes (usually a favourite sex scene or emotional scene from a book, from the opposite character's POV) as half the work has already been done, and readers LOVE LOVE LOVE 'em.

14. If you're wide, throw a backlist series into KU for 90 days as an experiment. If you're in KU, take a backlist series wide.

15. Publish a backlist tie-in book/novella into a box set. Readers of the box set who want to know more about the characters/world will be funnelled into your old series.

16. Try not to get distracted by the shinies. By this I mean, try not to release book 1 of 5 different series and never get around to finishing them. When you do this, you lose the momentum that could see one of those series take off. Your backlist will be most effective if it contains series of 3+ books (5+ is even better), so try to focus on getting to that place first.

17. Consider other markets. Look for other ways to earn money from your backlist, such as releasing the books in audio, or selling subsidiary rights to a foreign publisher (especially if a series has done well in a particular foreign market). Depending on the type of books you write, you may be able to excerpt certain chapters to sell to publications, offer a publisher the right to serialise your work, create a graphic novel or play, or find other creative ways to re-package the content.

18. Hook into current events and trending topics. If you have a backlist book or series that touches on a topical subject, now's a good time to get the word out. You might like to consider writing some pieces for the media or offering yourself as an expert.

19. Try a podcast. Many authors are using podcasts to reach their audience. You could start your own or reach out to another podcast about your backlist books.

20. Write the next book! The only way to consistently improve your income and your backlist sales is to bring in new readers, and the best way to get those readers is

with a new release! The more you put out new material, the more your backlist will thrive.

Although I spend most of my time writing my next book, I'm always thinking about how to promote and improve the books I've already written. Don't neglect your backlist, because even the worst performing books can continue to bring in new income and readers.

What ideas do you have for promoting your backlist titles?



## SHUNNED

*The fire took everything.*

*My parents. My best friend. My life.*

*Now I have a second chance.*

*I only have to endure one year at this prestigious academy for rich snobs.*

*One year of being the charity case no one wanted.*

*One year of taunts and insults and bullying. Then I'm free.*

*But I didn't count on Trey, Ayaz, and Quinn.*

*Arrogant, privileged, dangerous.*

*Drop-dead fucking gorgeous.*

*They want me gone.*

*They want me to suffer.*

*They're determined to make my nightmares real.*

*Tough luck, bully boys – I won't hide away.*

*I'm not afraid.*

*But maybe... I should be.*

*HP Lovecraft meets Cruel Intentions in book 1 of this dark paranormal reverse harem bully romance. Warning: Not for the faint of heart – this story of three broken bad boys and the girl who stood her ground contains dark themes, crazed cultists, books bound in human skin, high-school drama, swoon-worthy sex, and potential triggers.*

Buy Shunned [here](#)



Under her pen name Steffanie Holmes, [Steff Green](#) is a USA Today bestselling author of the paranormal, gothic, dark, and fantastical. Steff received the 2017 Attitude Award for Artistic Achievement and is a finalist for a 2018 Women of Influence award. Her books are enjoyed by thousands of readers all over the world. When she's not hiking or front row at a heavy metal concert, you'll find Steff writing from her off-grid rural home, surrounded by her cantankerous drummer husband, horde of cats, and their medieval sword collection.

# Backup and sync options for your files

Fred Alvrez



**We've all either been directly impacted by a computer crash (and a loss of your files), or know someone who has gone through the pain of losing everything.**

With the internet and free cloud back-ups, there is no longer ANY excuse for this to happen. We can all be protected from any sort of computer disaster, such as;

- Theft of your computer
- Hard disk crash
- Computer crash
- Corrupted files

You might see I've separated a hard disk crash and computer crash. That's because if your computer crashes and not your hard disk, there's still a good chance you (or a computer tech) can get your files back. If your hard disk crashes, well, break out a bottle of wine. Maybe even two bottles. It's all over.

Again, there's no excuse for this. We are writers, and more than likely you write using your computer; you shouldn't be disadvantaged because your computer has been stolen, crashed, or you've simply bought a new one.

## TWO METHODS

There's two different things when it comes to backups and sync, and they are: backups, and sync

Backups are when you save your files to a portable hard disk, or even better a cloud option like Google Drive. The thing with backing up your files to a 'thumb' drive or portable hard drive, is that if that gets stolen too, you are no better off. These days, backups are used more for corporates to be able to recover files.

For what you do (write), syncing is a better option. While a backup is just that, a file sync means that you are working on a document on your PC, and every now and then it syncs this file to another location (generally the 'cloud' – somewhere on the internet) so you are protected. A copy of your file is always held securely in some remote location.

## FILE SYNC IS DA BOMB

So we are going to focus on file syncing for this article. The beauty of a file sync system – no matter which one you use – should mean that, say you move to a new laptop, you simply download whatever sync tool you might be using, log into it, and it starts downloading all your files. It's really that simple.

There are two other benefits; firstly, you are editing that WIP using a file that saved on your hard disk, so you have a speed advantage over working on a file that's online. Secondly, since you are working 'locally' on your file, you don't need internet access. I know you arty types – you still like to go off the grid now and then to get rid of those tempting distractions (I'm looking at you, Facebook).

Other benefits? Let's say you haven't got your own laptop – you might be at a friend's place, and you need to do some urgent work on that WIP since you've had a burst of inspiration. Simply log into your cloud provider (e.g. Google Drive, Hotmail, DropBox, etc.), find your file and start working on it. Too easy.

But wait, there's more! With most cloud providers like Dropbox or Google Drive, you have file 'versioning', so you can easily switch back to an older version of a file, if you stuff something up. There are some caveats around this, but it's there.

## MAKE THE FIRST STEP

Let's say you already have a Gmail account; this means you also already have a free 'Google Drive' account, where you can save your files. You may not even know about it, or may know about it but too scared/don't know enough to use it. Don't worry, I'm here to hold your hand through this.

First up, you need to download the Google Drive Sync tool; the safest way to find this is to log into your Gmail account using Chrome or whatever web browser you use, click on the 'waffle' on the top-right (it looks like a waffle, funnily enough), and then click on Drive. This will open your Google Drive. Click on the 'cog' on the top-right (it looks like a cog) and then click on Get backup and sync for Windows. Download this program, install it and then start dropping your files into it. If you get stuck, go to Youtube and watch some videos there.

So that's the process for a Google Drive, if you use Hotmail or Outlook mail, you can use a OneDrive account for free. You also get a OneDrive account with Windows, so you can use that if you want too – again, for free.

