

Oct / Nov 2021

Heart 2 Heart

Romance Writers of New Zealand

TIPS ON :

GHOSTWRITING

+

WRITING UNIVERSAL FANTASY

+

TOP 10 GOODREADS TIPS

+

RWNZ WRITING CONTEST UPDATES

PRESIDENT'S REPORT MOLLIE SMITH	3
EDITORIAL GHOSTWRITING	4
INSIDER ARTICLES:	
THE 'SMUT' EXPERIMENT	9
GETTING TO GRIPS WITH UNIVERSAL FANTASY	13
TOP 10 TIPS ON USING GOODREADS	19
RWZN NEWS	
WRITING CONTESTS NEWS	16
NEW RELEASES/AWARDS	22
REGIONAL REPORTS	25
WELCOME NEW MEMBERS	28



CONTACTS

RWZN President, Mollie Smith:
president@romancewriters.co.nz

Vice President, Matt Mole:
vicepresident@romancewriters.co.nz

Treasurer, Deb Howell:
treasurer@romancewriters.co.nz

Secretary, Rachel Stedman:
secretary@romancewriters.co.nz

Publicity, Josie Berliner:
publicity@romancewriters.co.nz

Memberships, John McCormick:
membership@romancewriters.co.nz

Heart2Heart Editor, Corina Douglas:
The deadline for H2H is the 20th of each month. Please have all articles, news, reports, and advertising to the editor at: heart2hearteditor@romancewriters.co.nz on or before the deadline.

Heart To Heart (H2H) is the official publication of Romance Writers of New Zealand (RWNZ). No part may be reproduced or used for profit by RWNZ or others without prior written permission from the editor.

The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily the views of RWNZ, its executive, or its editors. While every effort is made to ensure accuracy, no responsibility will be taken by RWNZ or the editors for inaccurate information.

**Mollie Smith**

Hi y'all!

It's getting closer and closer to Christmas (and summer), and I'm sure everyone's itching to get out into the beautiful, sunny weather with family and friends. Since many of you are voracious readers, too, I'm sure you'll have a heap of good books to read while you're out and about. If not, then you can always add to your TBR pile!

Two contests have finished (well, one is close to finishing): Great Beginnings and First Kiss. I know those of you who have entered Great Beginnings will be eagerly awaiting your results, and to those of you who have entered the First Kiss contest, good luck! The next contest after this is Pacific Hearts, opening on 1 Feb, so you've got a bit of time to get your entry polished.

The conference committee is coming up with some fabulous ideas for Conference 2022! There are a couple more things to confirm and, after that, I think the committee should be able to release a bit of info about where and when it's going to be. Watch this space and start saving now!

To those of you who have decided to do NaNoWriMo, well done! I had set myself the goal of writing 60k words in 60 days starting from 1 October. It hasn't worked out too well; I think I've managed about 10k. My goal wasn't the word count, though; the goal was the "bum in seat every day whether I wanted to or not" goal. Some days I could only get to 200 words. Some days I got 1k. Some days I edited an in-progress novel. But the important part was that I was there—bum in seat. "They" say it takes three weeks to form a habit, but research says it can take anywhere between two and eight months! The take home here is to not get too disheartened if you find yourself not forming that habit quite yet. You may just need a bit more time.

With Christmas closing in, I occasionally get reminded about the traditions my family had in the US, where I was raised. Dad took us to Christmas Eve mass at 6 p.m., followed by dinner at my grandparents', and we sat around opening presents until we needed to get back to Mum's house. But, the most special thing that happened was when Dad pulled out *The Cajun Night Before Christmas* and read it to us. It seems silly, but every year now, I pull out my copy and read it to myself. If I concentrate hard enough, I can hear my grandpa talking in his thick Cajun accent.

Whatever your plans are for Christmas, please stay safe. Put your feet up and relax, too; you've earned it after this year! Have a spectacular holiday season, and I'll see you all next year.

Nga mihi nui

-Mollie Smith, President

GHOSTWRITING

*Corina Douglas*

I can't believe that when this edition releases, it will be December! I don't know about you, but the Christmas cheer feels well and truly lacking this season, which means I'll be trying all the harder to ensure that the spirit of Christmas is felt in our family. The children's innocence means so much to me, and in a way, that's how I also view a story when selling it to my readers. I want to protect their sparkling view of the world we create. I want them to become so immersed in the story I've written that they don't realise they are sitting in their living room (or lying in their bed as it may be) while they read my story. Their minds *must* be elsewhere, filled with the action, adventure, mystery, or the romance my story is delivering. Of course, in order to produce such work, as author's, we must be able to create, even under duress.

Writing is such a lonely game at the best of times. I tend to enjoy that so I am able to create, but when I come across hiccups or issues, the best way to overcome them is to talk to other authors. Talking about our writing problems with others who experience the same means we obtain different ways of doing things and find alternative methods to move forward. However, it's duly noted that what works for one may not work for all;

therefore, it is our job to meander through all the feedback to work out which path suits us best.

Thus, my writing journey this last month has been marked by many conversations with both writing friends and clients, but the most interesting conversation I've had was with a ghostwriter. As many of you may have done (or may be doing now), I've considered offering my services as a ghostwriter numerous times. However, in more recent times, I've also considered *hiring* one to produce the various book ideas running around in my head. And this, folks, is my current problem. I have too many book ideas cramming up too much space in my head. Every day I fight the urge to write one story idea or the other, all while trying to tell myself to stick to my schedule already laid out. My biggest problem is that I don't just have fiction ideas anymore—I have non-fiction too. And these ideas are based on subjects that I've searched for online and in bookstores only to find they are either lacking in subject material or nowhere to be found. Thus, the idea of farming those ideas out while still laying claim to that concept is beginning to look attractive.



This train of thought has been prodding away at my consciousness more and more often recently. I also weigh up how busy I am. There are only so many hours in the day that I can allocate to my bread and butter (editing) and my writing endeavours, while also ensuring I have enough time to look after my family. I also had to tell myself some hard truths and remind myself that when I do sit down in front of my computer to write, nine times out of ten (unless I have to write articles), I choose to write a fiction story every time. Meanwhile, those non-fiction ideas continue to simmer away in the background not seeing the light of day.

So, November was marked by movement. There was a need to satisfy this train of thought that was eternally persisting no matter how many times I told it to bugger off. As a result, I recently set up a formal zoom meeting with my ghostwriting friend in the UK. What I learned during our one-hour conversation was more than useful, and I've summarised these findings below for anyone else considering similar avenues—whether to become a ghostwriter or whether you are also considering hiring one for your own book ideas.

