

April / May 2021

Heart 2 Heart

Romance Writers of New Zealand

HOW TO NAIL COVER DESIGN

+

MY FIRST BOOK LAUNCH

+

RWNZ CONFERENCE UPDATE

+

AUDIO BOOK NARRATION



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NEWS FROM THE PRESIDENT



Susan Sims

Hi everyone,

Hope all's well and your writing is going as planned as winter approaches.

It's exciting seeing **sign-ups coming in for conference** this year. I think Steff and the team have set up a wonderful conference under some trying circumstances, and I can't wait to hear from the speakers and see everyone who can make it this year.

The **RWNZ sponsorship and presence at the Dunedin Writers & Readers Festival** went really well with our writers featured in seven events over the weekend of 6-9 May. **The Festival was recorded** and the **podcasts are being loaded and played by Otago Access Radio** over the next few weeks. To listen you can find the playlist here: <https://oar.org.nz/dwrf2021/>

With conference coming soon, **requests for nominations to the Executive, any remits, and special resolutions will be sent out shortly**. Keep an eye on your emails for these and please consider nominating someone, or volunteering for the Executive.

I will be stepping down as President, so if you are interested, or know someone who might be, don't hesitate to join the Executive.

Keep safe, keep well, and keep writing!

Love, Susan

NAILING COVER DESIGN



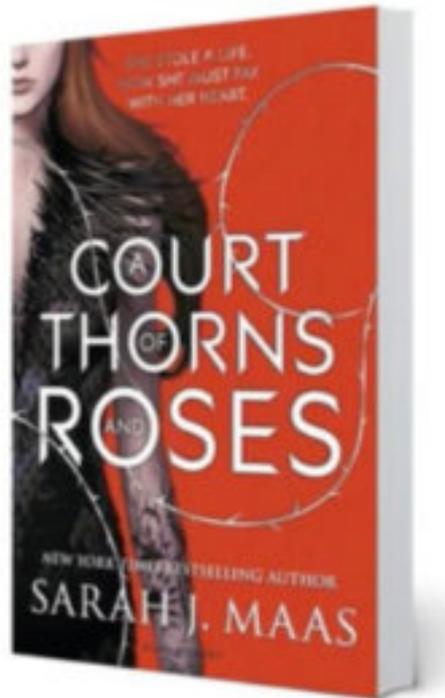
Corina Douglas

The last few months have been busy, because aside from launching two books in May, I've managed to confirm **eight** new covers for three upcoming series. I know—eight is a lot, right? And probably a little over-the-top, but I've had these booked in for at least four months and they just so happened to coincide. And . . . I can't deny that cover design is one of my favourite parts in the self-publishing process. There's nothing like the excitement (and motivation) of receiving a cover that you absolutely love and hits the genre you write in. A new cover gets the creative juices flowing, so much so that it's a battle to continue with your W.I.P. when your new cover is screaming at you to write its story already.

Of course, I appreciate that if you are not an indie author, cover design is a task that is usually something that your publisher will arrange. You also will have little to no say into how your story is packaged; however, all covers have elements that should be covered (pun intended) regardless of whether you are self-published or traditionally published. Aside from a well-known author name, it's also the biggest selling point we have, because with the evolution and growth of the self-publishing world, traditional publishers now sell books on all the same platforms that we do i.e. Amazon, Barnes and Noble, Apple, etc. Therefore, we—both traditional and indie authors—are all competing in the same melting pot. And if your cover doesn't draw in your reader as a thumbnail on all of these digital platforms, then how are you going to cash in that sale?

I'm a bit of a course junkie and a conference junkie. In other words, I love collating information to be aware of what I need to do in order to be successful in this game. As a result, I've listened to many people talk about cover design, and there are common elements that are applicable to every genre as well as some that aren't. Thus, given the eight covers I've had designed over the last few months, I thought it was pertinent that for this edition of Heart to Heart, I discuss what the common elements of a good cover are, and conversely, what aren't.

The first and most important common element is that your cover should **convey your genre and the promise of your story**. The promise of your story is related to 'Theory of Mind'. What is theory of mind? It can be a confusing term to explain and Google will lead you around in circles, but in layman terms, theory of mind relates to our capacity to understand someone's situation.



This includes where we emphasise with their situation and/or predicament. It could be something as little as being hungry, or in the case of a book, the promise of a story based on “An insecure, overweight thirty-something looking for love who suddenly has a concussion and gains confidence in her looks overnight.” i.e. yes, just like that movie you may have watched starring Amy Schumer in *I feel pretty*.

Let’s look at a book example. In Sarah J. Maas’s novel, *A Court of Thorns and Roses*, the theory of mind is “Dark, dangerous, and hot fairy prince falls for awkward mortal girl he needs to save them all.” What does this mean for cover design, though? It means that the cover should show the promise of this story.

For those that have read *A Court of Thorns and Roses*, you’ll know that it is not solely a romance but that it’s also a fantasy—namely a dark and deadly fantasy. Thus, the cover should convey those elements of dark and deadly. The cover for *A Court of Thorns and Roses* is shown below and if you look carefully, you’ll note that this theory of mind has been conveyed in the following ways:

- Jagged font (the ends aren’t smooth and rounded like the promise of a fairytale or a real happily ever after romance)
- The trailing thorns
- The black clothing that the woman is wearing
- The tattoos on her arm
- The background is red—all synonyms conveying heat, danger, and blood
- The tag line on the cover: ‘She stole a life, now she must pay with her heart’, conveys the promise of a hint of love, but also the promise of action, suspense, and danger.
- And finally, it also conveys some genre expectations in terms of the clothing looking fantastical. The tag line is another giveaway, as well as the font itself.



A few well-known publishing gurus, and particularly Liz Pellizter of Entangled, also emphasise that a cover must follow a triangular design. This triangle can be upside down (inverted) or the right way up, but the theory behind the triangle is that the human eye naturally goes to the middle of the triangle and if that spot is eye-catching and draws you in, you've created a cover that will sell. In the case of the cover above, the side and peak of the triangle is the woman, the base the author name, and your eyes immediately go to the title.

In the case of the *Follow Me* cover, the author name is the baseline of the triangle (inverted), the point is the title, and the middle is the woman's face. Our eyes immediately track to her hairpiece and then we have no choice but to gaze at the rest of the cover. In other words, it's arresting and engaging and we can't help but look at it. The use of the colours (red, black and white) are also arresting and complement the title. Altogether they also convey theory of mind, which promises a romance story that is rich, seductive, and definitely holds a lot of heat!

Additionally, when viewed as a thumbnail, these two covers will **stand out**.