DropBox has been around for a very long time, and some people have a preference for this product. Hey, whatever works – all I want you to do is get those files syncing to the internet, so you are safe from a computer failure/theft. And yes, DropBox also has a file sync tool.

Name	Comes with	Free space	Cost for more space	Notes
Google Drive	Gmail, Google Apps	15gigs	100gig NZ\$30/year 200gig NZ\$45/year	Use if you have Gmail
One Drive (Microsoft)	Office365 Personal	1000gigs* (1TB)	Really? *Must have subscription, includes email service and Office (Word etc) at NZ\$119/year	Use if you have Office365
One Drive (Microsoft)	Hotmail (now Outlook.com)	5gigs	50gigs US\$1.99/month	Use if you have Hotmail, live.com, outlook.com
Box.com	-	5gig??	Minimum 3 users, US\$16.50/month/user	
DropBox	-	2gig??	2,000gig US\$9.99/month	
iCloud	Apple	15gig	50gig NZ\$1.69/month 200gig NZ\$4.99 2TB NZ\$16.99	Apple Mac users





## SECURITY

Some people are rightly concerned about putting their files somewhere on the internet. For me, here's the thing: all the providers need to be at the top of the game when it comes to security. If DropBox had a major breach that was their own doing, it would be very hard to come back from that as a business. Users would leave in droves overnight, and DropBox would become a dirty word.

Notice I said above, "their own doing". The biggest security risk you face for your files, or any website you have to log in to, is you. More specifically, your password. Please please please do not use something like Monday21, or include your birth year or any part of your birthday, no pet's names, no using password123 (still the most common password in the world, believe it or not).

This is your passion/hobby/income stream we are talking about, and it deserves a decent password.

You can also use one or two other options for passwords here. Instead of a password, use a passphrase. Something like "where h@s my Mu\$e gone?" is pretty hard to crack, if not impossible. And please, don't think "some guy at the end of a keyboard is not going to be able to crack my password that's 'Suzy##44'". There is no guy trying to hack your password one by one; hackers and crackers use computer programs that will try a different password, one after the other, until it gets in. They are relentless, and take no user interaction. They plug away 24/7 trying to hack passwords, and that's all they do, and it costs nothing.

Another option to increase your security is a keyboard pattern. Look at your keyboard; You could use something like BHytgv5%6^ . That's obviously not a word, and the computer password hacking programs will always stick to words and names. But look again at that pattern – it's just a series of keystrokes that are grouped together, so typing them in isn't too difficult. Shift BGT then lower case tgv then up to 5, shift-5 to %, number 6 and then shift-6 to get ^ . It's seconds of typing, but it's a tight password. Note I am not saying you should use this as a password, but I'm trying to show you how easy it is to not use a word for a password.

I don't want to spend half this article on passwords and security, but another option is to use 2-factor authentication (2FA). Google search 2FA for an overview, and those who manage their own websites? You should 100% be using 2FA to stop the baddies getting to your website and hacking it.

## RANDOM STUFF

Most cloud service providers have an app for your smartphone or tablet, so you can access your files from there, if you want to read your WIP while watching The Bachelor at the same time. If you want to be able to edit your files, you'll need to have the app as well (e.g. Word) to be able to do this.

Don't think you have to stick with one provider, e.g. Google Drive. At home, use 4 different providers, which is crazy and I'm trying to cut back, but there's no reason you can't have more than one free one on the go, and installed on your computer.

Lastly and most importantly, you need to do an occasional check of your files online, to make sure they are syncing ok to your computer. The way to check is simple; let's say you've edited your WIP today, and it's synced to DropBox. Just login at [www.dropbox.com](http://www.dropbox.com) and go to your folders on the web browser, and see if the file has the same time and date as when you last saved it. If it does, then you can feel safe it's syncing ok.

Each tool (Google Drive, OneDrive, DropBox etc) has a different way of showing if files have stopped syncing. I'm not going to try and cover them all here, that would take too many words. But you can go to the provider's website and read up on how to check – generally it's something like a green circle or tick for all good, and something red for not good. Obviously this is an important thing to check – I have an appointment in my Google calendar for every three months to have a quick look and see if everything is happy. Even if your latest WIP is syncing, it doesn't mean all your files are syncing, so that's something to keep in mind.



### CLAIMED

*Lives depend on them discovering gold, but what price are they willing to pay?*

*Two best friends fly to their gold claim on a remote part of Vancouver Island, both in desperate need of large amounts of money. It's their annual pilgrimage, but this year there's added pressure to deliver.*

*What they find shocks the pair, when they discover a small community that's been shut off from the world and living underground.*

*The rituals that they perform cause the two men to feel shock, revulsion and anger. Regular earthquakes only add to the danger, along with two sisters who they must rescue if they are to succeed.*

*Will they find gold, and what will it cost?*

Buy *Claimed* [here](#)



*One day while sitting in yet another airport with yet another delayed flight, Fred Alvarez thought to himself, "I'm going to write a novel". And so he did. For the next three months, when he was in airport lounges and on flights, he wrote.*

*He is no stranger to writing non-fiction, having been the editor of two monthly magazines, was accepted into the New Zealand Motoring Writers' Guild, and has published a motoring book. His foray into fiction is the reason he has even less hair, and even more empathy for his writing wife.*

*Motoring Journalist, IT guy and tech geek by day, Fred now sweats under Alexa's watchful eye every night creating fast-paced reads.*

# Scene Structure

Iola Goulton



**This is the second article in my series discussing some of the issues I see most often in the manuscripts I assess and edit. I discussed macro structure last month—the structure of the novel as a whole. This month, I’m discussing micro structure—the structure of individual scenes.**

No, a scene isn’t simply the words between the chapter opening and the \*\*\* indicating the start of a new scene :)

And no, adding random scene breaks to pretend you’ve started a new scene doesn’t solve the problem of headhopping ... which I’ll talk about in a future article. Yes, I’ve seen that.

## WHAT IS A SCENE?

A scene is a unit of your novel, written from the point of view of a single character who wants something. They have a goal.

## GOAL

The character’s visible objective in the scene. Ideally, this goal will relate to the character’s overall internal or external goal.

## CONFLICT

Something the point of view character must overcome in order to achieve their goal. This conflict will typically come from the other character in the scene.

## DISASTER

Something which prevents the point of view character from achieving their goal.