However, before we begin, I want to broach a subject many of you are probably thinking—is it fair and ethical to use a ghostwriter and claim the glory (and potentially the profit) of the book once published? The answer is a very clear yes. Ghostwriting has been around for a very long time, centuries even. There are many 'authors' out there who hire ghostwriters to write all of their work, as in: they don't lift a finger to write one word—even so far as the blurb or the acknowledgements at the back. This includes well-known authors Robert Ludlum, James Patterson, R. L. Stine, and Michael Crichton to name a few. These authors—or 'businessmen/businesswomen' might be the more apt term here on in—hire ghostwriters to write their story ideas. In some instances, they may have hired the ghostwriter based on a conceptual topic or a problem that needs solving. In others, they will hire a ghostwriter and provide them with a very detailed outline, one which the ghostwriter *must* give effect to.

Over the last decade, with the rising popularity of self-publishing, the number of ghostwritten books has increased dramatically. I personally know of a few

BRANDING

→ IDENTITY

→ LOGO

→ DESIGN

→ STRATEGY

→ MARKETING

...

‘authors’ who own multi-million dollar portfolios of ghostwritten stories (fiction mainly). They are successful because they can make ruthless business decisions given they aren’t attached to their work like we are. In other words, they think like businessmen.

And the majority of these ghostwritten books aren’t typically produced by famous or traditionally published authors anymore—they’re produced by people just like you and me. The eye-popping thing is that they’re flying under the radar in the middle of the Amazon rankings and raking in hundreds of thousands of dollars (sometimes millions) a year. In this type of framework, a typical businessmen will have at least 200 self-published books in a portfolio per year. Usually, their main jobs will include coming up with the book idea, crafting an outline or conceptualising a topic, hiring the ghostwriter, hiring the editor, and then hiring the formatter. Once the project/book is complete, their next and final task will be to load it up on self-published platforms. Following its release, they engage a VA to market and advertise the books, including any newsletter swaps or self-promotions required. And then the wheel revolves again as they move onto the next one.

Effectively, they’re doing what most of us in the self-published world do—except produce the content. Sounds easy, doesn’t it? Except, you have to admit, it does sound boring, and it definitely doesn’t offer that sense of achievement we feel when producing our own stories.

I’ll be honest. It took me a long time to come to grips with the fact that this is a legitimate business. When I first discovered that a number of famous books and traditionally-published authors that I looked up to didn’t write their own books, I was severely disappointed and found the idea abhorrent. I couldn’t believe it. But now, years down the track, and with self-publishing running full-steam ahead with no intention of slowing down in the future, I can see from a business perspective that the self-publishing industry is just like anything else in this world—another lucrative business platform. I’ve also had to come to grips with the fact that such businessmen aren’t going away and there’s nothing stopping them. Thus, producing ghostwritten books will continue to be a viable career for many. So...why not join them?

To be clear, I couldn't hire a ghostwriter to write my fiction books. I would feel like I'd be cheating on myself, and it would not do my imposter syndrome any good. This journey in the realm of fiction is my own road to travel, and I'll be damned if I self-sabotage myself any further than I already am! So, with this all in mind, I asked my ghostwriter friend for information on how to become one and how to hire one for some of my non-fiction book ideas. Her advice, mixed in with a lot of other reference material I've picked up on this last year, is summarised below:

Where do I find ghostwriters?

Ghostwriters can be found in the usual places—Guru, Upwork, iWriter, and Fiverr. However, the advice is to tread carefully with Fiverr (like always), as quality and quantity aren't always guaranteed.

How long do they take to produce?

Their work and delivery time varies as it is dependent on where you are in their queue and how many words they can produce in a certain timeframe. If the book you have in mind is non-fiction, there's also research and referencing time to consider.

How do I know they're suitable?

To determine suitability, some of the ghostwriters at the listed sites above can produce samples and/or you could request a 1-2 page sample or first page of a chapter based on the idea you have in mind. I would totally recommend this avenue as this follows my editing process. We are all individuals and we all have our own individual writing and editing style. Just like finding an editor, it is also important to find a ghostwriter that matches *your* style. You are looking to see if you have a certain affinity with their voice in order to claim it as your own. You are also considering if they can write competently and could cover the amount of referencing and detail you require for your non-fiction piece.

How much do they charge?

Ghostwriters, like editors, typically charge out per hour or per word. Sometimes it could be per project. An 'average' is an hourly rate of USD \$15-\$20 per hour or USD \$0.01c per

word. However, I have heard from my editing mentor that those editors who are blessed with natural content editing skills can charge up to USD \$0.10c per word. Sounds lucrative, doesn't it? This is initially why I gave this serious consideration as it's said that only 10 percent of all editors in the world have a natural content editing ability, and as I'd been told I possessed this skill, the idea of being a ghostwriter was therefore floated past me. After looking into this further, I don't see this as a viable career path for myself, but for any other natural content editors out there, or anyone who loves to write and write well, this is another career niche to consider.

Length of Books

Typically, length may be dictated by the budget you have in mind. However, an important aspect to consider if you hire a fiction ghostwriter—or conversely, if you are considering becoming a fiction ghostwriter—is to not limit the word count of a fiction book. There are many reasons for this, and being a panster, this turns my insides into a tight ball of string because there is often no way you can set limits on a fictional story. Often the end is when you get there, or when the character deems it so, not when the businessman stipulates that fact.

My ghostwriting friend is also a notorious panster, and her way of getting out of this horrid limitation is to get her employer to set a *minimum* word count. They then agree that the project will be at least so many words, and any additional words (even if in the thousands) will be free-of-charge. Sounds like a great deal, doesn't it? I also think it's a fabulous marketing tactic to ensure that her clients come back again and again.

Timing

There are numerous timing issues to consider, one being that if you hire a ghostwriter to write a series of books for you, then you must also consider their need to have time off. As writers ourselves, we already understand the drain that producing creative work can create. Ghostwriters are no different, and if you engage one to create a series of books for you, do not be surprised if they require a week off in between. They may

also require longer, especially if they write in a range of genres or have a number of ongoing clients to schedule around.

Plagiarism

An important issue to watch out for is plagiarism. In general, ghostwriters write constantly, sometimes over 60,000 words per week. That's a book a week! If they work full-time, they will most likely write fifty books a year. That's a lot of books! And if they're writing in the same genre every time (as some ghostwriters just choose to specialise in a particular genre), then you'll want to make sure they haven't inadvertently plagiarized. The same goes for non-fiction work if you've sent them a list of references to adhere to. To combat this issue, make sure you use a plagiarism checker. There are many available now, and they can be found online.