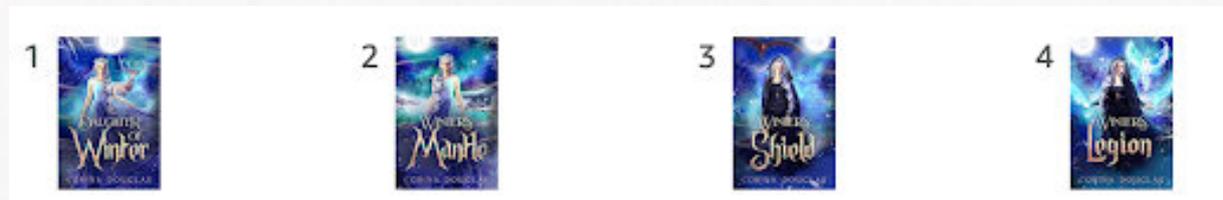
Aside from the triangle requirement, another element of a great cover is movement. This can be conveyed by animals or people in motion, hair swinging, magic swirling, or in the cases above, the thorns moving and/or the feathers on the hair piece fluttering in the breeze. If a cover conveys a sense of movement, it is arresting and engaging. It draws our gaze more than a cover that is static and has no movement.

As mentioned above, a cover must also address genre expectations. For instance, the title and the colours in *Follow Me Darkly* convey darkness. The woman's facial piece and her red lips convey sexy dark romance. And in the case of Sarah J. Maas's cover above, the red portends to battle/war and blood, the thorns to crises and problems, and so does the title and the tag line.

And aside from all of the above, the last element to consider is branding. Your cover is your business ‘front’ and therefore, it must also convey your branding. Whether self-published or traditionally published, everyone will agree that you’ve made the wrong decision if your covers do not convey your branding. This can include not only your series brand, but also your author brand. We need to make it easy for readers to spot who we are and where our books are. I’ve delved into series branding and author branding a bit more below.

Series Branding:

I have one public series out, called *Daughter of Winter*, and these covers are all blue. My title and author name use the same font across every cover, and their placement is identical on every single book in that series. The first four books in this series are shown below as a super thumbnail size for emphasis.



Clearly, when lined up together like that, or conversely, even separately when on an also-bought line on Amazon, they scream to the reader that they’re part of the same story and by the same author.

Author Branding:

For one of my next series, the colours are black and red, conveying war and loss and heartache. The font is different for both the titles and my author name, however, their placement on the cover is identical to my blue series above. In other words, this careful placement falls under my 'author branding'. Another series is predominantly in green (Cernunnos), but the title and author name is the same. Another prominent element of my author brand includes elements of my niche genre. For me, that's Celtic mythology. Thus, on every cover, I also have a Celtic symbol between my title and author name, and these, too, match the symbols on my author website.

Here's a few examples of my author branding across the board below

(NB: Just note that only one of these is public at present)



All of these elements must come together in order to create a cover. You'll also note that all of my covers follow a triangular design, and I seem to have a penchant for the base of the triangle being the author name, the peak the head of my main character, and the centre being the title/the person's torso.

Here's another example of three very successful books in the Shadow Beast Shifter series by Jaymin Eve. If you didn't know, Jaymin held the number 1 spot in the kindle store for a good few solid months with these exact books not that long ago. Looking at those covers, I can see why.



These covers are kickass, right? They convey movement, a triangle (all in the middle), the series title and the title and the author name are all in the same location, the fonts are all identical and the main character shows progression.

Aside from what journey you take in cover design, I therefore challenge you to take a minute to stop and assess what covers are selling in your genre. Are yours similar? Or are they drastically different? Is this a reason why your book may not selling? Of course, it could be any number of reasons, but you could do yourself a favour and eliminate this issue through simple self-assessment.

If you're just starting out and you want to a) fast-forward your knowledge of what is selling in the current market and what is not, and b) have no idea how to meander through Amazon to find out which ones have the top 20,000 Best-Seller Ranking and have been out for at least six months, then I suggest you look at purchasing a K-Lytics report. These reports are genre-focused and they do cost money, but aside from a whole heap of important information, they also show you the most successful cover design elements that are selling in your genre. It really is mindblowing. In most instances, the top-selling books all have the same dominating characteristic i.e. a bare-chested man on the front. Even the colours used on the covers are glaringly similar.

Of course, I'm fully aware, as you should be, that covers aren't everything in this authoring business. However, there's no denying that they play a huge part, and I hope that the information contained above goes some way toward helping you work out if you have a best-selling cover.

Until next month, Corina

REFLECTION OF OUR AUTHOR JOURNEY



The Otago chapter's May meeting was focused on the three things we'd wished we'd known before we started this authoring career, and the three things we are most proud of. The responses were summarised and recorded in the following lists below. I'm sure that many of us can associate with most of these and also recognise that we are not alone in our day-to-day struggles and achievements.

Before reading this list, I would encourage all chapters to consider holding a similar session on this topic as it would be interesting to add to this list and compile every chapter's feedback so that we have a national list.

I would love to publish this near the end of the year. So, if you ever host a meeting based on the following, please email your summary to: heart2hearteditor@romancewriters.co.nz

*Many thanks,
Corina*

THINGS WE WISHED WE HAD KNOWN:

- The ways in which indie publishing was going to change the publishing landscape.
- To focus on writing a series.
- That I understood/recognised the power of tropes, and that readers' fondness for a particular trope influenced how they chose books.
- The sooner you treat writing like a job, the more likely you are to achieve success.
- Reviews are for readers, not the author. (NB: That said, always check the ARC reviews so that there's nothing wildly wrong that requires a rewrite, but then move on.)
- Consistency is everything. From publishing, writing, and marketing, being consistent and creating habits aids productivity. It also has the added benefit of being calming and helps stop overwhelm.
- Reviews and book awards don't generate sales.
- Sale figures determine whether a traditional publisher will keep an author.
- Persistence is the key to success.
- Employ a professional editor.
- Invest in a professional cover designer.
- Get Vellum right from the start.
- Find expert advice as soon as possible. There are plenty of welcoming writers groups ready to assist new writers with support and guidance.
- I wish I'd muddled through self publishing on my own in 2012, because I very likely would be lightyears ahead by now. I feel like I've hobbled myself with a publisher.
- Don't use common stock images on covers.
- Group series by trope and theme.
- My IRD number is my TIN number. (If you don't use this, expect to pay a bunch of extra withholding tax to the US.)
- Hnry (an NZ based online accounting software service) is amazing for accounting on the go.
- A pretty premade cover still doesn't work as well as a keyword stacking cover.
- Novellas don't move as well as full-length books in my subgenre. It's worth adding another subplot or two to make it longer.
- Don't use conferences, apps, and new software as procrastination. Keep on writing.
- Know your 'tier ones' like the back of your hand (the top-selling indie authors in your genre) and emulate their path to success.
- Learn how to understand Amazon Ads with Bryan Cohen ASAP.

