

June / July 2021

# Heart 2 Heart

Romance Writers of New Zealand

**TIPS ON :  
FINDING WRITING MOJO**

**+**

**AUDIOBOOK CREATION**

**+**

**13 WAYS CONTESTS CAN HELP YOUR  
WRITING CAREER**



**CONTACTS**

RWNZ President, Susan Sims:

[president@romancewriters.co.nz](mailto:president@romancewriters.co.nz)

Vice President, Mollie Smith:

[vicepresident@romancewriters.co.nz](mailto:vicepresident@romancewriters.co.nz)

Treasurer, Deb Howell:

[treasurer@romancewriters.co.nz](mailto:treasurer@romancewriters.co.nz)

Secretary, Rachel Stedman:

[secretary@romancewriters.co.nz](mailto:secretary@romancewriters.co.nz)

Publicity, Josie Berliner:

[publicity@romancewriters.co.nz](mailto:publicity@romancewriters.co.nz)

Memberships, John McCormick:

[membership@romancewriters.co.nz](mailto:membership@romancewriters.co.nz)

Heart2Heart Editor, Corina Douglas:

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## FINDING MY MOJO



*Corina Douglas*

This editorial will be short and sweet given the content in this edition is *outstanding* this time round. And to be honest, the issue I'm having at the moment with my writing is something that doesn't need much explanation—in a nutshell, I'm trying to 'find my mojo'. After a hectic rush of pre-orders, I decided to take the month of June off writing to catch up on some much-needed admin tasks that had been backlogged. Unfortunately, due to losing another family member in late June, my writing hiatus was extended into July—comprising a total of 61 days in the end.

As July dragged on, I told myself I'd be starting fresh on the 1st of August. However, the closer I crept toward that date, the quicker my motivation dive-bombed. It took me a while to see that the main reason for this wasn't just because I wasn't ready (given our recent loss), but also because I was SCARED. You see, the next book I'm supposed to write is the final book in my current series. I have big expectations for its ending, but I'm conscious that my readers have even higher expectations than I do, and that led me down a twisted path of self-doubt and fear.

It took a while to see the truth for what it was, but also to recognise that I was doing the right thing by taking time off until things settled down family-wise. This is because the creative mind needs the right environment to work, and I was more than conscious that I'd pushed myself rigorously to meet pre-order deadlines after the sudden loss of my dad in early March. In hindsight, those months are a huge blur. I did end up launching the book on time, and it was well-received, but the main feedback I've had so far is that the story was incredibly raw and heartbreaking. Don't get me wrong—that's my style. I can't pull off humour what-so-ever, but I can write emotional storylines. However, it appears that this latest book was rawer than most, and a lot more readers than usual have become overwhelmed with the angst and sorrow and heartbreak tied into the story.

The problem was, I hadn't noticed it was like that until those reviews. And after looking back at the manuscript after some much-needed distance, I can see that the loss I was experiencing in my life was transferred to my characters. Being a pantser, I can only surmise that it naturally flowed from my subconscious. At the time, I'd thought the

# LIVE, WORK, CREATE.

book wasn't hard-hitting and, in fact, had even questioned my editor on whether it was up to its usual standards. Her reply had been incredulous and that it was the biggest emotional book I'd written yet, however, I couldn't see that until after it launched.

So with my latest reviews in mind, I consciously made a decision NOT to start the finale in my series during the month of July until I'd given myself the time I needed to heal from our recent loss. My story does not deserve to be clouded by emotional heartbreak. No, my finale deserves an open, creative mind that is not influenced by real-life experiences. In other words—an environment that will make the story flourish and come to life. So, I respectfully gave it that time.

And here I am now, at the start of August, ready to begin writing. However, I now have a new problem I'm facing—that being that I'm now too scared to start. You'd think that after seven publications I'd be biting at the bit and super confident in my ability. Ahh, no. Quite the opposite. The time off has only increased my level of anxiety and fear to deliver on expectations. However, I won't let that stop

me, and in fact, refuse to let it do so. If you've read one of my earlier editorials, you'll know that my 'why' is strong enough for me to battle through this fear. It's also something that many, if not all writers face from time to time. And yes, I'll even argue black and blue that the greats do too a.k.a. Nora Roberts and Stephen King.