Rights

Arguably, ensuring ownership of content is just as important if not more so than plagiarism as a contractual agreement should always come first. Somewhere in the contract you must cover rights to content. In general, ghostwriters own all rights to the content they produce until you pay them the full and final agreed upon amount for the project. Once the final payment is in their account, and if clearly outlined in the contract, the rights to their work is now the employer's and not the ghostwriters—meaning you can do whatever you wish with the contract.

Cancellations

This issue is relevant for both the ghostwriter and the employer. Just like in any job, cancellations create headaches—whether that's because the ghostwriter can't produce the work within the agreed timeframe or whether that's the employer cancelling the work order. This means either the ghostwriter is out of pocket or the employer is scrambling and could lose their pre-order rights or readers lined up for the pre-order. Either way, it's a nightmare. Thus, you'll want this covered under contract. And if you're considering being a ghostwriter, a good way to address this is to claim that if the employer defaults or cancels on *you* at any time, then you own the rights to the work already

produced—as in, they've forfeited their rights by pulling out. I think that sounds completely fair and reasonable!

I'm sure there are a number of other considerations that I haven't addressed here, but then I'm only at the beginning of this investigative process. If I should ever embark on ghostwriting as a career, or should I ever engage a ghostwriter to produce a non-fiction book idea floating around in my head, I'm sure that like all things in the self-publishing world, I'll make mistakes and learn from them. In the meantime, for those also considering such avenues, I hope I've answered a number of questions you may have about hiring a ghostwriter or becoming one.

And with that closing editorial topic for 2021, I wish you all "happy writing" over the Christmas break, and I look forward to touching base with you all in 2022 for our special Valentine edition!

*Merry Christmas and best wishes,
Corina x*



THE SMUT EXPERIMENT



Moisy

When you write a 'throwaway' palate cleanser between projects...and it pays off.

This writing business can be confusing as all hell.

You can work hard, write amazing stories, and then release those babies into the world...to the sound of fecking crickets.

Then you do something on a whim, and the universe suddenly sends you love in the form of some inexplicable yet glorious syzygy. The stars align, and some "bit of fun" book—written under a secret pen name and then tossed into the abyss—is granted a set of wings.

WHY, UNIVERSE?

Why do you do this to magpies who can't resist such shiny things? Because, of course, I've been trying to figure out how it happened so that I can recreate it!

Of course, the writer who already self-sabotages her success, but dilutes her work across several pen names and who finds it impossible to stay monogamous to any genre, needs to be seduced by another! More variety, more spice—write erotica too!

I probably should have seen it coming.

My mouth and mind are filthy. Ask anyone. For me, writing erotica was likely inevitable. Usually, I write about aliens, mountain men, wounded warriors, tormented souls, and dystopian futures. All of the stories start quite sweetly...and end up with enough steam to hard-boil the contents of ovaries.

I was destined for "the dark side." It was only a matter of time. And this is how it happened...

When I wrote a downright dirty and delicious, no holds barred, writing for the id, absolutely smut-tastic novella to maintain my sanity as we fall headfirst into another round of author-derailing lockdown home-school, I'd just wrapped up book 3 in a series and was literally just looking to keep in a writing state of mind without the mental effort required for shaping the plot of book 4.



I was all hopped-up after snorting back Theodora Taylor's book about universal fantasy, and I only had small pockets of time between the motherly duties of emotional reassurance for teenage daughters while dredging the back of my brain for how to balance ionic equations so as to pass on that gleaming gem of chemistry wisdom. It was a perfect storm for exactly this type of writing, and I got swept away in the fun!

Between educational rants, I'd rush off with a cup of tea to giggle/laugh maniacally as I played puppet master to some wildly adventurous characters. It was done in a week, and by the time its sixth, seventh, or ninth happy ending had reached completion the thing had a 25K word count.

Now what?

I couldn't publish it under my other names. It was absolutely dripping with filth. I couldn't even send it to my usual editor for fear she'd never look me in the eyes again! But, I knew it was good for what it was. I could hear the naughty giggles of the future readers in my mind...and I'm an entertainer at heart. I didn't want to waste it, and I had nothing to

lose by testing the waters.

So, I polished it. Secretly—as if it was something shameful. I proofed it myself as best I could and made a cover (I'm not terrible at either, it's okay). I invented a new name, wrote a juicy blurb, trawled Publisher Rocket for some saucy **keywords***, and then threw it into the wilds of Kindle Unlimited.

**FYI: when you wholeheartedly embrace the erotica genre for your book, there is little reason to fear it being thrown into Amazon's "dungeon." You can basically use whatever bloody alpha sexy steamy explicit words you want! Such FREEDOM!!!*

What about creating an author platform?

I claimed an Amazon author page, a Facebook page, and a **BookBub**** profile — because those are all free, and I didn't want to throw money away on a whim.

***BookBub is one of the few places you can advertise erotica if you keep the targeting refined to the readers who've asked for it—which makes it quite competitive, but at least it's an option. That, and author newsletter lists, are the reported "bread*

and butter” of audience reach for erotica authors wanting to find success.

The thing is, my time is already stretched. I don't want any pressure to write newsletters or fill a release quota for yet another pen name, so these profiles I created all said the same thing: I don't exist. Don't try to find me. If you read the book and liked it, then feel free to follow my Amazon author page because they'll email you when new books come out, but I won't. I don't want your email address. I won't be in touch. And I'm a busy woman, so don't hold your breath for more books either. You know, all the things that a good marketer should say. LOL!

What happened with the book, Moisy?

Well... wouldn't you just know it. The thing got read.

Madness.

Surely it was a one-day thing—erotica readers just like new and shiny things too. That's what I told myself when this thing surpassed all my other books combined in pages read on that first day. (Granted, that's not hard. I don't want to blow this out of proportion. I'm talking tens, then hundreds of dollars here. Not thousands. I have a decent-sized backlist, but it's split between pen names that I do little to notify the world about. Where I grew up, tall poppies got mown. I have massive blocks when it comes to marketing myself, and I'm not going to lie. I just don't do it. I'm working on it, but right now, anonymity is my bestie, Ostrich-life is my safe place, and stealth publishing is my jam.)

Anyway. The smut book... It kept getting read. It floated up and down in the Top 100 of several erotica categories while I waited for the other shoe to drop. It didn't. The new release tag faded, and the “30-day cliff” came and went. It's still bouncing around those same ranks.

On what investment, you ask?

One week's worth of intermittent writing time, another day or two on edits and a cover, and the \$20.37 I spent trying to figure out how to do an effing BookBub ad on day five

before giving up. I was in profit from day one.

What???