This can be summarised in a single sentence:

[Character] wants [Goal] but [Conflict] then [Disaster]

The Goal-Disaster-Conflict scene structure originated with Dwight L Swain in *Techniques of the Selling Writer*, and has been discussed in various books and blog posts (and was the subject of a quickfire session from Damon Suede at the 2018 RWNZ conference). Randy Ingermanson has an excellent blog post on the subject: *Writing the Perfect Scene* (and a book). I also recommend KM Weiland’s book, *Structuring Your Novel*.

<https://www.advancedfictionwriting.com/articles/writing-the-perfect-scene/>

## SCENE AND SEQUEL

But that’s not all. A scene is usually followed by a sequel. Where scenes are about the point of view character’s external actions in pursuit of a visible goal, the sequel is about the character’s internal reaction to the conflict and disaster.

The sequel also has three parts:

## REACTION

The character’s initial (and often involuntary) reaction to the Disaster.

## DILEMMA

The character is now faced with a problem, a Dilemma, two options they have to choose between.

## DECISION

The character’s solution (right or wrong) to the Dilemma. This will form the basis for the character’s goal in the next scene.

The decision plunges the characters into the next scene, and the next. This pattern of goal-conflict-disaster-reaction keeps the plot moving forward towards the overall character goal, and to the answer to their story question.

Some authors like to have their characters endlessly pondering their reaction and dilemma. The problem with this is that while Scene is showing, Sequel is telling. Yes, we need the sequel. But keep it short, and move the reader into the next scene. Don’t write pages of interior monologue.

Instead, finish early, and finish on a powerful word or phrase, one that the reader will remember ... a hook that will keep them reading.

## TRANSITIONS

Not all scenes are followed by sequels. Sometimes, the story moves straight into the next scene. If so, there should be a change in the time, place, or point of view character. The change in time or place might be signalled through a simple transition at the beginning of the next scene or chapter, e.g.

- The next morning ...
- Back at the ranch ...

Or the next scene could take place in the same time and place, but with a change in the point of view character. This change is signalled by a scene break (usually \*\*\* or similar) or chapter break, and by identifying the new point of view character in the first sentence of the new scene.

## DO I HAVE TO FOLLOW THIS STRUCTURE?

For most scenes, yes. Your reader (consciously or subconsciously) expects the scenes to follow this structure, especially in genres like romance. But you don’t have to follow this structure for every scene in your novel.

This is (yet another) example of knowing the rules so you know how to break them. If you know how to structure a scene and most of your scenes follow the expected structure, then your reader will react when one of your scenes follows a different structure—and you can

manage that reaction to best suit your story.

If you don't know the rules, then your scenes are likely to leave your readers feeling dissatisfied, as though something is missing.

Scene structure isn't the only thing readers expect. They also expect to know what is happening in the scene, which means anchoring them in the scene as quickly as possible—in the first line, the first sentence, or the first paragraph. If the reader isn't anchored in the scene, they're likely to start skimming (I know I do). And we don't want the reader to skim, because skimming is an invitation to close the novel.

So the first sentence of a scene or chapter is important. It's the one time you can tell rather than show. Sure, showing is better than telling, but telling is better than obscuring the necessary information.

### WHAT DO READERS NEED TO KNOW?

You need to answer three questions as quickly as possible, ideally in the opening sentence of each scene:

#### IS THE IDENTITY OF THE POINT OF VIEW CHARACTER CLEAR FROM THE FIRST SENTENCE?

The reader expects the first-named character to be the point of view character. This should also be the character with the most to lose in the scene—the character who is facing the major conflict.

#### IS THE LOCATION CLEAR?

Readers want to know where the scene is set, especially if the scene location has moved since the last scene. If the location isn't clear, the reader will assume the location is the same as in the last scene ... which can get confusing if it isn't.

#### IS THE TIME CLEAR?

Readers expect the scene to take place immediately after the conclusion of the previous scene. If this isn't the case, the author needs to indicate when—perhaps through the transition (e.g. the next morning) or perhaps through a time indicator at the beginning of the chapter (e.g. Christmas Day, 1945).

So that's my summary of scene and sequel. I'll be back next month with another of my top tips on revising and editing your manuscript.

If you'd like a free downloadable *Scene Structure Worksheet*, then visit [www.christianediting.co.nz](http://www.christianediting.co.nz) and sign up for my free email course, *Learn to Revise Your Novel in Two Weeks*. And if you're looking for more resources on scene and sequel, check out my Amazon shop at [www.amazon.com/shop/iolagoulton](http://www.amazon.com/shop/iolagoulton).



*Iola Goulton is a New Zealand book reviewer, freelance editor, and writer. She holds a degree in marketing, has a background in human resource consulting, and works as a freelance editor specialising in Christian fiction. When she's not working, Iola is usually reading or writing her next book review.*

# Psychology and Writing – A Relationship with a HEA

Darian Smith



**Psychology and storytelling have a long and intricate history together. Writers can borrow from the theories and learnings of psychology to create well rounded, fully developed characters who instinctively make sense to our readers. Writers and psychologists are both, at their heart, students of what makes people tick.**

For romance writers, the focus is on the relationship between the characters – we need to build connection, create conflict, and then bring them together for a HEA.

One way of building connection is through reflective listening. Communications experts will tell you most of us spend more time thinking about what we're going to say next instead of listening to what the other person is telling us. So reflective listening is taking a moment to actually explain to the person what you have heard them say, so that you can check you got it right. It enables people to feel heard and understood and this builds connection. Obviously this would be horribly boring as dialogue in a book so you want to take it up a level and have characters reflect not what is being said but the emotions behind it. For example:

"What a crock." Sarah folded her arms and glared at the closed door. "Good riddance. I hated that job anyway."

"That really hurt you, huh?" James said, his head tilted as he studied her.

Sarah's lip trembled. "I know it's silly, I just..."

"Hey. It's okay." He pulled her into his arms and stroked her hair.

In this example, Sarah is exhibiting anger but James reflects her true emotion of being hurt and sad back to her. She realises he understands her and they build connection. If he'd gotten it wrong, however, it could have



created conflict. (Or if he'd gotten it right but she wasn't ready to hear it!) So there are lots of ways to develop the relationship or the conflict using this technique.

Another useful psychology tool are a set of behaviours identified by John Gottman and referred to as the Four Horsemen of the Relationship Apocalypse. These behaviours herald a relationship in decline and are warning signs for a counsellor but for the writer, they offer opportunity for conflict and drama.