THINGS WE ARE PROUD OF:

- Making a full-time income and achieving it within three years of setting that goal.
- Making the decision to 'write to market'. Recognising there's an intersection of what you love and what sells.
- Always looking to improve and learn.
- Not giving up.
- That the first book I published is still selling twenty-five years on.
- Placing in a RWNZ competition.
- Being published in an international magazine.
- Having stories published in the School Journal.
- Receiving a fan letter all the way from Norway.
- Having an award win recognised over the public announcements to a plane load of strangers.
- Putting myself out there as a writer at the age of 57.
- Writing a second book for Avon and a sixth book for Carina.
- Publishing up to 17 titles as of right now.
- Being involved in anthologies. The outside recognition was reinforcing.
- Achieving a regular income (even if it's still small).
- Winning the Reader's Favourite Gold Medal award in the 2020 Fiction-Mythology genre.
- Volunteering for RWNZ and giving back to other writers.
- Finding time in my busy schedule. Waking up at 4 a.m. is doable if you want it that badly.

LET'S TALK AUDIOBOOKS (EPISODE 1)



Naomi Barton

The Day in the life of a Narrator

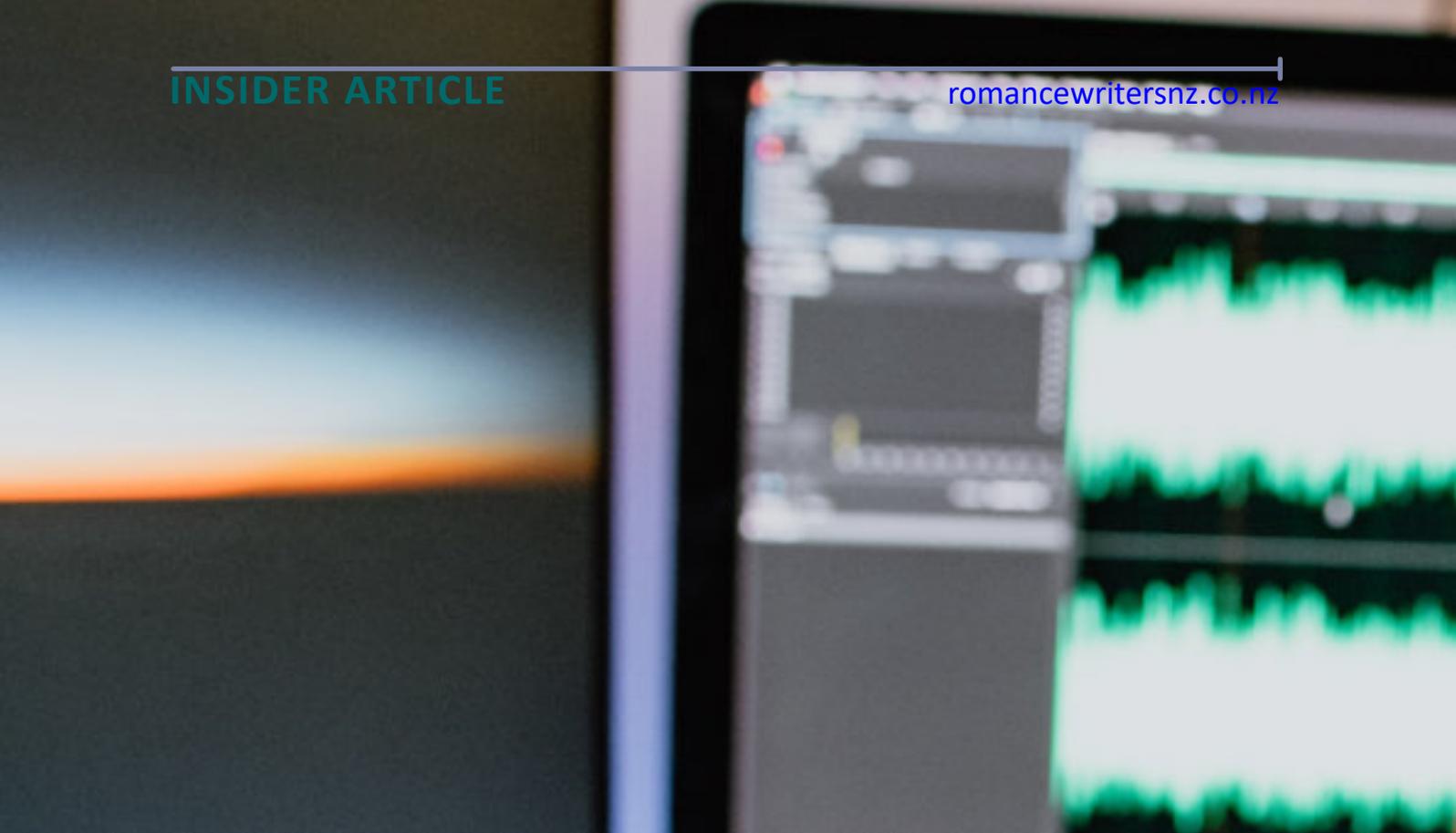
I have been an audiobook junkie for as long as I can remember. Relaxing at home on a sick day from school was bliss, as I could snuggle up with a tape deck and Storytime cassettes. The voices of many stunning British actors would soothe, transport, and entertain me for hours. I can remember the vivid descriptions and voices of enchanting characters with detail, even now, many years later.

Listening to a story that takes you away from the stress of a particular situation has continued to be a comfort for me over the years. With sick children in hospital, I was often kept company by the voices of narrators who got me through some long, worrying nights. Sometimes an audiobook simply makes the housework tolerable or a long tedious drive more manageable. To me,

audiobooks are a deeply intimate offering, linking an author with a listener or 'reader', and a great narrator does this with sensitivity, bringing out the very best of the writing and story.

Audiobook narration was something I'd always wanted to do. Landing back in New Zealand as a Covid-19 refugee got me thinking about whether I really wanted to go back to the classroom to teach Drama, something I had been doing for several years at international schools. I had started writing myself, and immediately began thinking about how the stories would be wonderful in audio. Fast forward six months, and I have now recorded four audiobooks for other authors in my home studio.

As an author, you may have dreamed of having your writing recorded, but you have either been put off by the logistics of how you go about getting it done, or the investment required to do it. I am hoping to share with you my insights into audiobooks in this series of articles for H2H and I want to start with a little window into a day in the life of a narrator.