So, to put it bluntly: I need to (re)find my mojo. And to do that, I'm going to turn to the tips and tricks that have been shared over the ages. In case there is anyone out there currently experiencing the same position that I am in, I hope that this list will provide you with a path forward to jump that hurdle of fear, find your mojo, and push forward.

## **Some tips to 'Find Your Mojo' again:**

- Remind yourself you're not alone. Everyone experiences this in their writing career—numerous times in fact.
- Go for a walk or get out into nature to get those creative juices flowing.
- Set your alarm when the house is asleep. Get up and make writing the first thing you do for the day. Knock that task off first!



- Write your goals down and put them somewhere visible.
- Find an accountability partner. Tell that person how many words you're aiming to write in a certain timeframe. Ask them to check in with you regularly.
- Post your goal on social media and provide regular updates. Hold yourself accountable!
- Pull out your calendar, find a spare thirty minutes and set aside that time to write.
- Listen to a conference seminar or read some motivational craft books on fighting the fear but doing it anyway.
- Speak to a trusted colleague on your story idea to ramp up motivation.
- Visit the local library, pull out your laptop, and write in the company of books and like-minded people.
- Pull out your old first drafts to remind yourself that a polished manuscript is the last step in this journey and that it always starts with a crappy first draft. ALWAYS!
- Listen to an audiobook or read a favourite passage from one of your favourite books—particularly on a similar scene you're about to write.
- Book in a new cover with your cover designer to celebrate after you've written a certain number of words.
- Post your frustrations on writing FB groups and other similar forums asking if others are experiencing this and what they do to move forward.
- Pull out craft books on outlines, as often the problem is that you don't have an outline (can't speak for experience on this as I don't outline but I've heard this works wonders).
- Pour a glass of wine (or your favorite beverage) and play some moody music to set the scene, then write.
- Tell yourself that the first draft isn't the final draft—you have plenty of time and opportunity to change and amend the story until you deem it ready for publication, but right now, the most important thing to do is to START.
- Pull up your reviews (on Amazon.com or similar) and read all the positive comments. Ignore the negative ones please! Better yet, print the positive reviews out where you can see them by your computer desk or chosen writing space.
- Just like the muscles we use when we begin marathon training, weight training, or even swimming, the creative brain takes a while to warm up and become effective. And the skill of writing is no different. Expect the first few scenes, possibly even chapters, to be stilted and downright terrible. But don't let that stop you. Keep pushing through until the creative flow returns because it eventually will, and you can always fix a bad draft.

Etc.

I'm sure there are many others, but hopefully one or a number of these tips spark you to begin your writing journey today. Know that you aren't alone and I'll be on the same journey with you.

You got this! See you on the other side.

*Corina ✕*

## LET'S TALK AUDIOBOOKS (EPISODE 2)



**Naomi Barton**

### *Finding a narrator and investment*

So you're keen to make an audiobook? But wonder how you will find a narrator and how much your investment will be? Well, read on...it may not be as daunting as you think!

There is a broad range of options available to you. The Audiobook Creation Exchange, known as ACX, is the marketplace where many narrators and authors connect. ACX is an affiliate of Audible/Amazon but only open to residents from the US, Canada, UK, and Ireland. You may also have heard that your titles may have been 'claimed' by scammers on ACX. There is sadly a lot of scamming in the ACX marketplace, so be sure you have claimed your titles even if you can't work directly with ACX! Take a look at the link to

the ACX checklist to seek more clarification about this: [ACX Right's Holders Checklist](#)

Fortunately, Findaway Voices exists and is open to those of us not living in the above-mentioned countries, and because Findaway will market your book 'wide', your audiobook will make it on to Audible and about 40 other online retailers quite easily.