On an unknown author's debut title? In this day and age? Are you serious?

Was there something magic in it? Not especially.

In my usual style, I was sort of aiming for one niche and ended up straddling four—even though this was no reverse harem tale! There were several books in a few of those niches that were riding hard at the top of the erotica category, so I may have provided something that was in demand, but it was definitely a different beast to those available. It's hard to say from one book, but if different = good in erotica-land, then I may have found a new home!

So, what's a girl to do?

I've been chasing the golden dream for a few years with some small success, but now there's something shiny blinking at me that looks like it might actually be evidence that gold exists. I was so excited that I had to tell someone. I told the tribe what I did.

My super-secret pen name lasted all of three minutes, because the members of the Wellington-Kapiti chapter are masterful interrogators. There's not a lot of erotica being openly written within our group, but we're quite an aggressively supportive bunch who love a good giggle, and I'm a clown who laps that shit up. And the truth is, I'm not ashamed of what I wrote. I'm all for sexual liberties, and I have far more shocking things in my mind that I could've written...so, will I?

Damn right, I will!

Smut-book 2 (Return of the Smut?) is already with my fab editor who quietly read the first book and apparently can still look me in the eye! She'll save me time in proofing, and I can put that towards writing the next one. I've already adjusted the release schedule for my other pen names to make way for the newbie.

Do I have everything figured out? Hell no. Do I have other commitments? Many. Can I spare precious time to experiment

here? As you can see—I'll make time.

Will I be able to recreate the results of Smut Book 1?

I have no idea. I'm not an expert by any means, but I can write a good story. I've absorbed a lot of information since I started self-publishing, and although I don't always use it [cough, marketing knowledge], I try to be smart about applying all I've learned.

In regards to smut-book 2, I even set myself boundaries before I started. Keep it similar enough to the first book in style and length so it remains comparable, for example.

Trouble is...I'm not very good at obeying rules—even the ones I set myself.

By the end of chapter one, I'd already gone on an irresistible tangent so promptly threw all restrictions out the window. Why limit my imagination if its unbridled passion is what led to the initial success? Rules schmules.

My name literally means "rebellious woman", and it's an accurate descriptor. Is that problematic? Yes, sometimes it is. My constant and pressing need for instant gratification is not easily fed by such behaviour, so I'm always hungry. That's okay. It makes me write faster. And while it doesn't keep me "in a lane," it does allow my creativity to soar.

I know myself well enough to understand that I can't colour within set lines without losing my joy—and what kind of depressing smut would that lead to? Why would someone want to read about dull and lifeless sex when the purpose of them reading smut is to explore their wildest fantasies? We should give our readers what they want, right?

I'm not interested in writing bland, joyless erotica, and it's best for my readers to learn quickly that the brand of smut I deliver will cross a multitude of lanes as it titillates them—but titillate it will! That's the promise I'll be keeping.

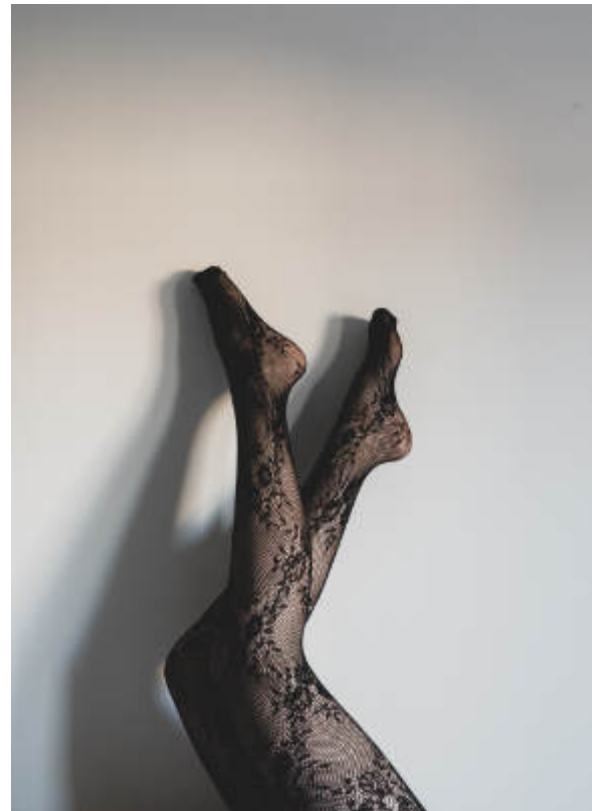
Smut Book 2 came out at twice the length, and it reads rather differently. But it's no less delicious—it's even more so, in my opinion—and the more pages there are to read of it,

the more half-pennies there'll be in my piggy bank...

Have I strayed too far from the recommended path and shot myself in the foot again? We'll see what the readers think when I unleash it upon them, but I've got a good feeling about it.

Will I market this one? Maybe. I have growth in mind, and I'm sure I'll soon find the right combination of fertiliser that I'm comfortable pouring over my poppies, it's just that organic is where I'm at right now.

The experiment continues, of course. Hopefully, I can report back with good news!



Bio:

Moisy writes in many directions and has too many pen names to mention—instead of staying in one metaphorical lane, her author journey is more like traveling on a romance super-highway with spaghetti junctions. She thrives without limitations and is quite relieved there are so many different ways to find happy-ever-afters, so she'll remain deeply into sub-genre polygamy until her writing brain withers and dies.

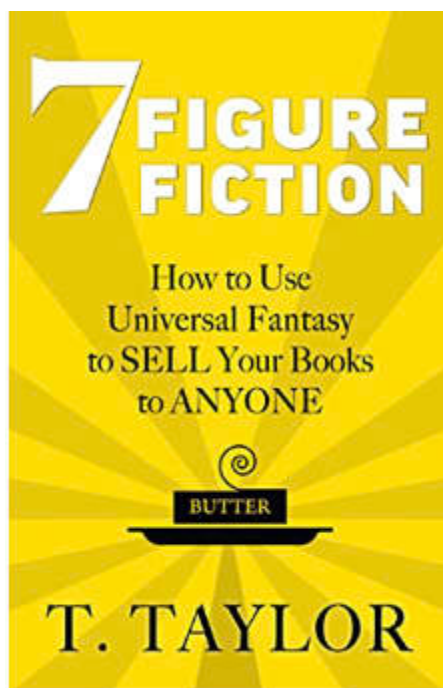
GETTING TO GRIPS WITH UNIVERSAL FANTASY



Jayne Castel

If you've been hearing the term 'Universal Fantasy' a lot of late, it'll be because T. Taylor's book [7 Figure Fiction: How to Use Universal Fantasy to Sell Your Books to Anyone](#) has been doing the rounds on social media and writing groups and forums.