First of all, good narration takes time. Not only does a narrator need to have read your book and made decisions about interpreting your story and the voices of your characters, but they need to have an appropriate studio set up in which to do the work. Each project takes weeks to complete when prep, recording, editing and mastering are done properly.

Many narrators, including myself, start small with a 'wardrobe studio' or something similar which can be made in a spare room—or in my current context, the end of a hallway. In this space, I hang up duvets to baffle the walls and deflect sounds, which will ricochet off hard surfaces. To meet the technical specifications of Audible or Findaway Voices—who are the primary distributors of audiobooks—the studio must be very quiet. Extraneous noises from heat pumps, barking dogs, lawn mowers or cicadas can be the aural pollution that will have files rejected. A professional mic and audio interface are a necessity, and I have learnt a lot as I have recorded my first few books about how to place the mic, avoid plosive pops, and reduce distracting breathing noises. Often the audio editing

software helps with this, but a good set up makes a big difference to the end product.

To bar my cats from my studio, I put up the old baby gate and hang out the washing so the spin cycle doesn't disturb my recording. Then, to deliver the best quality voice for my author's, I do a really thorough vocal and physical warm up so my voice is as free and dynamic as it can be. As a drama teacher I know how important this is. I love to use music as I stretch, and I try to use music to clear my mind so I can dedicate my recording time to immersing myself in the world of the book. Stretching, tongue twisters, and sirening hums are my wake up for the body, brain, and voice. I won't drink coffee before I record, as this dries up the vocal chords too much. Breakfast these days is light and sustaining; I don't want annoying tummy gurgles getting captured by my mic!

I will be familiar with what I'm reading, and may have annotated the text if need be, particularly if there are a broad range of characters. Getting the consistency of character voices is a challenge at times, so listening back to earlier recordings is really helpful to get back into that character.



I also think about the way the character looks. I might have a mental picture of that person, which helps me get the voice and attitude right. Narrating is not just reading a story, it is voice acting, so the body matters. The facial expressions and gestures that the author may have indicated, or which I interpret to match the dialogue, all get used as I self-direct. The narrative voice itself is a character, too, often filtered through deep point of view, and this is what I keep in mind as I tell the story.

After a couple of hours of recording, listening back to what I've recorded, doing pick ups where there is a flub or something that just doesn't sound right, all makes up a morning's work. The afternoon and evening is for editing and mastering. This can be time consuming, and relies on specialised software. The technical specifications for audiobooks are created so that when an author uploads their MP3 files they can be distributed to a range of online retailers. The specific length of the head and tail of each file, the bit rate, peak values—not to mention the room tone—all have to be considered. All of this work is what produces the minutes

that become the finished hours the author has paid for.

I trust that this introduction provides you with a valid insight into what your narrator will have to address when recording your audiobook. In the next edition, I will discuss investment and commonly asked questions, how to find a narrator, what to expect from your narrator, and what the growing audiobook market wants.

Bio: Naomi Barton is an audiobook narrator, voice coach and budding romance author. With a background in teaching drama and philosophy at international schools she brings a rich range of experience to all her creative projects.

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Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/NaomiBartonVoice>

Instagram: @naomibartonvoice <https://www.instagram.com/naomibartonvoice/>

MY FIRST BOOK LAUNCH - A Dream Come True



**Annika
Ohlson-Smith**

I have attended and catered for many writer friends' book launches during my years in Nelson. Some of them were anthologies that I—among others—had a few poems or a short story in. I was convenor of the RWNZ Nelson Chapter for several years until 2018. In 2016, our group decided to create an anthology of short stories and parts of chapters from novels that we had written over the years. We did the whole book ourselves, except for (a) the lay-out that Wendy Scott had a contact for, and (b) the printing, which Copy Press in Nelson did. The twelve of us shared the cost of printing 100 books and got our money back plus a small profit during the year.

After this experience, it meant I had a good idea of the amount of work involved with self-publishing. I didn't mind the hard work but couldn't afford it on my own. However, I had two novellas: *Hide & Seek* and *Operation Exodus*, which were glaring at me from the screen, waiting to get out there with enticing covers. So, I rang Dave MacManus at Copy Press and asked if he was interested in reading them. He was and he did. He rang me and said he really liked them. So, we set up a contract. Already from the start, he said he

wanted more out of *Operation Exodus*. As I already had expanded it from 20,000 to 40,000 words, I neither had energy or ideas for it then. But a sequel is now brewing...

The second thing Dave said was, "Get someone who hasn't read your books earlier to proofread them one last time." As most of my writing buddies had read and edited at least parts of the books, I had to search for people I knew outside our group. As I couldn't afford to pay a professional editor, I had to find someone prepared to do it for love, or a tin of home baking.

Angela Bissell, my husband's niece, writes for Harlequin/Mills & Boon and was just doing the finishing touches of her latest novel and said that she would love to proofread *Hide & Seek* during the Christmas break. *Operation Exodus* was edited by an old friend, Bob Irvine, who is a journalist and editor. I know he loves my baking, but he insisted he was on a diet. For the excellent job they both did, I've gifted them a copy of these books.

Meanwhile, I wrote the dedications, acknowledgements, and blurbs. Then it was time to discuss the covers with Holly, the

graphic designer at Copy Press. Thanks to Holly's skill and my insistence, I'm very happy with both book covers. Both front covers were used to make bookmarks, which was very appreciated by buyers at the launch. I also spent some time chasing prominent people to write a foreword for the books. It turned out that neither Jacinda Ardern nor Ashley Bloomfield were able to do it. As the very friendly reply from Jacinda's office explained "They, as well as all MP's are not allowed to do any favours of a commercial nature for anyone". They wished me luck with my books though, which was really nice.

I decided to skip a foreword for *Hide & Seek*, but asked a Swedish friend, editor, and translator, Lena Kamhed, to write a few words for *Operation Exodus*. She did this in her usual cheeky, humorous way. Quite a few readers have pointed out that they love her final comment on the back cover, specifically: 'It's a real cock and bull story'.

The date for the book launch was Friday, 23 April, from 6:30 p.m. onwards. This was a special day as it coincided with my mother's birthday—she would've been ninety-nine that day, had she been alive. She's the one I've inherited the talent for writing from, and I felt her presence the whole evening. Also, in Sweden, it was World Book Day—appropriate to say the least.

We held the event at the same venue that the Nelson Romance Writers use at our monthly meetings—Nick Smith's National Office Hall. It is a big hall that can house a lot of people, with lots of tables and chairs, a fully equipped kitchen, a bar, and big panels to put up posters on. I had worked hard advertising the event, not just in the media, but by putting posters up in the libraries, bookstores, and any other places I could think of in the Nelson area, as well as via Facebook and emails. As for catering, I had decided not to do it all myself, as by that time I was stressed enough. Two dear friends, Sally and Carol, came to the rescue and the sixty or so people who came didn't have to starve.