Findaway invites you to explain what you're looking for, and they will present you with a range of narrators who will audition for you. You can negotiate the per-finished-hour (PFH) rate, and you can also consider a royalty share option, which is called *Voices Share*. This means you'll share 20% of your royalties with the narrator in exchange for half their PFH rate. You are committed to this contract for 10 years, although you can 'buy' your narrator out at any stage. *Voices Share* tends to not attract the more experienced narrators because it's a big risk for the narrator to be sharing royalties with you in exchange for a lower PFH rate. Most narrators would far rather have their PFH payment upfront. Although, at times they will take royalty share jobs if they are eager to break into a new genre or they see your story

You must consider that you've put in a lot of effort to tell your story, and the narrator is going to interpret and express it to a whole new audience. It's important that they share your vision for storytelling. You want someone whose accent, style, and studio setup match what you are aiming for. For instance, what gender is your main character, and do you have a broad range of characters who need different accents? These are all important considerations. You may also have a timeframe that matters to you. Are you planning to release the audiobook at the same time as your ebook? You need to ensure your narrator is aware of these constraints and has time in their schedule to deliver within your timeframe.

The standard union rate for narrators in America is USD \$200 PFH. **Remember, this is for the narration only.** It doesn't include the editing, mastering, and proofing that you will also need, which may be done by the narrator themselves or outsourced to an audio producer. A skilled narrator can take about 2 hours for every 1 hour of audio they produce in the booth, but many take far longer, and

each finished hour can be the result of hours of work behind the scenes. Recording pickups, which involves re-recording the flubs, missed or added words, and mispronunciations are time consuming, and this is all part of the PFH that you pay.

An experienced narrator should be able to give you a good estimate of the final duration of your book depending on how many words-per-minute they average. For me, at approximately 150 words-per-minute, a 63,000 word novel will equate to about 7 finished hours.

But perhaps you want to skip the 20% commission to Findaway and find a narrator for yourself? Most narrators will be happy to work directly with you. But where do you find these wardrobe-lurking folks?

**Check out these sites, which connect you to Australasian narrators:**

- <https://aussienarrator.com> is a new site dedicated to helping authors find great local voices for their stories
- <https://anznarrators.nz> has a comprehensive list of Australian and NZ narrators

**In addition, here are some other suggestions:**

- Facebook pages such as Indie (ACX And Others) Audiobook Narrators and Producers, where you could reach out to narrators
- Ask for a referral from an author friend who's had a great experience
- Listen to audiobooks in your genre, and approach those narrators directly who you think would do a great job of your story
- Find an audiobook publishing house (of which there are too many to list here), who can take care of the whole process for you

Remember, if you are traditionally published, you most likely won't have the rights to create your own audiobooks, but you can always negotiate this when you agree to your contract, which is something more than one author I know wishes they'd done.





When reaching out to a narrator, introduce yourself and explain what you are hoping to achieve. Ask them to record a sample or two for you. Think carefully about what you'd like to hear. Accents, characters of different genders, and steamy scenes are important to get right, so don't be shy to ask the narrator to prepare more than one short excerpt for you to listen to.

Remember, at this stage they won't have read your entire book, so they won't necessarily understand everything about your characters' inner motivation, but you will know pretty quickly if their narration is a good fit for your book. Trust your gut and don't sell your story short. A narrator's ability to characterise is the distinction between someone 'reading' your book and 'narrating' it. You are a storyteller, so you know when it's been told well according to your tastes and preferences.

And conversely, be open-minded. You might have a particular idea about how a character should sound, but a quality narrator comes from a dramatic background, and they are skilled in interpretation for ears, not just eyes.

Talk with your narrator, and trust them in their professional judgement. If you have concerns, let them know. However, if you are happy, great! Time to agree to the PFH rate, which I would advise to be in a contractual agreement, and your journey into the wonderful world of audiobooks has begun!

In the next article I will discuss how you upload your files to Findaway, and I will share a few insights on where you can market your audiobooks to maximise sales.

**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.*

**Website:** <http://www.naomibartonvoice.com/>

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

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



## CONFESSIONS OF A CONTEST ADDICT



*Jackie Rutherford*

### *13 ways contests can help you with your writing career*

My addiction to contests came about early in my romance writing career. After a background writing young adult fiction, I'd joined RWNZ and had written three chapters of my first ever romance novel when I got an email informing me about RWNZ's Great Beginnings contest. When I investigated further, I couldn't believe that there was such an easy opportunity to get feedback from other writers who knew what they were doing when it came to romance writing.

I quickly edited my three chapters, wrote a synopsis, and then submitted it into the contest. I still remember the feeling when I opened up the email informing me I was a finalist, along with the constructive and

encouraging feedback I received from those first-round judges.