And for good reason too—Theodora Taylor's approach has much to recommend it!



So what does Universal Fantasy actually mean?

I love the term 'Universal Fantasy' (UF)—which Taylor defines as *“why readers feel things when they read my books—why they connect with and enjoy my books.”* They are “things humans fantasize about”—‘universal’ issues and themes that resonate with us on a personal level. And although each of us has different preferences when it comes to the elements we love in movies, TV series or books, there are archetypal UFs that are incredibly popular, which is why certain stories (*The Lord of the Rings*, *Outlander*, *Star Wars* etc.) have such ‘universal’ appeal.

There are fantasies embedded into these stories that hook us on a primal level. We dive in, travelling through Middle Earth on a quest to stop Sauron, journeying through time to Jacobean Scotland and into the arms of a gorgeous Highlander, and embarking on a dangerous mission to rescue a princess in peril from the Death Star.

Is this a revolutionary concept? Not really. It might sound new...but actually, this idea has been around for a while—it just hasn't had such a catchy name before!



Many authors have sensed the theory, but have been unable to articulate it. Taylor explains that this lack of conscious understanding of why we do what we do is why authors will have books which sell extremely well and then ones that flop. In the imitable words of Elana Johnson: “what makes one release a racehorse and another a donkey?” Taylor uses her own career as an example, explaining that the stories that leveraged UF were the ones that did well, and when she was writing a story that didn’t use them properly, she’d get a nagging feeling throughout the writing process that something was “off” but couldn’t quite put her finger on exactly why. Once she understood UF, everything fell into place.

I think many of us have had this experience—I know I have!

So isn’t UF just another word for ‘trope’? Um...no. **Making a distinction between a UF and a trope is essential if you’re going to be able to use UF effectively. Taylor defines it as “tropes are your story’s WHAT IT IS...and Universal Fantasy is your trope’s WHY IT’S GOOD.”**

Basically, if your trope is Second Chance Romance, you need to dig deep into why readers love it. This requires some brain teasing. Second Chance Romance is a love

that is hard fought, about characters that have a connection but messed things up the first time, or maybe the timing wasn’t right, or outside forces pulled our lovers apart. Whatever the reason, this trope gives us a chance to put things right, to fix our mistakes. Many of us will never forget our ‘first love’. What if we could go back and relive that relationship again and do it right this time? You need to get to the heart of the emotions underlying what makes the trope popular. Dig deep!

And it’s not all about tropes either. **UF goes beyond your story’s tropes—it’s also about all the themes and elements you weave into your story.**

After reading Taylor’s book, I decided to put her ideas into practice. I had a new release coming up, so in my release email to readers I wrote an intro that used UFs (without telling readers that, of course!). This was a Highland Romance Christmas novella, and the long-awaited fourth instalment in a series (a story I hadn’t planned to write, but did!). When I did my last read of the manuscript I jotted down anything that seemed like a UF to me and then used that in my email. The main trope was Arranged Marriage, but there was so much more to this story that I wanted readers to know about. Here’s an excerpt from what I wrote...



HIGHLANDER PLEDGED incorporates some of my favorite elements and themes:

- Being truly seen and understood by someone else for the first time in your life.
- The courage to love, to bare all, and trust your heart with another.
- Some feathered and furry friends: having two pet hawks and a loyal Highland Collie by your side!
- A determined hero who knows exactly what he wants!
- Sexual awakening of a virgin who has been taught to fear men.
- A ruthless, arrogant clan-chief hero who only shows his soft underbelly to the woman he loves.
- Escaping awful parents, and a family where you never fit in.
- And, of course, it's set at Christmas...my favorite time of year!

The response was great! I received emails from a number of readers telling me how excited they were about the story. One reader told me she'd always wanted to escape her awful family, while another said she ADORES books with animals in them.

Yes, my friends, UF does work.

Highland Pledged, despite that it's a novella rather than a full-length novel, launched strong and has done really well. Now, I wrote that novella before reading Taylor's book, but I knew as I penned it that my readers were going to devour the story. Why? Because, although I hadn't yet learned the term 'Universal Fantasy', I already understood the concept of making one's book as 'emotionally juicy' as possible (those of you who attended my keynote at the RWNZ 2021 conference will know what I mean!). As such, it was easy to extract the UFs after the fact.

So, if you're on the fence about Universal Fantasy, I highly recommend getting to grips with it and using UFs during all phases of the writing process. Also, don't forget to use them in your product descriptions, emails, and marketing materials. Let your readers know you are writing the stories their hearts yearn for. They'll thank you for it!

Bio: *Jayne Castel writes epic Historical and Fantasy Romance. She's the award-winning author of a number of best-selling series. In love with all things Scottish, she writes romances set in both Dark Ages and Medieval Scotland. Jayne's latest series, Stolen Highland Hearts, is available on Amazon [HERE](#).*

Website: www.jaynecastel.com

RWNZ WRITING CONTESTS

*Shelagh Merlin**Judges, we need you!*

Have you ever thought about putting your hand up to judge a competition only to let fear get in the way? Are you worried that you're not a good enough writer to step in and judge somebody else's writing? Or maybe you know you're good enough—you're published, after all—but you don't think you have enough time? Well, let me dispel all those myths.

I'll deal with those of you who are already published and established writers first. Essentially, for all of you, fitting in a bit of judging here and there is all about time-management. Judging does take time out of your busy days but it also helps you to keep on top of your writing skills. Even if you're judging an entry submitted by a clear rank beginner you will learn from judging that entry. Why? Because you read actively, not

passively when you are judging. You're not only looking for out-of-sequence plots, poor spelling and grammar and under-developed characters, but also that special something about this piece of writing that grabs you and tells you that this writer has got what it takes with just a little bit more work and experience.

Of course, giving that writer feedback about what is fabulous and what is not quite so good is going to benefit them, but it will also benefit you because thinking of all those things as you judge the entry is helping you with your own craft. You're actively identifying aspects of writing, whether it is sentence structure, sparkling dialogue, or clunky sex scenes, and by doing so you are, possibly subconsciously, thinking about how you would have handled those situations. You may even pick up a tip or two that you can use in your own work.

As for not having time, with all due respect, that's bollocks. Some of the most prolific judges in RWNZ are multi-published authors with both successful writing careers and successful careers outside RWNZ. Bronwen Evans is a case in point. She judges regularly,



usually more than three entries per contest, is also our webmaster, helps out with conference, steps in to manage contests when we're desperate and still pumps out her books while continuing in a demanding job out in the real world. If she can find time to judge, anyone can.