Other friends, Tony, Brian, and Ron manned the bar with excellence, and Amanda womaned the kitchen. Angela—the romance writing niece—had come all the way from



Wellington with her husband to attend the launch. She was the perfect choice to help greet people on arrival, and see to it that they signed in and used the disinfectant bottle. And last, but not least, my darling husband, Allan, took care of selling the books while I signed them.

We had made posters with pictures and captions for both books, which caught people's interest on arrival. *Hide & Seek* starts in Stockholm, Sweden, but after that the setting is either Crete or Nelson. As I've been to Crete, I had several photos from there showing the village and the café I've used in my story. Nelson pictures as well, of course.

Operation Exodus also starts in Stockholm, so the posters have photos of the South Hospital

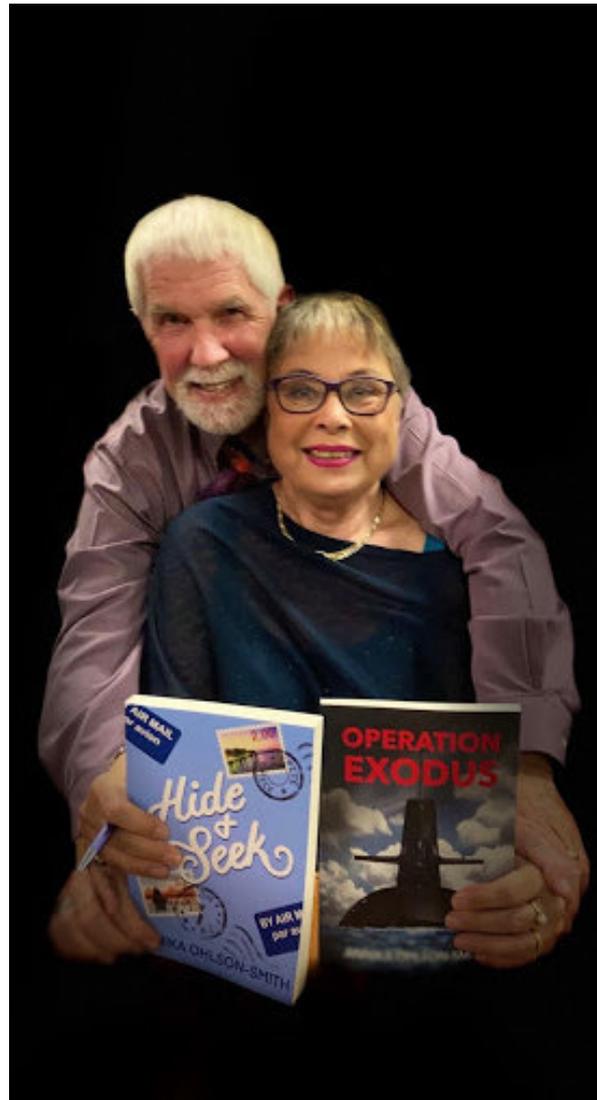
and the 'cliff-room'—the real nuclear safe shelter, located twelve metres under the hospital, which is on top of a granite cliff. When I lived in Sweden, I worked as a medical secretary at the South Hospital, and had visited the 'cliff-room' a few times. The other locations in the story are on board a nuclear-powered American submarine, and an imaginary valley in the Andes.

The book launch was opened by Dave MacManus from Copy Press. His talk almost moved me to tears, and that was when I fully realised *I'd done it*. There at the round table in the middle of the room were MY books—my two novellas.

In my speech, I told them that *Hide & Seek* is a relationship story based on my own and my New Zealand pen-friend's real-life stories. We both married young to our first loves. We both suffered grief from losing our husbands; I lost mine to another woman, and she lost hers to a man. It's hard to trust another man again and dare to believe you're worth being loved. Both of us were lucky to meet a new man and be remarried. I was fifty when I married my kiwi husband, and we have just celebrated our Silver Wedding Anniversary, more in love than ever.

I got the idea of *Operation Exodus* while working at the Stockholm Blood Transfusion Service. I discovered a spare phone on the windowsill in my boss's office. When I asked him about it, he told me it was a war phone and said I couldn't use it to phone out. If it ever rings, it will be because war is imminent, or a nuclear disaster has happened, or a possible large-scale terrorist attack. My imagination was alerted big time. What if that phone rang while the boss wasn't there and I had to answer it? What orders would I get?

My first book launch was a great success; I sold fifty-five books that evening and I'm looking forward to the next one. In the meantime, I'm booked in to speak at the libraries in the area and hopefully sell more books. Both novellas are for sale at Paper Plus in Nelson and Richmond. Copy Press will also sell them to the libraries, and as digital books on [MeBooks](#). If you want to buy any of my books, email me at amos46@xtra.co.nz, and we can make an arrangement.



Bio: Annika Ohlson-Smith was born in Stockholm, Sweden. She married young, had two children, divorced, went to NZ and met her Kiwi-husband Allan. They live in Nelson. She writes poetry, short stories & novellas on sweet romance and suspense. Annika is also working on an autobiography.

She's had 20 short stories published in the Swedish women's magazine *Allers*, her short story *Ladies on Trains* published in NZSA *Top of the South* anthology *Journeys 2007*, her short story *Mission Possible* published in the *Adult Learning Support Anthology Rough Justice 2009*. Her short story *The Phone Call* was Highly Commended in *Page & Blackmore's Short story competition 2008* and in 2015 her short story *Black Friday* finished as shared fourth place in the *RWNZ Chapter Short Story Competition*. She is a member of Romance Writers New Zealand (RWNZ) Nelson Chapter since many years.

REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN
FOR “LOVE FINDS A WAY”,
THE 2021 RWNZ CONFERENCE



Friends,

I'm so excited! We have a HUGE conference update for you. The big news is that registration is open and you can now book your tickets and accommodation.

- **REGISTER NOW**

Register for “Love Finds A Way.” (Remember to log in to receive the RWNZ member pricing.)
<https://www.romancewriters.co.nz/event/2021-rwnz-conference-registration/>

You'll also find the links and details of member rates at our conference hotel on that page.

- **First peak at the CONFERENCE PROGRAMME**

Take a look at what you can expect from our 2021 conference and our draft programme. This will be updated regularly as more workshops and keynotes are confirmed. Please note that you will be able to choose your workshops on the day of conference.

