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AUTHOR

Writing Newsletter

January 7 2021

Welcome to 2021!

There is a strange feeling to the start of this year, a mix of cautious optimism and significant uncertainty. We've certainly faced a challenging 2020, and it can be difficult to feel positive about the future. Here in the UK we have just re-entered lockdown, and I know similar restrictions and challenges are affecting people all across the world.

I'm no expert on dealing with difficult times, all I can offer is my understanding and support. We are getting there. What has helped me is to focus on what I can do, rather than what is restricted.

My aim for this newsletter is to give you some inspiration for the year ahead. With that in mind, the focus on this edition is goals and planning, as well as a little recap of the great reads I found in 2020. I also have a beautiful and hopeful piece of poetry from our Featured Creative Alyse to share, which I hope speaks to you like it did me.

All the best for the new year – let's make the most of it together



Lelita Baldock

Author – Writer - Editor

Featured Creative – Alyse Jansons, Poet



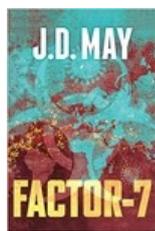
Alyse is a woman enthused by words, no matter the language. Sometimes she will be doodling, or otherwise having an existential crisis. This could be caused by the fact she currently lives in France. She has written on a personal level for years, but mostly keeps her writing for private eyes (not referring to detectives in this case).

Growth – Alyse Jansons

lives we lead are listless
water streaming down the panes
hurt growing like gnarled,
ugly trees.
but I believe
flowers will grow on
dead-looking branches
each petal strengthens
and forms hope.
it is fragile and
at the deftest touch
can be destroyed.
 this, though
is not a reason not
 to hope.

What I'm excited for!

JD May's debut novel, crime fiction *Factor-7*. Out this week!!



“Factor-7 is a bucking bronco ride of bio-weaponry, secrets, terror, betrayal, infidelity, raw human emotions and redeeming love. It's a gripping suspense thriller that will keep the reader up all night turning the pages.”

I can't wait to sink into this thrilling page turner.

Grab your copy through Amazon.

<https://authorjdmay.com/>

So you've set some writing goals? Now it's time to make them happen.

My top tips for taking action



1) Block out a sensible time during the week

Planning is the key to making more of the hours available to you in a day, week, month. I like to plan week by week, but you may prefer to look a but further forward and block out the month. Start by blocking out your work hours and scheduling the non-negotiable tasks that must be completed, such as food shopping, cooking, cleaning, any classes you are taking, if you are parent things your children have on. Now you can see the spaces (they may only be small, but that's ok). These spaces are where you get to do negotiable tasks like exercise, TV watching, socialising with friends and, your writing.

This is where prioritising comes into play. You could say that all your free time will be spent tapping away at your keyboard, but is that realistic? We all need time with friends and family, and our brains need time off too. But how much time you leave for free tasks and how much you commit to for your writing is a choice you get to make. Take it seriously, the hours you schedule for your writing are locked in, just like other non-negotiable tasks like work.

When I was writing my debut novel *Widow's Lace* (<https://www.lelitabaldock.com/>) my weekly free choice schedule looked roughly like this:

Monday: 7pm -10pm writing

Tuesday: Gym

Wednesday: 7pm -10pm writing

Thursday: Gym

Friday: Date Night

Saturday : Long walk, time with friends

Sunday: 9am - 5pm writing

Your schedule will look very different, because it is for you!

It can be challenging to plan out your weeks at first, but stick with it. Before you know it will be a super quick task to start your week and you will find much more time for what you want to do!

2) Accept things will get in the way

No matter how well you plan your week, life happens. The unexpected will pop up and divert your time. Don't let this overwhelm you. It can be easy to feel like you never get time for your work, like it's hopeless to even try. But this isn't true. Remember, you can't control the universe, but you can control your response. Accept

Most of the time there will be nothing you could have done to avoid it, like a sick child, or filling in at work for a friend. Other times it may be a result of poor planning. If this is the case, reflect on what you could adjust in your planning for the next week.

3) Have a note book or use your mobile to make notes when they come to you.

Your brain can be its own boss, and it won't necessarily stick to your planned creative hours. For the times outside your writing window when you are suddenly struck with a new idea or the perfect phrase, have a way to make a note.

Using a note app on your mobile is a great option, or buying yourself a small notebook.

Great for those brilliant flashes of insight that tend to hit just as you are about to drift off to sleep!

4) Accept how much you will be able to write in your window

Sometimes your window for writing may only be small. And it can feel like it's just not enough time to get anything real done. This is not the case.

Remember 20 minutes crafting one paragraph is still progress. It's not about quality but quantity. Focus on writing well, not on writing lots.

Additionally, be realistic about how much you can achieve in the time you have allotted. Don't sit down with 1 hour of time and expect to complete chapters of work. Allow your writing to flow naturally, rather than trying to force yourself to a set word count or page within your give time.

5) Create a writing space – head space shift

And finally, to get the most out of your window of time, create a space that is just for your work. By having a place where you write you create an association for your brain so when you sit down it knows: this is where I write, rather than where I plan, work, do the finances etc...