They are:

- Criticism – blaming and attacking personality or character rather than specific behaviours
- Defensiveness – defending actions without being willing to hear the other point of view
- Stonewalling – withdrawing without being willing to resolve the issue, often called “the silent treatment”
- Contempt – saying things to your partner with the intent to insult and hurt

Writers of romance can make use of these behaviours to create problems in a relationship. Beware of using contempt, however, as it is the most damaging of the horsemen and will require the most mending to create a solid and believable happy ending. There will have to be a shift in the way the characters think of each other and behave to each other and a motivation to forgive past behaviour. The good news is that, as a writer, you can be creative about how that happens. Counsellors have a much harder time being stuck with only reality to work with!

The concept of “love languages” is another useful tool for counsellors and writers alike. Gary Chapman came up with the notion that people use different methods – or languages – to express love and affection. Conflict can occur in relationships when participants differ in the primary love language.

The five love languages are:

- Words
- Acts of service
- Touch/physical affection
- Gifts
- Quality time

A classic example of this might be one partner's complaint, “He never says he loves me and he's always wanting to go out with his friends and doesn't spend time with me so he doesn't really love me.” While her partner replies, “I bring her cups of tea in bed every morning and we snuggle and kiss every time we meet and hold hands. How can she not know I love her?” Her love primary love languages are Words and Quality Time. His are Acts of Service and Touch. They are missing the messages they send each other and as a result, feeling unloved.

Set up your characters to have conflicting love languages and part of their journey is to the realisation of what the other has been trying to portray.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, Mr Darcy's way with Words leaves

something to be desired and Elizabeth has always been so very good with them. But when her family is in dire need, it is Darcy's Act of Service in coming to their aid that demonstrates to her his love. None of these love languages are right or wrong, they are simply different ways of expressing the same sentiment and when we – or rather, our characters – understand that, they can see the emotions behind the behaviour and find their way to a happy ending.

And, at the end of a story full of conflict and drama, a happy ending is what we want.

For more tips and tricks on using psychology for character building, check out my book: *The Psychology Workbook for Writers: Tools for Creating Realistic Characters and Conflict in Fiction*



### THE PSYCHOLOGY WORKBOOK FOR WRITERS

*Writers know that their characters and stories should be multi-layered and believable. Now here's a simple workbook that uses the same knowledge that gives therapists insight into human behaviour to create fiction that hits the mark. Each chapter outlines an aspect of psychological theory as it can be used for writing and provides two worksheets to translate it into action – one to develop characters, one to develop the story.*

*Darian Smith is a prize winning fiction writer with a degree in psychology, and is a member of the New Zealand Association of Counsellors. He combines these two sides of his background to provide simple, easy to follow tools that make use of established psychological theory to help writers develop fully rounded, interesting, realistic characters and inject conflict into their stories.*

*Give your writing the benefit of over a decade of training and experience, and discover how to have readers wanting more.*

Buy *The Psychology Workbook for Writers* [Here](#)



*Darian Smith writes mainly speculative fiction (fantasy) and lives in Auckland, New Zealand with his wife (who also writes) and their black cat (who doesn't).*

*He has received the Koru Award and the Sir Julius Vogel Award. He is a qualified counsellor/family therapist who set up a free community counselling service as well as working in private practice before joining the Muscular Dystrophy Association to work with people living with neuromuscular conditions.*

*He can also be seen - by those very swift with the pause button - on television shows such as *Legend of the Seeker* and *Spartacus*.*

*For more information about Darian and his upcoming books, check out his website at [www.darian-smith.com](http://www.darian-smith.com).*

# An interview with renowned writing teacher and USA Today bestselling author Patricia Kay

Bronwen Evans



**I credit Patricia Kay's courses with teaching me how to structure a story that is filled with emotional conflict and tension. When I first began writing in 2006 I knew nothing. So I became the online course Queen. I have done all of Pat's courses and often I redo a lesson to remind me of what I should be doing. Just as I finished her last course in 2009, I submitted my first ever completed historical romance and got an agent and a contract with Kensington Publishing! I highly recommend Pat's courses. And best of all they are FREE to RWNZ members! I had to pay for them! But Pat taught me well... Let's meet Pat.**

*Hi Pat*

*Thank you for taking the time to answer some questions for us about yourself and the craft courses you have allowed RWNZ to use for our members.*

**1. You've had a long career. How did your romance writing career start and what did you write?**

In 1986 I was working at a newspaper as the classified advertising manager and I was bored. I kept thinking if I didn't do something, I was going to have to work at a boring job forever. On an impulse, I signed up for a creative writing course at my local community college. I had a wonderful teacher and after some misguided choices, I realized writing romances was what I was meant to do.

**2. I know you must have had some bumps along the way. What**

*is the most important thing you learned as a romance writer?*

Making writing a habit. You simply must park your body in the chair and force yourself to write whether you feel like it or not. Once you form the habit of sitting down to work at a certain time every day, you will actually find yourself working every day. And that's the most important thing you can do for yourself, because if you wait until you feel like working, you'll never accomplish anything. Persistence and discipline and working every day are the key to success.

**3. How and why did you get into teaching romance writing?**

Someone asked me if I'd be interested in teaching a novel writing course at the University of Houston extension center in nearby Cinco Ranch. Apparently, I'd been recommended. I decided it sounded interesting and I'd give it a shot. I loved doing the class, and I simply kept doing it.

**4. Why do you think it's important to learn the basics of crafting a story?**

Learning the basics first saves you tons of time and tons of rejections. Writing is like any other skill. It requires training and practice.

**5. If you could have changed anything about your career what would it be?**

I would have stuck with writing women's fiction once I had a shot at it. But we all learn by our mistakes, and hindsight is always better than foresight.

**6. What are some of the common mistakes you see in new writers? Do your courses help with this?**

Lack of conflict and meaningful motivation are the two most egregious mistakes new writers make. We all fall in love with our characters and hate being mean to them, but without conflict, there is no story. Conflict is what makes a story interesting, what makes a reader turn the pages. And of course I hope that my courses help aspiring authors master this.

**7. What is the most important thing a new writer should learn? Which course would you recommend them to start with – Novel Writing 1?**

Novel Writing I or Scene & Sequel. Once a writer masters scene and sequel, they will have a much easier time constructing a story. (BRON: Totally agree!)