Program: <https://www.romancewriters.co.nz/2021-full-program/>

- **EXCITING PITCHING OPPORTUNITIES** •

This year, our editor and agent pitches will be online over Zoom. This means we're able to invite more editors and agents to hear your pitches than ever before. We've secured eight amazing publishing professionals who want to hear about your books. You can find out about our editor and agent lineup here:

<https://www.romancewriters.co.nz/events/2021-editors-and-agent-pitches/>

When you register, tick the editors and agents you'd like to pitch. More may be added and we'll keep you updated. Please note that we only have a limited number of pitching slots, so we ask that you only sign up to pitch if you have a completed manuscript or are an experienced author with a proposal.

- **AWARDS DINNER AND COCKTAIL PARTY**

Our annual awards dinner will be held Saturday 7th August at the James Cook Hotel. Our theme this year is "Passport to Love". Come dressed to impress, inspired by your favorite travels and adventures.

We'll also be hosting 'Love on the Rocks' – a welcome cocktail party with drinks and canapes at the Foxtail bar (a four minute walk from the hotel) from 5:30 p.m. on Friday 6th August. This is a great chance for you to catch up with friends you haven't seen since before lockdown. This event is included in your ticket price, and you can purchase an extra ticket for a partner if you like.

- **THE SANDRA HYDE ROMANCE WRITERS MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP**

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the death of one of our longtime RWNZ members, and Harlequin Desire author, Sandra Hyde (writing as Sandra Hyatt). Sandra continues to help romance writers through the Sandra Hyde Romance Writers Trust, which was set up in her honour by family and friends.

If you're a NZ-based romance writer (published or unpublished) struggling to progress your writing goals, apply for her RWNZ conference scholarship.

In 2021, this covers the RWNZ conference fee, plus a \$150 contribution toward expenses. If the winner isn't currently a member of RWNZ, the prize will include a one-year membership subscription. Anyone who has previously entered (other than a prior successful applicant) is also welcome to reapply.

For details on how to apply and more on Sandra's life go to: <https://www.romancewriters.co.nz/events/sandra-hyde-romance-writers-memorial-scholarship/>

- **THE CONFERENCE COMMITTEE NEEDS YOU!**

I am in DESPERATE need of someone who is awesome at organising to take on the job of managing pitches (the weeks before/after conference) and co-ordinating our amazing volunteers.

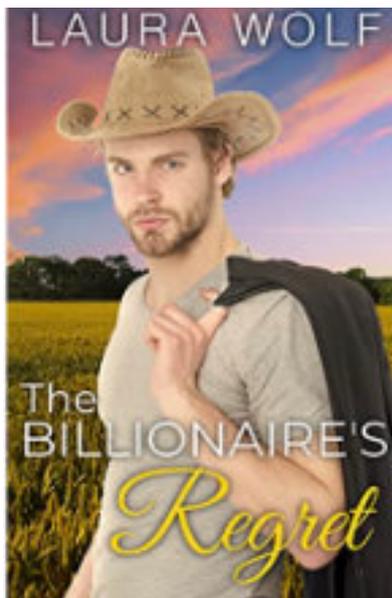
If this is you, PLEASE email me at steffgreen@gmail.com and I will be eternally grateful.

- **WE NEED A WRITING CRAFT WORKSHOP**

We have some AWESOME marketing and business workshops this year, but we need 1-2 more craft workshops. If you can present on something to do with craft, please fill in this form and we'll get back to you asap. <https://forms.gle/U6H4aacAu9CD9vQu8>

We've got lots more surprises up our sleeves and we can't wait to share them with you. We look forward to seeing you in Wellington in August!

*Steff xxx
Conference coordinator 2021*



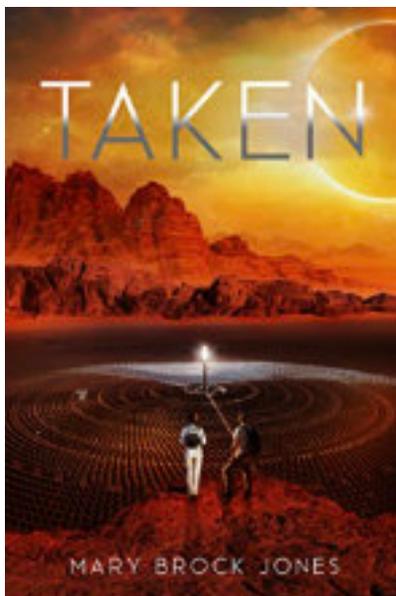
Laura Wolfe

THE BILLIONAIRE'S REGRET

Laura Wolfe just released *The Billionaire's Regret*.

A surprise child. A misunderstanding between friends. And a secret that has lasted a decade. A cowgirl meets her match with her billionaire ex-best friend in this sweet romance set in beautiful Montana.

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B096L9WDFJ>



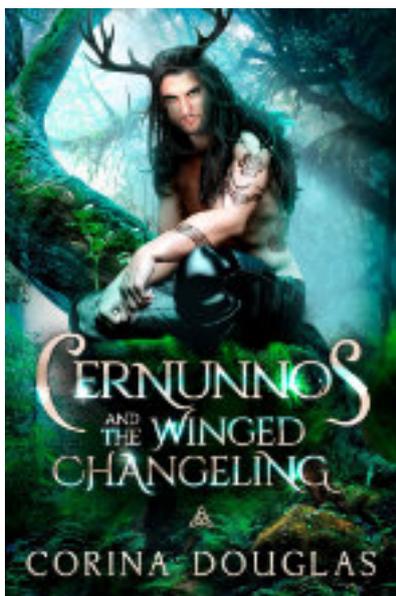
Mary Brock Jones

TAKEN

Mary Brock Jones has released *Taken*, the second book in her Arcadia series, a science fiction saga mixing romance, adventure and suspense.

Ethan Winter has been imprisoned and brutalised, his company attacked and his planet threatened, and to save them, he must work with a woman set on fighting him every step of the way.

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B08ZM9B8C5>



Corina Douglas

CERNUNNOS AND THE WINGED CHANGELING

On 18th May, Corina Douglas released *Cernunnos and the Winged Changeling*, a short novelette which is a complement to her *Daughter of Winter* series.

When a winged changeling is found hunting in his domain, the Wild God of the Forest is faced with a decision: mercy or death.

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B093BJSRSB>



Corina Douglas

WINTER'S VENGEANCE

On 30th May, Corina Douglas released *Winter's Vengeance*, the fifth story in her *Daughter of Winter* series.

Uncertain allies, faltering battle plans, and a shocking future. The legacy is no longer what it seemed.