Now to those of you who are new to this writing gig. Maybe you're only just starting your first manuscript or perhaps you haven't even put pen to paper yet because you want to learn some craft first. How on earth could you be good enough to question the quality of somebody else's writing, you ask. Well, you are. You are a writer no matter what stage of the journey you are in.

Judging is for everybody. It's a wonderful way of testing that knowledge you picked up at a conference workshop, university, or an online course, because you are actively reading the entry and applying that knowledge while doing so.

It doesn't matter how skilled you are at identifying what's technically fabulous. You read books, don't you? You know what really draws you into the story and what pushes you

out faster than you can blink. That's the knowledge you need to judge. Nothing fancy. Just your own intuition.

If you're great at identifying poor grammar and other things as well then good for you, but those things are less important. They're not what is going to turn away a publisher or agent. If that story hooks you then it's likely to hook somebody else, too, and that's what you need to think about when judging.

So, come on everybody! Jump onto the website, click on the tab to judge the contest or contests you're interested in and do your bit to help your fellow members. Email me at contests@romancewriters.co.nz if you need help.

Current contests

Great Beginnings ran through September but a disappointing number of people registering to judge this competition has delayed getting entries out for judging. To those few of you who put your hands up to help, a heartfelt thanks, and to those of you who entered, good luck, and please be patient.



The *Daphne Clair de Jong First Kiss* contest opened on 1 November and ran through that month. At the time of writing I can't tell you how well it was supported in terms of either entries or judges except to say that some of the same names that pop up to judge each of our contests have once again registered to help with this one. Thank you!

Upcoming contests

First up, start polishing those unpublished manuscripts. You've got time, but ***Pacific Hearts*, which is for full-length unpublished manuscripts, opens on 1 February next year.**

If you don't have a handy unpublished manuscript sitting around, don't despair. You can enter your already published masterpiece in the ***Koru Awards*, which open on 1 March next year.**

Finally, if long stories aren't your thing, or you like to dabble in those short and sweet little gems when you're between books, then I have just the contest for you: ***Chapter Short Story* opens on 1 April.**

So, everybody, get those keyboards polished and pens sharpened. I'm looking forward to reading your works.

Contest managers needed urgently!

A big thank you to Anna Klein, who has taken over managing the *Koru Awards* this year, giving Bronwen Evans a well-deserved rest.

I do still need two more contest managers. While judging of *First Kiss* is still under way, I would love to hand this contest over to somebody else to finish off.

I also need somebody to manage *Chapter Short Story*. Please email contests@romancewriters.co.nz if you're interested.

TOP 10 TIPS ON USING GOODREADS



Bronwen Evans

I have to admit up front that I have a love/hate relationship with Goodreads. But Goodreads is now owned by Amazon and, as such, I'm sure we will, or should, learn how to utilize it.

There are loads of trolls on Goodreads and that doesn't look like changing anytime soon. Just live with it. They come in and 1 star you and it's such a suck. You only have to look at my pre-order to see it: [The Seduction of Lord Sin](#). And I haven't even written the book yet... Recently, there has also been a scandal where authors have been blackmailed—"pay us or we'll organize thousands of 1 star reviews on your new release", etc. It took a piece in the NY Times to get Goodreads to act on that. But Goodreads is also full of readers. And we all want readers, right?

What I'm sharing today I learned from [Alessandra Torre](#), and I suggest you look at joining her author Facebook group, [Alessandra Torre Ink](#). It has loads of useful

information from over 18k followers on all aspects of self-publishing.

Did you know that Goodreads has an author FOLLOW button? Readers can follow you like they would on Amazon, and that's important because every time you do anything on Goodreads your followers are notified in their feed. That sounds like something I want to use—I want to be in my target genre reader feeds.

So here are just a few tips on how to utilize Goodreads:

1. Create a Goodreads Author Profile

Basic but some of you probably haven't. AND you should ensure you set up an author profile and update it regularly. Why should you update it regularly? Because it's a change and followers get notified reminding them you exist.

Once you have set up your profile, you then get a Goodreads Author link that you can share to grow Goodreads Followers. Put it in your backmatter. On your Facebook page, etc. Run contests to grow followers. You can see mine here... <https://www.goodreads.com/>



[bronwenevans](#)

2. Be active on Goodreads by answering questions regularly

Just under your author bio on your Goodreads page is an area for questions. Goodreads have some already sitting there that you can answer, or you could do some question swaps with your fellow authors. Like me asking Kendra Delugar what she's working on. Then Kendra can also ask you. Once again, your followers will be notified of this.

That's an important thing to remember. If you want readers to engage on your Goodreads pages you need to engage on Goodreads too. So perhaps each morning or night take fifteen minutes to engage on Goodreads using these tips.

3. Leave reviews for books that you love

Leave reviews? As an author I was always told no. But it's okay if... Obviously only leave good reviews. But if you write a well written review, your followers will like it, which makes your review more visible to other readers, and you may find new readers will follow you. The review doesn't have to be

long but it does need to be authentic and heartfelt. At the bottom of your review, ensure the box that says 'on your feed' is checked.

4. While on the book review page....

This is something you can do each morning or night in that fifteen minutes you'll spend on Goodreads. Like and interact with a few other comments on the book you've just reviewed i.e., engage with readers. Respond to comments but always positively.

5. Have your blog linked to Goodreads

Like any reader platform, content is gold. So ensure you have regular content on there by linking your blog (as you should also do on Amazon). It will show up on your Goodreads author page under your books. Usually, you'll review and engage with reviews in the genre you write in, as those readers are your target.

6. Add your current WIP that is up for pre-order to your current reading shelf

This is not new to me but what was new was her next piece of advice....

REVIEW your own books (leave the STARS

blank) don't rate it. So, review your WIP that is up for pre-order to start a buzz. This is why followers are important as the review will go into their notification feeds. Tell readers something about the book they might not know. How you're having fun writing it, or how the hero teased you, etc. Use videos or pictures in your review. Make it entertaining. It will help create buzz for your upcoming release and will hopefully make readers add it to their 'to-read' list so they will get notified when it goes live.

7. What about WIP not up for pre-order?

Add that in too. Manually add the book. Only add the title and author name, leave the rest blank. If you have a book cover, then load it, otherwise it will simply have a blank cover. Then you have a book to encourage readers to add to their 'to read' shelf long before it's up for pre-order or live. The buzz begins early. And it's more content.

8. REVIEW all your books but DO NOT star them

Why not go and review all your books—not all at once, maybe one a week. It's another notification event and you can update readers on characters, awards and anything fun with the book. Use photos, videos, anything entertaining.