It's a simple trick to shift your head space quickly and get straight into your writing asap. Making the most out of the time you have scheduled.

And that's it. I have found the above to be an enormous help as I worked to find time for what I love to do: write. I hope something here will help you too.

Does an Australian location feature in your novel?



I recently came across a fantastic book directory initiative. It's called **'Books From Here.'** Basically it is a listing of self-published books by the region in which the plots are set or the authors are based (Australia only). The website's goal in their own words is: "to give self published and small-time authors a place to advertise their work, and as a directory of works from specific areas."

It is completely free to list your book, so head over and register now!

<https://booksfromhere.com/>

My Top Reads of 2020

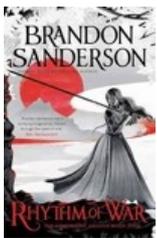
I am a book-o-holic, and proud of it. Any day of the week you can find me with my nose buried in a crime fiction, fantasy, historical romance and anything in between, often with a glass of cold rosé in hand!

2020 was no exception. I did, however, discover the world of indie authors. For this reason my top reads of 2020 will be split into two lists – traditionally published and self-published.

Not all of these books were released in 2020 – but I discovered them that year. I like to focus on everything I have enjoyed.

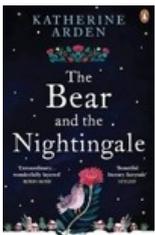
I will mark the 2020 releases clearly for purists who like their lists to be specific to the year!

Traditionally Published



***Rhythm of War* – Brandon Sanderson (2020 Release)**

Fantasy at its absolute best! This is a long book, but you don't notice, you just keep reading.

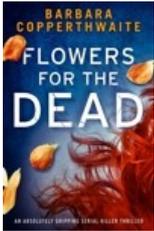


***The Bear and the Nightingale* – Katherine Arden**

A beautiful tale set in medieval Russia, weaving together history, legend and mythology.

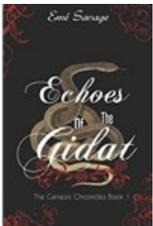


***The Secrets We Kept* – Laura Prescott**
Spies, secrets and the writing of Doctor Zhivago



***Flowers for the Dead* – Barbara Copperthwaite**
What creates a serial killer and can we have compassion for them? This fictional tale asks some uncomfortable questions.

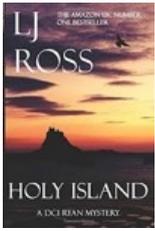
Self-Published



***Echoes of the Gidat* – Emé Savage**
Incredible world-building and beautiful escapism.
The sequel, ***Tetarul Parallel*** – which is arguably even better – was released in 2020.



***Easter Egg* – Jason Acar (2020 Release)**
Video games aren't real – right?



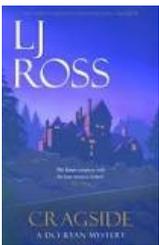
***Holy Island* – LJ Ross**

An isolated island, mysterious murders and a detective who won't stop until he finds the truth. The 17th novel in this series, ***Cuthbert's Way***, was released in 2020.

***Jinkie Jankies* – JM Muir-Coates (Pending Release)**

This is a sneaky one, it's not out yet, I was treated to a first draft reading – but I cannot wait for its release! Children's fiction at its best!

What I'm currently reading



***Cragside*– DCI Ryan Mysteries Book 5, by LJ Ross**

This series has me hooked! At the time of writing this there are 17 books in this incredible series. Ross began her detective novels in 2015, and she started strong. The first 3 fit nicely in a story arch, then she ventures into a wider story. All I can say is that I can't put them down!

Highly Recommend!

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

Writing Quotes / Inspiration

“Get your facts first, and then you can distort them as much as you please”

- Mark Twain

Feels fitting for the current times, wouldn't you agree? Ahem – politics!

“Write drunk. Edit Sober”

- ???

This one always gives me a giggle – mostly because it is just the worst advice ever in my opinion! It is attributed to Ernest Hemingway. And whilst there is no doubt he was a heavy drinker, as a rule he never started drinking until *after* 4pm. But it's good for a giggle!

“It's never too late to become who you might have been.”

- 19th Cent. Author Mary Ann Evans, whose pen name was George Eliot

Sneak peak at some of the inspiration that drove next edition's feature author, Dan Coonan. I can't wait to share this interview with you!

Are you an author, blogger, reviewer, editor, podcaster, or other writing content creator?



I want to feature you!

This year I want to open up my newsletter to feature people from all aspects of the writing process – creatives, promoters, enthusiasts and more.

If you would like to feature in an upcoming edition of my newsletter, please email me: lelita.baldock@gmail.com and we can get started!

Coming Up Next

Coming up in next edition of my Writing Newsletter (Jan 21), I'll be talking with Dan Coonan, author of *Presidential Spirits*, about his writing journey, incredible success and advice for budding writers. As well as tips on editing and publishing from those in the know, and much, much more! Looking forward to sharing with you again soon.