**8. In today's changing market what is the most important thing to remember, or do, when just starting out?**

Oh, boy, that's a loaded question. I think, for any writer, at any time, it's important to figure out what your strengths are and stick with it. I know quite a few writers who constantly jumped on whatever new bandwagon appeared, and as a result, they sabotaged their careers. Know your strength, and keep your eye on the long-term goal – building a career and readership.

**9. Is it true that you can always learn craft no matter where you are in your career?**

Absolutely. And that's true of every endeavor. Those of us who make a long-term career of anything will be constantly adding to our reservoir of knowledge and ability.



◀◀  
10. Finally, you must have some advice for a new writer, I know I do – do Pat's courses which are loaded on our website under resources.

Mine is "put backside in chair every day and write."

Patricia Kay's courses can be found under the resource area of the RWNZ website. Pat is now retired so this is the only place to find her fabulous courses.

<https://www.romancewriters.co.nz/resources/patricia-kay-courses/>



## THE MILLIONAIRE BROTHER

*When Kevin Callahan sees the girl lying on the side of the road, he does what any decent, upstanding person would do: he stops to give aid. And that singular act changes his life, for he finds he cannot forget the girl or abandon her. As he helps "Jane Doe" build a new life while she struggles to regain her memory, he realizes he is finally ready to put the past behind him and move forward in his life, too. This fifth book of the Rainbow's End series gives readers the kind of satisfying and emotional, family-oriented story Ms. Kay is known for.*

Buy *The Millionaire Brother* [Here](#)



[Patricia Ann Kay](#) also known as Trisha Alexander and Ann Patrick, is an American bestselling author of romance novels and women's fiction. She has authored more than 50 romance and women's fiction novels. She sold her first novel to Silhouette/Harlequin in 1990. Since then, millions of copies of her novels, in both print and digital format, have been published in more than 20 different countries. An acclaimed teacher, over the past 15 years Pat has also shared her love of writing with more than a thousand writing students.

# From the Editor: What NaNo and Marmite have in common.

Gillian St. Kevern



**As the days are getting longer, the temperatures rising (in theory anyway), and the end of the year cannoning towards us, conversation tends naturally to one topic: Are you doing NaNoWriMo? NaNo (known properly as National Novel Writing Month) tends to be one of those things that, like plotting or pantsing, polarises writers. Some are all for it, some equally against. It is the marmite of writing events.**

I'm a huge NaNoWriMo fan. Thorns and Fangs, my first published novel, started life as a NaNo project way back in 2013. This was in my Japan days, when I was writing before and after my job, teaching English in rural Shimane. That's actually redundant—all of Shimane is rural. But you get the idea—I was writing in bits and pieces, without a writing community. I'd started projects before, finished a few of them, but lacked the 'oomph' to edit them afterwards. NaNo changed that.

## WRITING COMMUNITY.

In Japan, I was writing alone. With NaNo, however, I wasn't alone. There were thousands of similarly hopeful people attempting 50,000 words in one month, some of whom were in Japan. I didn't make it to any meet ups, but the fact that I had the forums, the regional forum and chat rooms full of writers bemoaning the fact that their characters were not cooperating with their carefully thought out plot, wondering how to spell prevaricate or celebrating another day's successful writing, was fantastic. The community was exactly the boost I needed.

Once I moved back to Christchurch and November rolled around, I discovered that we have a really active NaNo scene with lots of write-ins and other events. I was really dubious ahead of attending my first live event. I don't consider myself a people person, and I had all the community I wanted in the form of the NaNo forums and

a couple of NaNo Facebook groups. I wasn't sure what attending a write-in could give me that I couldn't get online.

A lot, as it turns out! Not only did our regional coordinators do an amazing job of making us all feel welcome, support us over plot holes and other hurdles, and foster a really supportive atmosphere, but there's something magic that happens when writers gather. We have a shared energy that is just electric. I believed that I couldn't write after 7:00 pm at night, but went to a write-in anyway, and wrote a good 1000 words. Turns out that I can write late at night when I have the proper motivation.

There's also nothing like being able to share struggles and triumphs with people who know the pain of having to delete a chapter because you've realised your characters have matured but your plot hasn't, or being able to trouble-shoot a pacing issue. Even when I didn't hit my word count goal, I came away from the write-ins feeling that I'd accomplished something. My social meter was full and my writing motivation boosted.

### HABIT BUILDING

The traditional goal of NaNo is 50,000 words in the month of November. Whether these are new words or an existing project depends on the writer and how much of a rebel they are. No one really cares. The important thing is that you write.

What is interesting is what happens when you set yourself the goal of writing 50,000 words in 30 days. For me, it forced me to be deliberate about my writing time. Instead of writing when I felt like it, I had to set myself a writing time. I felt good when I hit my 1667 words, sad when I didn't. After a week, I'd built up enough of a writing muscle that I could hit my 1667 words before leaving for work. That gave me a productivity boost that lasted the entire day. As a chronic overachiever, I loved my daily goal and, boosted by the joy of hitting it, often exceeded the 1667 words needed to hit the 50,000 word limit.

Please be aware that while this works really well for my personality type, I know a lot of people for whom a daily writing deadline is kryptonite. This is the marmite-factor I alluded to above. My writing buddy has tried NaNo multiple times, but the combination of deadline pressure and community really doesn't work for her. That said, there are ways to harness the energy of the live events without signing up for the 50,000 word challenge. Many of the groups formed in the write-ins continue to meet after November. Lots of groups welcome people whether or not they're doing NaNo. There are also groups that chat, groups that write, and groups that do a bit of both. It's worth while exploring your options to find the group that best suits your needs and working style.

*Many of the groups formed in the write-ins continue to meet after November. Lots of groups welcome people whether or not they're doing NaNo.*

### Focus

The other thing that happens when you set out to write a novel in a short amount of time is that (in my experience anyway), it speeds up the process where the story takes on a life of its own. I like to plot and feel happier when I have a good idea of where I'm going. However, there is always a point where the characters go off script. It's not until I hit that moment, that I feel like the story has really come into its own.

I've written stories that have taken many, many months, and stories that have come together in less than two weeks. Each story has its own individual needs and the point where it ignites is different for each of them. But I suspect that with situations like NaNo, when you're (ideally) working on your story everyday, you're carrying it around with you, talking about it with other wrimos, making it a big part of your life, that throws a bit of extra fuel on the rocket.