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B08GBVWFFL>



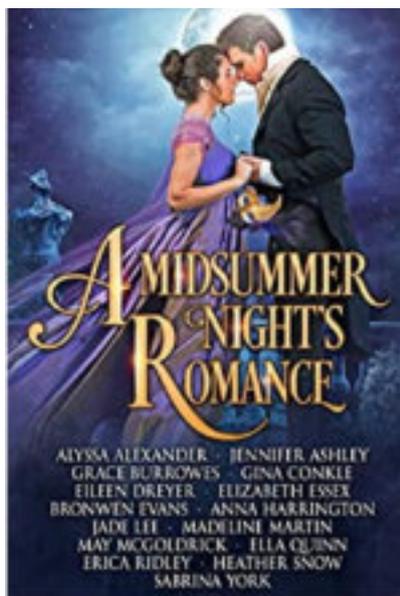
Vivien Street

STOLEN CHANCE

Vivien Street will be releasing *Stolen Chance* on June 20th. It is a standalone, second-chance, enemies to lovers romance with a spice level of 2.5.

Nathaniel Eagle couldn't believe the woman he'd given up all hope of finding had walked back into his life. He smiled, savoring his long awaited revenge.

<https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/stolen-love-vivien-street/1139605295>



Brownen Evans

A MIDSUMMER'S NIGHT ROMANCE

Brownen Evans has released a new boxset called *A Midsummer's Night Romance* with 14 other historical romance authors.

Filled with fairytale gardens and fantastical costumes, sparkling champagne, and heartwarming romance. One thing is certain—fifteen pairs of hearts will never be the same again.

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B088RMC47H>



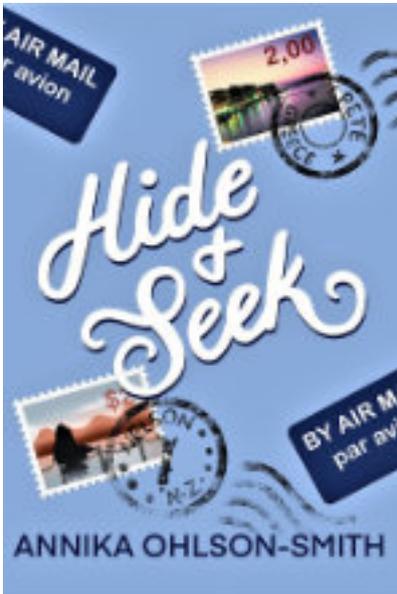
Jordan Ford

THE PROTECTOR

Jordan Ford released *The Protector* (Barret Boys, Book 3) in April.

He's tasked with protecting a celebrity's daughter, but with a stalker on the loose and a young woman bent on pretending she's not famous, his job is nearly impossible.

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B092161QZP>



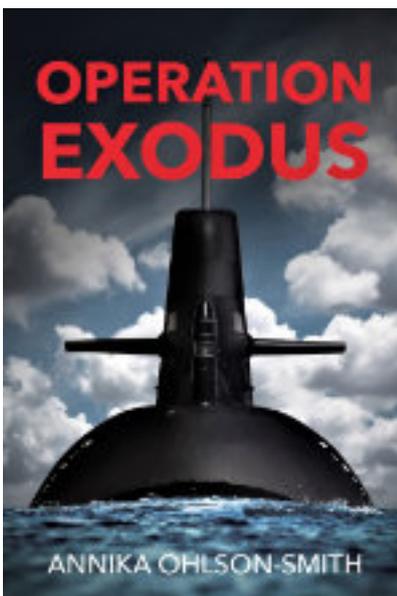
Annika Ohlson-Smith

HIDE AND SEEK

Annika Ohlson-Smith published two books in Nelson in late April. They can be purchased at Paper Plus in Nelson and Richmond, or by emailing Annika.

She wakes up in a hospital without knowing why she's there or who she is. Her gut feeling tells her to run away. Ending up in Crete she literally collapses into the arms of a total stranger. What will happen to her when she finally remembers?

[Email Annika: amos46@xtra.co.nz](mailto:amos46@xtra.co.nz)



Annika Ohlson-Smith

OPERATION EXODUS

Can be purchased at Paper Plus in Nelson and Richmond, or by emailing Annika.

Lieutenant Commander Annelee Holm's order is to hijack a bus full of people and take them to a nuclear safe shelter. A 'drill' becomes reality and to save them from a nuclear catastrophe, she must evacuate them all to the wilderness in the Andes. A long and hazardous journey where 'Love' strikes and Annelee must face another reality. Will they ever be able to go back home?

[Email Annika: amos46@xtra.co.nz](mailto:amos46@xtra.co.nz)



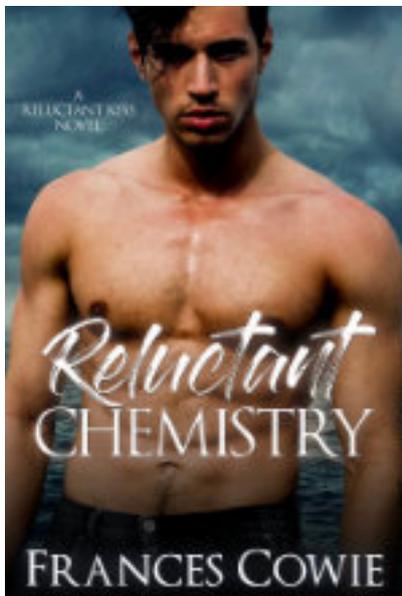
Allison Butler

THE THIEF

Allison Butler released *The Thief*, Book 2 of her *Border and Brides* series in print on June 2nd.

She needs a home, he needs a bride ... neither wants to fall in love.

<https://www.harpercollins.com.au/9781867222385/the-thief/>



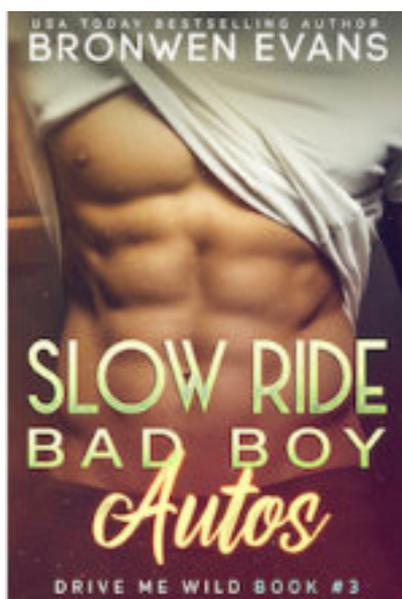
Frances Cowie

RELUCTANT CHEMISTRY

Frances Cowie will be releasing her latest contemporary romance, *Reluctant Chemistry*, which is Book Two in the *Reluctant Kiss* series on June 16th.

The second chance he never saw coming. He wouldn't drive away this time. Because...One Reluctant Kiss Would Never Be Enough. Welcome to Luka and CeCe's story.