With that, I was hooked. An experienced romance writer friend gave me fabulous advice to enter the same book in a few different contests to get a wide variety of feedback rather than just rely on the judges from one contest. And so began my addiction with contests. I did a quick tally for this article, and all up in the last four years I've entered 23 different stories in over 40 contests. From these contests, I've gained so many insights and learnt valuable lessons. I've put together a list of how entering contests can benefit you, but I'm sure if you choose to enter contests you will find other advantages as well.

### **1. The feedback helps you to improve your writing technique**

Okay, so it feels a little redundant to spell this out, but it's impossible to put a price on how valuable the collective feedback from contests has been in improving my writing technique. Before I started entering contests, I'd done a lot of courses, I'd had award-winning writing friends give me feedback on



assessments, I'd had a book accepted for publication and worked with a professional editor at a publishing house—but I can honestly say the most helpful thing I have ever done to improve my writing is to enter contests.

When you enter contests, the first-round judges are usually other writers from the organization running the contest, and as most contests will give a single entry to at least three judges, by rough estimates, I've had more than 300 other writers give me direct feedback on my writing. All of these writers have their own strengths. Some judges are incredibly generous and will line-edit your entries, which provides fantastic technical help. I once had someone go through an entry and circle every adverb I'd used. Another writer pointed out every incident of passive writing in my excerpt (and there was a lot). One judge who I'll forever be thankful to told me I needed to work on my character's motivation and pointed me in the direction of Debra Dixon's *GMCL Goal, Motivation, and Conflict* book.

Having lots of different writers critique your work means you very quickly learn your own

strengths and weaknesses. And by the time I'd had over thirty judges reading a number of different entries telling me they loved my voice and dialogue, but I majorly, majorly sucked at setting, then I finally accepted that I needed to go and do some serious professional development on how to write engaging setting.

## **2. You get to test different story ideas**

I've always been someone who's had an overabundance of story ideas and an underabundance of time to write them. If you're like me, contests provide a great way to test the market and see which of your story ideas/beginnings really appeal to readers. Most contests ask for the first few chapters plus a synopsis so, therefore, you don't have to write the whole story and then discover the idea doesn't appeal or there is a major flaw in your set-up. This saves you precious time and means you can focus on the ideas with the most commercial potential.

## **3. You can test different genres**

If you write in one genre but you're interested in testing whether your voice works in another genre, then contests are a great, low-



risk way to do this. Many contests have different categories (e.g. historical, paranormal, contemporary, etc.) and the judges of those categories are usually familiar with the demands of a particular subgenre and how your story stacks up.

#### 4. You learn character is king

To be honest, this has been my biggest lesson from contests. It doesn't matter how exciting your story idea is, if you haven't made your readers care about your characters, you're not going to do well. I learned this lesson in a big way through a young adult LGBTQ+ entry I circulated amongst a lot of contests called *Attractive Forces*. I knew the story idea was generic—nerd tutors football player, they fall in love, but then have to face coming out to friends and family—but I liked my starting chapters so I entered it in some contests. The entry finaled and won for one simple reason—the judges just LOVED Logan and Jake, my two main characters.

I had a judge telling me they swore out loud when they got to the end of the entry. I had judges ask me to email them when I released the book because they so needed to know what happened to these characters. I also had a judge telling me they were going to get T-shirts printed saying 'I Love Logan' and 'I Love Jake'.

At the same time, I had other entries circulating in the same contests with far more exciting and unique ideas that never had the same response, because frankly, the judges just didn't like the characters as much.

Character is king. Lesson learnt. I'll never forget it.

#### 5. You learn how subjective this industry is and you're never going to please everyone

*Attractive Forces*, my entry that won so many contests and had full manuscript requests from a number of final-round agent and editor judges, also had a judge score it 48/100 and basically tell me I couldn't write. Yup, that's the downside of putting your work out there; there are going to be some people who don't like it. But that's okay. The sooner you learn that not all readers are your readers, the quicker you're going to save

yourself a lot of mental anguish trying to write something that everyone likes.