It is really obvious now that I am not a rocket scientist. I am, however, a big fan of NaNo—and yes, I will be doing NaNo this year. Wish me luck.

*Each story has its own individual needs and the point where it ignites is different for each of them.*



*Those who dream by day are cognizant of many things which escape those who dream only by night.*

*— Edgar Allan Poe*



## Announcing Jenny Nordbak / Wicked Wallflowers for 2020 Conference

Linda and I are working hard behind-the-scenes to bring you lots of wonderful surprises at Conference 2020 – we're going to make all your author dreams come true, especially the strange and wonderful ones.

This month, we're announcing a special guest – Jenny Nordbak will be attending our conference to give a workshop. As part of our main programme she'll also be recording a live episode of her popular podcast where she'll be interviewing one of our keynote speakers on stage. Expect deep insight, lots of laughs, and a bit of naughty fun.

Jenny's podcast: [The Wicked Wallflowers Club](#)

Jenny's popular weekly podcast called The Wicked Wallflowers Club focuses on the romance genre, but engages with broader topics that impact women. The show was described by Entertainment Weekly as "a compelling reminder of why the oft dismissed genre is such a force in cultural conversations", and its thousands of listeners are some of the most hardcore readers on the planet.

About Jenny Nordbak

Jenny Nordbak earned a B.A in Archaeology from the University of Southern California. After graduating, she spent two years leading a double life, working in healthcare construction by day, while secretly working as a dominatrix at a dungeon in LA by night. Her memoir, *The Scarlett Letters: My Secret Year of Men in an LA Dungeon* (St. Martin's Press, 2017), is a candid look into that time in her life.



Jenny is an advocate for sex positivity and female empowerment. She writes the Stocks and Bondage column for Penthouse Magazine and has been featured as a sex expert on The Doctors television show. She contributes to Men's Health and Bustle and has appeared in numerous publications including Newsweek, Women's Health, Cosmopolitan, and Redbook. She is currently working on developing her memoir for TV with Jackson Pictures and publishing her next book, a romance novel.

Your conference homework: binge-listen to the Wicked Wallflowers Club

I'm a big fan of The Wicked Wallflowers Club and I bet you will be, too. Listen to some fascinating discussions about romance, society, sex, love, feminism, and books with some of our favourite authors, including JR Ward, Penny Reid, Laurel K Hamilton, Sierra Simone, Tessa Dare, and Sophie Jordan. You can also follow Jenny on Twitter and Instagram.

I know we'll all make Jenny feel welcome! That's it from us until next month. In December we have a very special Christmas treat for you :)

xxx Steff and Linda

# News from the President

Susan Sims



Hi all,

**Another month has gone racing by!**

RWNZ has received an apology from Stuff on the recent article that we feel is appropriate and have accepted on behalf of the organisation.

The journalist who wrote about Christchurch conference accepts she “should have made herself known to organisers in advance of the conference, and had her position declared publicly to attendees. A clearly displayed media pass may have been appropriate.... She has learnt lessons from this experience and will change her practice in future.”

The apology also recognised “that romance writers have in the past struggled for respect”, and that what was intended as “wry humour... could be misinterpreted as unfair and belittling. This was not (the journalist’s) intention, nor of anyone at The Press.”

As an organisation we’ll look at how to best ensure that this does not happen in future.

The Exec were updated by Linda and Steff on next year’s conference, I can’t wait – the speakers look fantastic, and they are working hard (please volunteer to help out via the website) to build on the success of 2019 and give us another wonderful experience.

The Expression of Interest form for conference for 2021 is now live on the website! Please fill this in if you are keen to convene the conference for RWNZ.

For anyone that’s going through NANOWRIMO for November, good luck!

Happy writing everyone :)

Susan



## EXPRESSION OF INTEREST TO CONVENE RWNZ 2021 CONFERENCE

**RWNZ is looking for expressions of interest for running the 2021 conference. We need to start planning now as hotels and speakers book up well in advance.**

**The success of our last few conferences has been due to the work and dedication of our convenors. We’re looking for an RWNZ member or team willing to take on the role of convenor for the 2021 conference. If you would love to take on this challenge, and have a vision for our 2021 conference, then you can let us know by completing the following form on the RWNZ website:**



**EXPRESSION OF INTEREST  
TO CONVENE RWNZ 2021  
CONFERENCE FORM:**

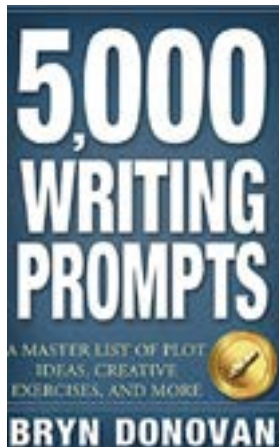
<https://www.romancewriters.co.nz/membership/expression-of-interest-to-convene-rwnz-2021-conference/>



# The Bookshelf

## Book Review: 5,000 Writing Prompts By Bryn Donovan

Reviewed by Susie Frame



**Title:**  
**5,000 Writing Prompts**

**Author:**  
**Bryn Donovan**

*For writers. For thinkers. For dreamers.*

*5,000 Writing Prompts is the must-have resource for novelists, short story writers, screenwriters, creative writing teachers, bloggers, memoir writers, playwrights, improv actors, and other creators. It's not only for people with writer's block, but also for people who want to write faster and make their stories richer and better.*

*It includes...*

*150 plot ideas for each of these genres: fantasy, science fiction, mystery, romance, young adult, historical fiction, and general fiction*

*hundreds of other master plots from classic fiction and mythology*

*hundreds of dialogue, character, and setting prompts*

*100 poetry exercises*

*hundreds of prompts for personal writing and journaling*

*500 blog post ideas*

*...and much more!*

*From the author of Master Lists for Writers, this comprehensive book is filled with inspiration. Let it spark your imagination and remind you that your creative possibilities are truly endless.*

Buy *5,000 Writing Prompts* [Here](#)

### REVIEW

What can I say? I'm a sucker for a craft book. 5,000 Writing Prompts takes my 'help' book tally to twenty-two. But if it lives up to what others have said about it, it should be my last.

'Now I've got book plot and sub-plot ideas for the foreseeable future.'

'It is kickstarting my brain in ways I could never imagine.'

'When I can't get a feel for what happens next, I open 5,000 prompts.'

I mean, after those three comments alone, what emerging writer with crippling procrastination issues wouldn't be interested in adding this resource to their craft book library?

