*Romance Writers of Australia Inc*

*is proud to announce...*

**Diversions Romance Short Story Contest 2024**

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| **Opening date:** | 2 October 2023. **Online entries only.** |
| **Closing date:** | 5pm Sydney time, 23 October 2023. |
| **Eligibility:** | This contest is open to all authors writing and publishing romance in Australia and New Zealand. |
| **Entry fee:** | AU$20.00 RWA members per entry (GST incl.) non-members $30 (GST incl.) |
| **Judging:** | The Diversions Short Story Competition will be judged by a mix of reader and writer judges. |
| **Entry specifications:** | We are accepting stories featuring diverse leads from underrepresented/marginalised groups.  A 4000 word romance short story, featuring the 2024 theme – **LIGHTS**  Stories must be romance (HEA/HFN is mandatory) and all heat levels accepted. |
| **No. of entries:** | Maximum of TWO entries per person |
| **Prizes:** | N/A  The top-scoring 12 stories will have the chance to be published in our 2024 Diversions Anthology. |
| **How to enter:** | The link is available on the RWA website. <https://romanceaustralia.com/our-contests/> |
| **Queries:** | **Contest Coordinator: diversions@romanceaustralia.com** |
| **Purpose:** | To reassure entrants - especially those writing on a fringe topic/character - that in addition to the judging panel, the DEI committee can provide a diversity-centric perspective.  The RWA Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) committee will read entries after the judging has concluded, to provide comments and ensure that judging reflects a diversity-centric perspective. Any comments added by the DEI committee will focus on representation of diversity and exploration of diversity / characterisation and won’t alter the judges’ scoring. |

**ENTRY CONDITIONS**

**RWA Inc. reserves the right not to accept entries that do not comply with the entry conditions. The contest coordinator’s decision in this regard is final.**

1. The Diversions Short Story Award is for a romance short story of 4,000 words that includes the 2024 theme – ***Lights*** as an integral part of the story. Stories that are commercially available or contracted for publication are not eligible for entry. For the purposes of this contest, RWA deems ‘commercially available’ to mean: any work of fiction *(or part of)* that is *(or has been at any time)* available for purchase or download in any format for any price including free.
   1. in any marketplace where books are available *(this shall include physical or digital bookstores, a publisher’s website or store, and any other retailer or distribution outlet for books in any format);*
   2. at any other venue where the work includes *(or is followed by)* links to non-free content, or otherwise appears with the intent of selling or encouraging purchase of any of the author’s works *(this shall include story-sharing or file-sharing sites, blogs, social media sites and other author websites.)*
2. The Entry must showcase diverse leads from underrepresented/marginalised groups who are integral to the story. Under-represented and/or marginalised refers to people who are discriminated against based on race, colour, ethnicity, caste, national origin, age, body size, ability including mental health and/or neurodivergence, gender identity, marital status, familial status, parental status, socio-economic status, religion, sexual orientation, and/or political beliefs.
3. All Australian and New Zealand authors are eligible to enter.
4. Authors are not allowed to judge for contests they have entered. Contest Coordinators may not enter or judge a contest they are managing, but may enter or judge for another contest.
5. If, after entering a story in Diversions, the entrant makes that story commercially available (or accepts a contract for its publication) during the judging period (from submission of entry to the public announcement of placegetters), the entry is no longer eligible to go forward in the contest, or to be included in the anthology, and the entrant must contact the contest coordinator to arrange for the entry to be withdrawn.
6. The **definition of romance** implies the romantic development of a relationship between the protagonists via a storyline with a ‘happy ever after’ or ‘happy for now’ ending (HEA/HFN), and includes all romance sub-genres, i.e. contemporary, historical, Regency, futuristic, fantasy, paranormal, time travel, romantic suspense, new adult, rural/outback, science fiction, gay/lesbian, menage. Judges will judge your entry based on the information you give, so **contact the contest coordinator in advance if you are unsure of the correct sub-genre.** Your entry must be a romance that features underrepresented or marginalized protagonists to be eligible for the contest and gain a place in the anthology. Stories that are not romances are not eligible. No pornography.
7. The entrant must be the original author of every entry they submit. Entries by joint eligible authors are permitted. Fan-fiction (stories using characters, settings, worlds or other elements that belong to someone else) is not eligible. Entries must be text only, no images.
8. RWA reserves the right, at any time during the contest or anthology production, to reject and/or disqualify entries that in the contest coordinator’s opinion contain any of the following presented in a positive light or as titillation: rape, paedophilia, incest, non-consensual violence, necrophilia, bestiality or any other conduct that is degrading or promotes hate, misogyny, homophobia, biphobia and transphobia. All characters involved in romantic and/or sexual situations must be 18+ years of age.
9. Up to two (2) Entries per person are permitted. Copyright in the manuscript remains with the entrant.
10. Entry fees are non-refundable once your entry is accepted. PayPal or credit card payment only, via the online system. No cash or cheques.
11. Judges’ decisions and scores are final. No correspondence will be entered into. If you have suggestions on the contest process, advise the coordinator by separate email.
12. Ties for finalist placings and placings in the anthology are resolved by highest total X-factor score. A minimum total score of 85% must be gained for an entry to win a 1st, 2nd or 3rd placing, or to be eligible for a place in the anthology.
13. Thank you notes to judges are welcome. Please email any thank yous to the contest coordinator, including the judge numbers, and they will be forwarded. No gifts.
14. **Prizes:** the first 3 place getters will receive a certificate. The top-scoring 12 stories will also be invited to take part in the Diversions 2024 anthology (see below).
15. If by the promulgated closing date, the contest has received fewer than ten (10) eligible entries, the contest coordinator may elect to: a) extend the closing date; and/or b) Declare the contest void and refund all entry fees received. If the contest is declared void, no judging will be conducted, and no placings or prizes will be awarded.
16. If an entrant submits an AI generated work, then that entry will be disqualified, and the member may be barred from entering any competitions in the future.