And while judging guidelines urges judges to be constructive and use their nice words, sometimes there can be harsh comments. I've lost count of the number of negative comments that I've had from judges in contests. *"I think you were trying to be funny, but it really didn't work."* *"This opening did not work for me. I found it off-putting and would not have continued if I'd picked it up in a store."* *"I know this is not what you want to hear, but there is absolutely nothing special about these chapters."*

If lots of people are telling you they don't like some aspect of your story/writing, then you need to look at improving it. But if you've just stumbled across someone who isn't into your style of writing, shrug it off, or make yourself feel better by looking at all the nasty reviews for some of your favourite books. You are not alone.

The nice sideline benefit of entering contests when you're an unpublished author is that it helps you to develop a thick skin, which, unfortunately, you're going to need as soon as you put your work out into the world.

#### 6. You get feedback from industry professionals and learn how subjective it is even amongst agents and editors

If you are among the highest scoring entries from the first-round of judging, your entry will go to the final-round judges, who are usually either editors or agents. If you want to be traditionally published, this can mean leapfrogging the slush pile, as many agents or editors will request your full manuscript if they like what they read. And because you often get comments from these final-round judges, it once again illustrates how subjective it can be at all levels in this industry.

Below is the feedback I received from the two final-round judges in the High Five contest run by the Southwest Florida RWA chapter, which was a contest simply for the first 5 pages of a story:

Editor final-round judge feedback:

*"Your 5 pages give us the very heart of what*



*your story is about, along with offering a unique twist! Bravo. We see the conflict, and you've set up a large number of story questions that drive the reader forward. Fantastic entry! I would love to see the synopsis and the full manuscript."*

Agent final-round judge feedback:

*"Although fairy tale re-tellings are perennially popular, they need to be different enough from the source material to attract reader interest. There was also too much backstory dumped into the first few pages."*

Just to reiterate – this contest was for the first five pages of a manuscript! Five pages! And yet you have an editor from a major publishing house and a successful agent with two very different takes on the same five pages.

### **7. You learn your point of difference in the market**

Contests provide opportunities not only to learn your own strengths and weaknesses as a writer, but also potential opportunities for your author brand. For instance, the most consistent praise I've had in contests is my

humorous voice. My entries where I've veered too far from that and tried a more serious tone have never done as well. So, I've learned my humour is a big part of my appeal to readers. Equally, I've learned that there is a balance and if I've gone too slapstick and snarky, without enough emotion to draw people in, readers don't like that nearly as much.

I also had a few first-round judges respond really enthusiastically to one of my main characters in my book *Opposites Attract*, and one who was a scientist journalist, pointing out that there aren't many heroines in the STEM fields in romance. This made me pause, because as a former biology teacher I often have to tone down my instinct to use science metaphors and include the fun science facts that naturally bubble out when I'm writing. So instead of toning it down for this book, I embraced the fact that this is a unique aspect of my author brand and amped it up.

I have two more books in this series planned around heroines working in STEM, and I wouldn't have realized that this is a gap in the market if it hadn't been for the feedback from contests.



**8. You get motivation to continue to write**

Writing is an isolating and lonely endeavour sometimes, and feedback with contests can provide motivation to continue. I often find myself returning to some of my most enthusiastic comments from judges when I need inspiration to finish a book.

**9. You have confidence going out into the market**

When I launched my first self-published title, *Opposites Attract*, in May this year, I was far less nervous than I would have been otherwise because I knew due to feedback from contests I had a product that enough readers liked. Therefore, my job was to make sure my packaging (cover and blurb) and marketing was appropriate so I could attract the right readers to my work.

I think one of the dangers that arise from how easy it is to self-publish is it can lead to people rushing to get their first book onto the market. So, if you're an unpublished writer, I highly recommend you take your time and use the opportunities that contests provide to hone your writing technique and get feedback on your work. If you're going to go to all of the effort to publish and market a book, you want to make sure it is one that the majority of people who read it are going to enjoy.

**10. It's a great chance to network with other writers and writing professionals**

As I've mentioned, the first-round judges for most contests are other writers, and therefore contests actually provide a great opportunity to network with them. I've had quite a few first-round judges offer to become beta readers off the back of contests. A friend of mine credits contests with helping her sell her first book back in 2013, as one of the first-round judges of the contest loved her entry and commented 'I think my editor would really love this'—and sure enough, that editor ended up buying the book.