First step? A kindle-ised sample chapter where Bryn explains how to use the book. Try this, she suggests. Every day for two weeks at roughly the same time, close your eyes, flip through the book, (or in my case randomly press kindle page-turning button), and point to something on the page. Write about whatever you're touching for 15 minutes. Whaaaaat? 15 minutes? For a writer with OCD problems, read: Obsessive Compulsive Distraction, that's like F.O.R.E.V.E.R. Bryn!

But time to stop all this procrastination malarkey. The faffing stops here. This is exactly what you need, I remind myself. I decide to play the game. My pen hovers over the first page of my pristine new notebook. The topic is picked. I'm ready to write about 'a performance, or the conclusion of one'.

But before I can write one word, my husband calls. I know what he's going to say before he says it. I drop everything and join him at his mum's bedside and together we hold her hands and watch as she takes her final breath.

Apart from writing a poem for my mother-in-law's service, I don't feel like writing much at all. But two weeks later, I feel a stirring in my fingers. I remember my '5000 Writing Prompts' homework. I write. And I cheat. The sentences and tears flow for over half an hour as I write about a much-loved woman play out her final performance. And for the first time in a long time I feel like a real writer. Thanks, Judy.

The next day my chosen topic is 'a kiss'. Easy peasy lemon squeezy. I've had lots of experience in this department. I cheat again and write for a full forty minutes.

For the next week I write about chases, church services, job interviews, unwrapping a gift, and escapes.

And then I write about an elevator. And I kind of like what I've written. But for the rest of the two week exercise, I don't play the game. (So sorry, Bryn). What I do though, is develop my 'elevator' exercise into a two-page Cold Read for conference.

On the Sunday morning of conference, I sit nervously waiting for Lyssa Randolph to read out my submission. (Thanks once again for a lovely delivery, Lyssa). And when the last word disappears into the ether, the little cockles of my heart are warmed when the editor has

## The Bookshelf Continued...

encouraging things to say about my efforts. Afterwards, when I thank her for her generous feedback, guess what happens? She asks for the manuscript. I KID YOU NOT! And all because of '5000 Prompts'. Of course I have to fess up to the lovely Nic Caws and tell her there is no ms at this point in time, but with the help of '5000 Prompts' and a bit of BITCH (Bum In The Chair) I'm determined there will be.

While flicking through the book the other day it occurred to me you could never, like never, run out of writing ideas. For instance, if you randomly selected prompts from the historical fiction list, the sartorial section, the indoor setting samples and cute date ideas, you could script a story about a Victorian widow who falls in love with her late husband's nephew; a nephew who, interestingly enough, has a penchant for wearing gym socks with sandals. While they're enjoying getting a bit of exercise at an indoor trampolining park, the widow's new love interest decides their next date should be at an upcoming rock concert. What genre would this be? No idea. But it'd be fun to write, I'm sure.

If you're like me and your creativity needs the occasional kickstart, you won't regret adding Bryn Donovan's '5000 Writing Prompts' to your library.



*Susie Frame lives in Dunedin, NZ, with her rather adorable husband of thirty-five years. When she's not looking after her grandies, coffee-ing, lunching, playing the piano, reading, knitting or eating popcorn at Rialto, she can occasionally be spotted at her laptop.*

*She has been writing educational readers for nearly twenty-five years for Auckland publisher, Wendy Pye Limited. She's a huge fan of the short story format and has been fortunate enough to have several 'shorts' published in magazines at home and far away. Susie has several romance novels on the trot. It is her dream to write 'THE END' on one of these 'unfinished symphonies' before she kicks the bucket.*



## The Bookshelf

***Do you have a writing  
resource you'd like to share  
with the RWNZ members?***

***Or a review of a technical  
book (marketing/craft/writing  
life)?***

***Please send it to :***

***[heart2hearteditor@  
romancewriters.co.nz](mailto:heart2hearteditor@romancewriters.co.nz)***

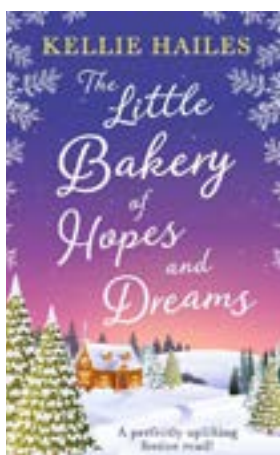
***Thank you!***

# Woos and Hoos



Samantha Burton (writing as Jayne Castel) released *PATH OF THE DARK* (Book #3: Light and Darkness) on 17 October 2019. This novel completes her Epic Fantasy Romance trilogy available on Amazon and KU.

Buy *Path of the Dark* [Here](#)



Congratulations to Kellie Hailes, on the release of *The Little Bakery of Hopes and Dreams*, her sixth book with HQ Digital. Trying to escape Christmas festivities, Josie Donnelly discovers that spending time with bakery owner Callan Stewart and his young daughter, Mia, makes her long for the family Christmas she's missed out on. Could the little bakery on the hill be her own recipe for a happy ever after?

Buy *The Little Bakery of Hopes and Dreams* [Here](#)



Congratulations, Jay Hogan, on the re-release of *First Impressions*, the first in the Auckland Med series. This NZ mm romance releases November 1st and contains enemies to lovers with some sizzling hurt comfort.

Buy *First Impressions* [Here](#)



Well done Ashlee Robinson, who released the third novel in the Little Sky Romance series, *Winter Heat*, on October 25th under her pen name Alexa Rivers.

Buy *Winter Heat* [Here](#)

**Heart to Heart is always keen to share new book releases from members, news of awards, contracts, basically anything that we can celebrate. Send us a 2-3 sentence summary of your good news and, if it's a new release, your book cover and buy link, by the twentieth of each month online at <https://www.romancewriters.co.nz/membership/member-woo-hoos/> or directly to: [heart2hearteditor@romancewriters.co.nz](mailto:heart2hearteditor@romancewriters.co.nz).**

## Woos and Hoos... Continued!



RWANZ members Bronwen Evans and Wendy Vella's Winter Wishes Boxed Set hit USA Today Best Sellers list at #60. This is Wendy's first USA Today Bestseller List. Congratulations Bronwen and Wend—we are thrilled for you!

Buy Winter Wishes [Here](#)



An amazing achievement from Lizzie Tremayne! A Long Trail Rolling, the winner of the RWNZ Pacific Hearts Award and the RWNZ Koru Award, was co-currently on #3 Free Kindle Books, #2 Free Suspense, #1 YA, #1 Historical Mystery, Thriller & Suspense!