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B096MXF57N>



Bronwen Evans

SLOW RIDE BAD BOY

Bronwen Evans will be releasing *Slow Ride Bad Boy*, Book 3 in her *Drive me Wild* series on July 7th.

A friends-with-benefits romance with her best friend's elder brother, set in Bad Boy Autos.

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B08KGZJQBN>

How to get your title featured:

Heart 2 Heart is always keen to share news from members:

- new book releases
- news of awards,
- contracts,
- and anything else that is worth celebrating.

To submit email the editor

heart2hearteditor@romancewriters.co.nz or use the form on the RWNZ website.

Supply: 2-3 sentences in the third person, a cover image (no other images will be accepted) and a CLEAN link direct to the retailer.



REGIONAL ROUND-UP REPORTS

Hawkes Bay

Convenor: Bronwen Evans

April meeting:

Jackie Rutherford talked to us about “How To Amp Up Your Author Voice”. The session was amazing, with examples from big blockbuster books showing how an author’s voice resonates. What is ‘Author’s Voice’. Jackie was brave enough to show us a before and after in her own work. Hopefully, Jackie will write up this topic for H2H. One thing in particular resonated with me as it’s simple—Author’s voice is what is said and how it is said. It is also where showing rather than telling is key. Showing allows for fresh similes for example. A fresh way of saying something and how an author interprets their character’s world.

May meeting:

The Hawke’s Bay group met on the second Saturday in May and talked about blurbs. Particularly, what should the blurb accomplish and therefore how much to reveal. It was summarised that it should be just enough to make the reader have to buy the book. The next meeting is on Saturday 12th, and we are discussing how to make the most of sequels.

Coast to Coast

Convenor: Julie Gilligan

April meeting:

The C2C April meeting was held online, and we had eleven members join. Enni, from our chapter group, took the attendees through how to use Canva when designing covers. Her demonstration showed us just how easily you could use a free book template, free graphics, and then filters to amplify the look and generate a very nice book cover.

May meeting:

A group of twenty-two was hosted in Tamahere by Caroline Bagshaw. We were taken through the ins and outs of how to work with beta readers by Nicky Webber, who also provided a detailed handout packed with the notes. This meeting was done a little differently, as our speaker presented during lunch, which left two hours of yakking and catching up with everyone—it was such a treat!

Wellington / Kapiti Coast

Convenor: Moira Kay

April meeting:

Another great meeting, held in Petone this month. After a catch up, Charlotte led an informative discussion about Gwen Hayes’s *Romancing the Beat* following her experience of a WIP critique with the woman herself. We also had a guest speaker, Michelle Moses, talk with us about time management, priorities, and getting organized.

May meeting:

Our chapter met up the coast at the Paraparaumu Library this month to discuss the importance of POV—how we do it, what our preferences are, and what’s actually important to our readers/genres etc. This was followed by a thorough discussion about Author Newsletters, in particular on-brand reader magnets, authenticity, and on-boarding sequences. And we all had a few chuckles when some of us shared some of the mistakes we’ve made in our publishing careers in an off-the-cuff “bloopers reel” chat.

Nelson

Convenor: Annika Ohlson-Smith

April meeting:

We began our April 10 meeting with a monthly update on our individual WIP writing journeys, followed by a paper on "Writing Dialogue in Fiction", led by Jaclyn Rosamond. Our discussion covered how writing dialogue in fiction in the 21st Century has changed. Modern readers prefer "white spaces" when choosing a book, preferring dialogue before action, plus shorter sentences, paragraphs, and chapters. They often skim read, and are less likely to buy if passages look too long.

We also spoke about the use of -ly adverbs in our writing. Adverbs are common in everyday language, thus an occasional adverb in fiction dialogue is more acceptable, less so in the narrative. We concluded with an exercise: rewriting a sentence by excluding a -ly adverb to make dialogue and action stronger.

Over cuppa and cake we had a wide-ranging chat regarding reviewing books on Amazon, and discussed Annika Ohlson-Smith's book launch.

May meeting:

We met, as usual, at Nick Smith's party rooms and started with the agenda, and then around the table with a catch up and where everyone was at with their story projects. Annika reported on her successful book launch that was attended by at least sixty people, which is a great turn out. She enjoyed her evening and her books were well-received.

We had a presentation by Karen on characterisation involving skeletons, circulatory system, nervous system, muscles, and skin, before there was an enticing

picture of Channing Tatum. We rounded out the meeting with an interesting writing exercise from a book by Edward de Bono called *How to Have Creative Ideas*. The exercise was called 'Association' and we had to develop associations between two random words, pilot and thunder.

Finally, while having our coffee we listened to discussions about funerals and muggings.

Otago / Southland

Convenor: Samantha Burton

April meeting:

The Otago/Southland chapter met at our usual venue (University of Otago Link), on Saturday, 10 April, at 2 p.m. We had one of our largest groups—eleven attendees! This month, as well as our usual catch-up, we discussed 'Identifying and overcoming stumbling blocks' such as perfectionism, comparisonitis, unrealistic expectations, fear of failure/success, FOMO, overwhelm, Imposter Syndrome, and writer's block!

May meeting:

Six of us met on Saturday, 1 May, to discuss the three writing/publishing achievements we're proudest of, and the three things we wish we'd known. A fascinating discussion ensued! (**Read our lists Page 9**) Many of those who couldn't attend actually ended up emailing in their achievements and lessons learned, so we could all benefit from them. Our next meeting will be on Saturday, 12 June, and will comprise a deep-dive into what 'writing to market' really means.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Colette Rivera ~ Otago
 Ali Mulford ~ Wellington
 Aavini Prasad ~ Auckland
 Terri Osborn ~ Wairarapapa
 Isa Pearl Ritchie ~ Wellington
 Andrea Curtis ~ Wellington
 Vicki Clewett ~ Auckland
 Kate David ~ Blenheim
 Julie Brocket ~ Otago
 Sarah Stephenson ~ Blenheim

Melanie Harding-Shaw ~
 Wellington
 Sarah Lin Turner ~ Nelson
 Alana Flavell ~ Hawkes Bay
 Tina Emsden ~ Christchurch
 Nat Connors ~ Auckland
 Charmaine Kennett ~ Christchurch
 Meguy Thiam ~ Auckland
 Kerry Stapleton ~ Overseas
 Amy Ridout ~ Nelson

Great to have you all with us!

Don't forget to read the information for new members page on our website. 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.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/RWNZMembersOnly/>

**The Heart 2 Heart formatting and Design
 are brought to you by Kura Carpenter**

The Cover-Up Artist

<https://www.kuracarpenter.com/>