9. Do a Goodreads Giveaway (has to be to an author who uses KDP. Wonder why? It's Amazon, of course).

Did you know you can do a Goodreads eBook giveaway contest? It's a great way of getting reviews for a pre-order. You can do giveaways for pre-orders, but the completed manuscript must already be loaded in KDP. This needs to be done at least 4-6 weeks before release so that reviews go up in advance. It entices readers to enter as they will be getting an advanced copy before everyone else. And it gets you reviews and notice prior to release day.

Alessandra recommends using the US \$119 option but includes the (up to) 100 ebooks that will be sent out. So, quite reasonable actually. (I recommend the ebook, but you can do book, too, except you have to pay for the postage from NZ or Aussi, which is a bit

expensive.) It takes a few days to set up and be approved so build that into your timeline.

Here's the link to the Goodreads Giveaway page: [Goodreads Giveaways](#)

10. Lastly, ASK readers to follow you on Goodreads using your author link.

It's never too early to build yourself a following.

And finally, if you need help with ANY of the checklist items, here are three videos from Alessandra about Goodreads that you may want to watch:

15 mins to grow followers: vimeo.com/639375024/acccb10ca3

15 mins to boost a book: vimeo.com/639393059/71039ecaf6

15 mins to prep a release: vimeo.com/639403501/fd2e833e57

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

You can keep up with Bronwen's news by visiting her website, www.bronwenevans.com, and get a FREE book by signing up to her newsletter [here](#).

Find Bronwen on:

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

Bookbub: <https://www.bookbub.com/authors/bronwen-evans>

Goodreads: <https://www.goodreads.com/bronwenevans>

*Her upcoming release is *The Seduction of Lord Sin**



Bronwen Evan

THE SEDUCTION OF LORD SIN

Release date: January 2022

Widowed Charlotte Dexter, Lady Clayton, married for duty as all good ladies are taught to do. Now, with her elderly husband dead, it's time to marry again. Marcus Roberts, Duke of Sinclair, agrees to accompany his friend to Lady Charlotte's house party because finding a bride is imperative. All he needs is a bride who he is sure can give him sons. Imagine his shock at learning the only woman at the house party is a widow who is rumoured to be barren. He should leave but as he gets to know Charlotte, suddenly the idea of any of these men marrying her stirs the jealous beast.

[Available Here](#)



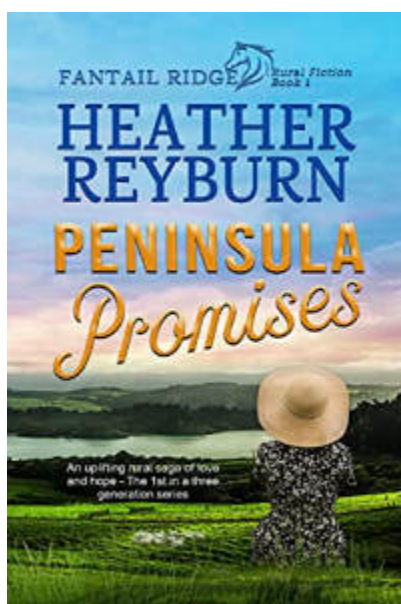
Author Anthology

FIVE CHRISTMASSES

Five award-winning authors bring you *Five Christmases*, five festive tales of love, and laughter, set in gorgeous locations across the globe.

From snowy Colorado to the sunny Pacific, the rugged Australian coast to the laneways of London, and the traditions of a Greek island Christmas, fall in love with stories guaranteed to bring you joy this holiday season!

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B09G5VYTQ5>



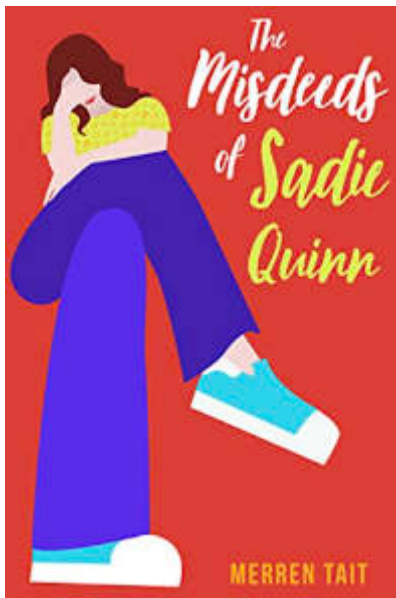
Heather Reyburn

PENINSULA PROMISES

Heather Reyburn recently released her debut novel, *Peninsula Promises*, Book One in the *Fantail Ridge Series*, which is set on the beautiful South Head Peninsula beside the Kaipara Harbour.

In 1930s New Zealand, stability and contentment are hard won, especially for a young wife and mother. When Alice Simpson agrees to move to a sheep farm on a windswept peninsula with her family, the lack of a house, electricity, and a decent road weren't quite what she expected.

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B095LCMVMT>



Merren Tait

THE MISDEEDS OF SADIE QUINN

Merren Tait recently released *The Misdeeds of Sadie Quinn*.

When a down-and-out Sadie Quinn seeks sanctuary with her grandfather, he gives her a condition for living with him. She must help him relive the misdemeanours of his youth. The problem is, the wilder the acts become, the more attention she gains from the handsome local cop, and for all the wrong reasons.

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B09G64215H>



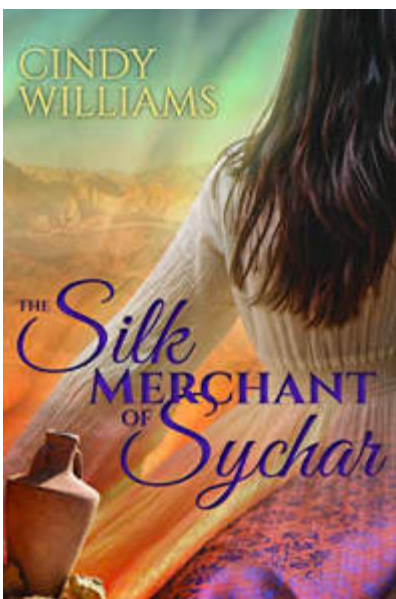
Laura Wolf

STRANDED WITH HER BILLIONAIRE BOSS

Laura Wolf released *Stranded with her Billionaire Boss* in late October.

Being stranded on a Pacific Island with a handsome billionaire sounds like a daydream, but for Alex Hannigan it is a perfect nightmare.

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B09JMFVZVQ>



Cindy Williams

THE SILK MERCHANT OF SYCHAR

Cindy Williams recently won the Caleb Prize (Australasian faith inspired writing) for her novel *The Silk Merchant of Sychar*.