Buy A Long Trail Rolling [Here](#)

## The Welcome Mat

Another red carpet roll-out this month for new members:



Lauren Clarke - Overseas  
Megan Gidley - Overseas  
Nancy Cunningham - Auckland  
Madeleine Birkett - Overseas  
Deborah Hull-Brown - Auckland  
Catherine Haines - Wellington  
Sarah Borgwardt - Otago  
Daniella Heppner - Auckland  
Isa Pearl Ritchie - Wairarapa  
Annabelle McInnes - Overseas  
Charis Kelly - Wellington  
Erin Palmisano - Nelson



Great to have you all with us.

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 the [RWNZ Members-Only Facebook page](#).

## Contacts

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Heart to Heart will be published in the first week of each month except January. The deadline for every issue is the 20th of the month prior (e.g. 20th October for November issue). Please have all articles, news, reports, and advertising to Gillian at [heart2hearteditor@romancewriters.co.nz](mailto:heart2hearteditor@romancewriters.co.nz) on or before the deadline.

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Heart to Heart Contact: Gillian St. Kevern (Editor) [heart2hearteditor@romancewriters.co.nz](mailto:heart2hearteditor@romancewriters.co.nz)

To submit a woo hoo, e-mail Gillian or use [this form](#) on the website.

To join the RWNZ Members-Only Facebook page, click [here](#).

# Regional Round-Up Reports

## AUCKLAND

Convenor: [Ruth Clough](#)

This month's meeting took place on Saturday 5 October at the Three Kings Tennis Pavilion. We had twenty four attendees at the meeting this month - it was lovely to see all of you.

Our speaker this month was Yvonne Lindsay, who presented a workshop on the Seven Habits of Successful Romance Writers. The talk drew inspiration from the principles of Steven Covey and translated them to success in writing. The seven habits are:

1. Be Pro-Active
2. Begin With The End In Mind
3. Putting First Things First
4. Think Win-Win
5. Seek First To Understand
6. Synergise
7. Sharpen Your Saw

Yvonne explained the concepts behind each of these habits and how they can be used to create and maintain a writing practice. The habits can also be used to help you get organised and be successful in all areas of your life, which in turns makes writing so much easier.

A big thank you to Yvonne for presenting this informative workshop to the Chapter.

## COAST TO COAST

Convenor: [Bel Macfie](#)

The C2C annual retreat was held on the second weekend of October in a beachfront setting in Pukehina, organised by the fabulous Meredith Reece. The weekend was full of discussion, learning, sharing and gorgeous food. Eight group members stayed the whole weekend and were joined on Saturday afternoon by thirteen others who came to attend Elizabeth Thompson's (Lizzi Tremayne) workshop on Crafting Compelling Characters. This was an enjoyable, interactive and thought-provoking workshop which used writing activities to look at telling a story from a different perspective, not always writing the obvious story, and the need to have a diversity of goals, desires, motivations, ethnicities and origins in your stories. Elizabeth referenced Michael Hague's six stage plot structure (see his website for examples) and Shawn Coyne's The Story Grid was also recommended by Catherine Hudson. The workshop examined protagonists and antagonists motivations, character profiles and how to create reader empathy. Elizabeth stressed the importance of getting facts correct for characters in different time periods as this feeds into author credibility. Thank you Lizzi once again for generously sharing your experience with us.

## HAWKES BAY

Convenor: [Debbie Williams](#)

Our October meeting was held at Pauline's where members discussed the self publishing process and various platforms.

We meet on the first Saturday of the month at 1pm, and new members are always welcome.

Our next meeting will be held on the 2nd of November at Mariana's, where the discussion will focus on the editing process. Also up for discussion will be the Christmas meeting (a.k.a lunch and celebration!)

## WELLINGTON/KAPITI COAST

Convenor: [Jane Ashurst](#)

14 of us met at Anna's gorgeous seafront house in Paekakariki on Saturday 5 October. The wind howled outside, and it poured down, but we were snug indoors. We welcomed new member Charis, and welcomed back Janet Elizabeth Henderson and Ellie Huse, both absent for some months.

On the agenda was:

- Monthly round robin catch up
- Gudrun's word game (Story-Matic)
- Blurbs Part 2: Build-a-Blurb Group Exercise
- Blurbs Part 3: Critique of our blurbs
- Cold Reads
- Plans for November meeting



*Wellington Photos*

# Regional Round-Up Reports

## NELSON

Convenor: [LaVerne Clark](#)

We had a good turnout at our October meeting. The topic focused on NaNoWriMo and the benefits of outlining a story before the 1st of November. Although most of us had taken part in previous years, two of our members would be newbies this time round and were looking for advice.

After a quick overview of NaNoWriMo and what it represents, we discussed the various ways a writer can plan the structure of a story, and the different frameworks to be found online. While a few of us admitted we were pantsers, we all agreed some outlining is necessary to get the most out of the NaNoWriMo experience.

Next month will ascertain the advantages of forward planning when we tap out 1,667 words per day at our monthly meeting.

As per usual, anyone wanting to come and check out our friendly group, you'd be more than welcome.

Next meeting: Saturday 9th November at 2pm.

Venue: Nick Smith's meeting rooms – Cnr Quarantine Road and Main Road Stoke.



*Welly photos continued!*

## CHRISTCHURCH

Convenor: [Emma Lowe](#)

The Christchurch/ Canterbury chapter had their monthly meet on Sunday 20th October at which Moya Barton generously offered to run a session on Spreadsheets for authors. It's safe to say few of us knew just what was possible with Excel, with her examples of accountability, word counts, manuscript submission response timetables and even character and plot development sheets. It was an eye opener!

We also discussed NaNoWriMo, for which two of our members are ML's and currently organising a host of write-ins and events around the city for the month.

Next months meeting on 10th November at South Library, Beckenham will be the last official meeting for the year. However, plans are already in place for the Christmas dinner, and a writing retreat during the summer break.

## OTAGO

Convenor: [Samantha Burton](#)

This month a group of four of us met at the University of Otago's link, where we had a catch up and had a discussion about self-editing. A few of us also decided to embark on NaNoWriMo and have formed a chapter Facebook group to keep us 'accountable' during November. The next chapter meeting will be on Saturday 9 November at 2pm.

## BLenheim AREA

Contact: [Iona Jones](#)