**11. You can win some valuable prizes**

It's not about the prizes, of course, but in some contests there are great prizes up for grabs. Some are simply monetary awards,

which is always nice because the entry fees can add up if you are entering a lot of contests. Other contests offer prizes such as professional editing or manuscript assessments, which are incredibly useful if you are on a limited budget and also gives you a chance to sample a new editor with no risk.

**12. You find new readers and get more reviews**

I haven't experienced this personally as my experience with contests so far has all been with unpublished books, but don't forget there are lots of contests for published books (RWNZ's Koru being our local example), and these contests provide great opportunities to potentially find new superfans.

A friend recently told me about feedback she'd had from a published book contest when one of the readers had loved her book so much they'd gone and bought all of her other books and reviewed them all on various platforms.

**13. You come to terms with the element of luck in this industry**

Ah...luck, that fickle mistress. There is an element of luck in contests that you can't avoid. No matter how the scoring is done, some judges score harder than others, some judges have particular—and what often feels like unfair—biases against the type of story you want to tell. In other words, a story that does well in one contest won't necessarily do well in other contests because of that luck element.

You will never know what innocuous sentences in your entry could offend some judges. In one of my entries, I had a scene where the heroine is apartment hunting and jokes about avoiding roommates with eight cats and others who practice satanic rituals. The opening line on one of my judging sheets for this entry was, "As the owner of eleven cats, I can tell you right now that my cats are wonderful to live with." Oops. Not surprisingly, I didn't get the greatest score from that particular judge.

Rather than getting too frustrated or upset about incidents like this, I try to frame this

random element in the bigger picture that this is what the industry is like. Writing a book that readers enjoy and putting it out into the world can feel like the equivalent of buying a lottery ticket, and that's another reality of this industry that you just have to accept. Going through the contest gauntlet definitely helps you come to grips with this reality.

### Some practical help on what contests to enter

- **New Zealand**

If you are interested in entering contests for the first time, RWNZ's website is a great place to start. <https://www.romancewriters.co.nz/contests/>

There are a variety of contests available for unpublished entries. Note—only the Pacific Hearts contest requires you to be an unpublished author, for all other contests it is only your entry that needs to be unpublished for the duration of the contest.

- Great Beginnings contest
- Daphne Clair de Jong First Kiss
- Pacific Hearts Award
- The Chapter Short Story Contest

Published books can be entered into the Koru.

I want to take this chance to say a big thank you to all those RWNZ members who volunteer as contest coordinators and judges, because the contests couldn't run without your generosity.

- **Australia**

Romance Writers of Australia offers a number of contests for different stages in your writing career: <https://romanceaustralia.com/contests-overview/>

- **America**

Romance Writers of America (RWA) has a list of the upcoming contests for their various chapters on their website [www.rwa.org](http://www.rwa.org) under Events> Chapter Events

[https://www.rwa.org/Online/Events/Chapter\\_Events/Online/Events/Chapter\\_Events](https://www.rwa.org/Online/Events/Chapter_Events/Online/Events/Chapter_Events)

Note—you don't have to be a member of RWA to enter most of these contests, although you do often get reduced pricing if you are.

If you have any questions about any aspect of entering contests, please feel free to email me at: [jackie@jackierutherford.com](mailto:jackie@jackierutherford.com)

Good luck!



**Bio:** Jackie writes Young Adult fiction under Jackie Rutherford, M/F contemporary romance under the pen name, Jacqueline Lee; and M/M romance under pen name, Jax Calder. She has won RWNZ's Pacific Hearts Award, Daphne Clair de Jong First Kiss contest, Chapter Short Contest, and Great Beginnings Editor's choice, along with winning the Chicago-North Fire and Ice Contest, the Grand Prize in the Valley of the Sun Hot Prospects Contest, Grand Prize in the Golden Rose Contest, RWA Ripping Starts contest, and has won her category in The Emily, The Stiletto, The Catherine, High Five, North Texas Great Expectations, Melody of Love, Diamonds in the Desert, and Utah Great Beginnings contests. For more information, you can find Jackie and her work at:

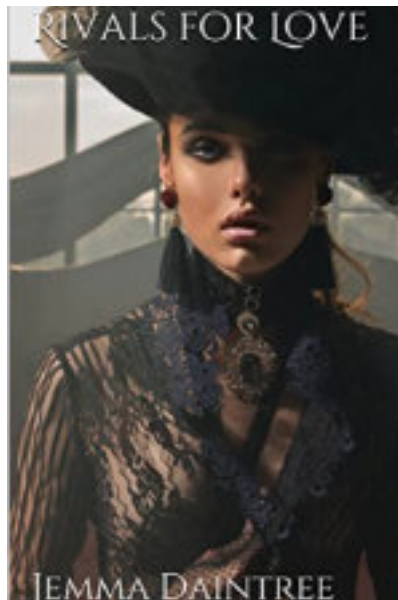
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## Jemma Daintree

### **RIVALS FOR LOVE**

*Rivals for Love*, by Jemma Daintree, is a NZ historical romance that was released on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June. It is the third book in the Aphrodite Club series.

*Will Carys succeed in publishing a new women's magazine or be prevented by Press Baron Felix Kinkaid?*

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B097TN26SK>



## Joanie MacNeil

### **A SENSE OF DUTY**

Joanie MacNeil recently released the second novel in her series, *Honorable Men: The Scots*.

*Hannah has no room for a man in her life and is focused on her plan to leave Scotland. Can handsome and charismatic Regan MacInnes change her mind and convince her to stay?*

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B096PZH698>



## Alexa Rivers

### **FIGHTER'S SECRET**

Alexa Rivers recently released *Fighter's Secret*, the third book in her Crown MMA Romance series.

*He's too wild, too unpredictable, and completely off-limits by my coach's decree.*

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B08XW8VDC5>



## Eva Shepherd

### **STRANDED WITH THE RECLUSIVE EARL**

Eva Shepherd recently released *Stranded with the Reclusive Earl* (Young Victorian Ladies, 2).

*Seeking shelter in a storm, Lady Iris Springfield arrives at the doorstep of Theo Crighton, the grumpy Earl of Greystone. Discovering he has shut himself away since the fire that took his eyesight, Iris uses her sunny optimism to counter his dourness. Theo is the first man to appreciate her for herself, not her looks or social connections. Now can she be the one to bring him back to life?*

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0979NM679>

## 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](mailto: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

### Wellington / Kapiti Coast

**Convenor: Moira Kay**

June meeting:

This month saw our group trialing a new venue in Johnsonville, which turned out to be great! We talked of great beginnings and shared our tips for hooking readers with everything from titles to last lines. We also talked of author branding, and drilling right down to understand our core promise to our readers so we don't trip ourselves up by breaking that promise! The next meeting will be at the Paraparaumu Library, from 1-4 pm, on Saturday 3rd July.

July meeting:

July saw a substantial turn-out for our regional group with over twenty members rocking up some serious discussion in the back room at the Paraparaumu Library! After a catch up and the sharing of our great beginnings homework from the previous month, we moved on to talk of romance news and recent big happenings in the genre e.g. the Ruby Dixon TikTok phenomenon. Following this, came the sharing and critiquing of book covers and a reminder of the important things to consider when choosing/creating a cover. Last on the agenda were a few cold reads and a brief chat about the upcoming conference. Our next meeting will be held 14th August at the Johnsonville Collective Community Hub.

### Nelson

**Convenor: Annika Ohlson-Smith**

July meeting:

The Nelson chapter met up at member Annika's house for the afternoon of Saturday the 10th of July. After a catch-up from members, we discussed options for where to hold our meetings going forward. One member, Christie, led a discussion on pitching stories (comparative and elevator), after which we practiced writing pitches for the last book we read and our own writing projects. We rounded off the meeting with delicious brownies and a chocolate roll made by members, Jaclyn and Annika. Our next meeting is Saturday 14 August 2021, venue yet to be decided.





## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Carmel Phillips ~ Wellington  
Carolyn Crow ~ Auckland  
Cindy Williams ~ Central North Island  
Diane Dupres ~ Otago  
Elisabeth MacDonald ~ Central North Island  
Graci Kim ~ Auckland  
Julie Wallace-Cooley ~ Christchurch  
Kerry Lambeth ~ Wellington  
Megan Spiers ~ Wellington  
Nikki Flaws ~ Central North Island  
Nian Nola ~ Auckland  
Olivia Spooner ~ Auckland  
Susan James ~ Wellington  
Tansy Boggon ~ Christchurch

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/>

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