*One woman, five husbands, and a weary rabbi at the well who knows everything she ever did. From the olive groves of Samaria to the bloodied sand of a Roman stadium to the exquisite silks brought from the East, *The Silk Merchant of Sychar* weaves colour into the biblical account of the woman at the well.*

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B07Z6HYW63>



Laura Fairlight

THE FACE STEALER

Laura Fairlight (who also writes as Laura Wolf) recently released a children's picture book to teach kids about cyber security.

Even if your kids don't get access to phones and social media apps, they may be exposed to them at friends houses. Conversations need to be had around what can potentially happen if you let people share your photos and information before they are put into a tricky situation.

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B09LM2J9YK>



Laura Wolf

HER RUNAWAY CELEBRITY CHRISTMAS

Laura Wolf has recently released *Her Runaway Celebrity Christmas*.

Can runaway Lila get the time she needs to figure out how to escape her web of contracts as well as her impending wedding? Beaver Creek seems like the perfect place to lay low for a while, but there's more to this unassuming little town than meets the eye.

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B09M2RBNG5>

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***October meeting:*

We met on the 2nd Saturday of the month at Bron's house and celebrated Jackie Rutherford's fabulous success with her first releases under Jacqueline Lee. We also discussed release strategies and how to gather reviews.

November meeting:

We met on the first Saturday of the month at Andrene Low's house and talked about trying to be creative in times of stress, such as deadlines, jobs, and COVID. How do we fit in writing and all the business side of being a self published author such as marketing, reviews, and advertising?.... It's a lot of work! Our Christmas pot luck lunch will be at Bron's on the first Saturday in December.

Coast to Coast**Convenor: Jill Batty***October meeting:*

The October meeting for C2C featured Michelle Somers presenting her topic "Creating Narrative Tension". There were 16 C2C'ers on the call, and she took us through GMC, hooks, and tension, including examples and exercises so we could try it out too. Very informative and practical. Michelle is an Australian author who writes Romantic Suspense and enjoys sharing the craft with other authors.

November meeting:

C2C had its November meeting in Papamoa, and we each brought 500 words to be read out and critiqued. It was a small meeting but held a lot of talent. At this moment, because C2C covers such a large area of New Zealand, we have members unable to attend because of lockdowns.

Our December meeting will hopefully be held at the Enchanted café in Tirau on 11th December. Meeting at 12 for lunch and a catch up. Please bring a secret santa gift to the value of \$10. We welcome people popping in if they are in the area.

Wellington / Kapiti Coast

Convenor: Moira Kay

October meeting:

Another “avoiding public places full of unknowns” Zoom meeting was the ticket for our group this month. The Agenda included discussions of tips and tricks for self-editing one’s manuscript to polish it up before moving it on to fresh eyes, and also the vast smorgasbord of marketing options... and how one figures out what’s right for their books. (The answer is: wherever your audience lives, through whichever method or platform that will let you advertise and that you can afford!)

We didn’t have any volunteers for cold reads this week, but as per usual, our tribal gathering of like minds was able to support and inspire each of us. We’ll be trying a face-to-face meeting next month in a known environment, and like the rest of the country, are eagerly awaiting Covid restrictions to ease.

November meeting:

November saw us meeting in person for the first time in months, and the living room of Sara Johnson’s lovely home was a-hum with the positive vibration of eager writers who’d been yearning for more than a zoom meeting can offer.

We welcomed two new members—Ali and Rachael—who easily slid into the swing of things. They jumped in on the discussions of ‘holiday romance how-tos’, which was based on our collective experiences, and the deep dive into heroines, which got us thinking about our female characters and the messages we’re sending out into the universe through our writing.

A great time was had by all, and next month, we’ll be invading Kris Pearson’s abode for our Christmas gathering.

Nelson

Convenor: Annika Ohlson-Smith

October meeting:

Five members of the Nelson branch of RWNZ met on Saturday at the Nightingale Library, Tahunanui. After agreeing the venue for the Christmas lunch, we got down to the business of analysing a romance novel (The Gateway by Sally Ash). The discussion was lively, as we all had differing opinions, but we generally agreed that attitudes to women, our heroes, and romance in general have changed considerably in the past twenty years, very much propelled by the Me Too movement.

Next month, we shall be learning about setting up a web page. New members are welcome!

November meeting:

Five members of the Nelson branch of RWNZ met on Saturday at the Nightingale Library, Tahunanui. After updating each other about our writing progress, the meeting was handed over to Mat Pottinger, an electronic engineer with wide knowledge of setting up web pages. His talk was informative and most useful, and he fully answered all the questions put to him. Next month we shall share a festive lunch at Jellyfish, in Mapua. Anyone interested in joining our group should contact Annika at (03) 548 5561.

Canterbury

Convenor: Emma Lowe + Julie

October meeting:

For our October meeting, we meet on zoom as we are unable to access our venue until we are back in Level 1. As it has been a couple of months since we last met, we used the time to check in with each other and see how everyone is coping in our current climate. We discussed ways to move forward if we were to remain in Level 2 or move up the levels to 3 or 4 and how we could take advantage of non local guest speakers when meeting online.

Otago / Southland

Convenor: Samantha Burton

October meeting:

Six of us attended our October meeting. After a catch-up, we had a brainstorming session for those who needed help/feedback with various aspects of writing/publishing etc. We also discussed using Universal Fantasy in fiction—a hot topic in writing circles at the moment. Our next meeting will be Saturday 6 November 2021, where we will be discussing our writing wins, highlights, and lessons learned for 2021.

November meeting:

Eight of us attended our meeting on Saturday 6 November. We had an interesting discussion around the questions: what are your writing/publishing achievements this year, and what's been your biggest writing/publishing takeaway or 'aha' moment this year? Our next 'meeting' will be a Christmas lunch on Saturday 4 December.



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Anita Maynard ~ Taranaki
Catherine Flann ~ Auckland
Elaine Casey ~ Wellington
Gabriella Pasztor ~ Wellington
Jane Key ~ Auckland
Jenni Edwards ~ Northland
Jessica Vivien ~ Auckland
Kelly Eden ~ West Coast
Linda Templeton ~ Central North

Nicole Dalton ~ Wellington
Rachael Herron ~ Wellington
Rachel Sawaya ~ Otago
Rebecca (Bex) Ansell ~ Auckland
Rosie Moore ~ Hawkes Bay
Shona-Ellen Barnett ~ Central North
Sue Glamuzina ~ Auckland
Tanya Nellestein ~ Overseas

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

kura.graphic.artist@gmail.com