**ENTRY AND FORMATTING**

1. Online entries only. Fill in your entry form and pay your entry fee online.
2. Your **entry** is a romance **short story,** featuring the **theme – *LIGHTS* –** with a **word count OF UP TO** 4,000. It must be saved in .doc or .docx format. Word count is exact and any words exceeding the limit will be trimmed. With shorter entries, bear in mind that judges are looking for character and plot development (see sample scoresheet on the website for details).
3. The **title page must include**: story title, heat level and sub-genre. The **header must include**: story title, sub-genre and page number, starting at page 1 on the story (don’t number the title page). **Author’s name must not appear on entries**. RWA contests strive to preserve anonymity between judges and entrants.
4. **Theme:** The 2024 theme – ***LIGHTS*** – must be an integral part of the story. Judges can award marks for intrinsic, original and creative use of the theme. It **must** feature a romance between underrepresented or marginalized groups within the community.
5. **Formatting:** A4 page, portrait orientation. Font: 12 pt Courier New or Times New Roman. Text begins approx. one-third of the way down the page, is aligned left (not fully justified), and is double spaced, with no blank lines or extra spacing between paragraphs, and the first line of each paragraph is indented. Remember, this is a digital contest, and entries will not be printed. Formatting will be assessed on having your margins, indents etc. set to the specified sizes, not by the appearance of your manuscript on a printed page.
6. To ensure fairness to all entrants, and consistency and ease for judges, **all the above formatting conditions are compulsory**. If any condition is not met, you will receive a 5-mark deduction (total, not per error) from your raw score, and your entry will be ranked below equivalently-scored entries that do not have formatting errors. The purpose of this system is to teach entrants the proper formatting.

**About the diversions anthology**

1. The top-scoring 12 stories will be invited to participate in the 2024 Diversions ‘Lights’ anthology. This is optional, and is in addition to certificates for the first three place getters.
2. The Diversions 2024 anthology will be published by RWA in digital and print, to be released in time for the RWA Conference 2024. Stories will be edited by RWA’s experienced anthology editing team.
3. Authors will license to RWA the right for a limited period (exclusive for 1 year from date of publication and non-exclusive thereafter) to publish worldwide in digital and print as part of the anthology. Copyright will remain with the author.
4. Stories will be donated. Any proceeds from the sale of the anthology will be used to recover production expenses and/or to fund RWA programs and services. RWA reserves the right not to produce the anthology in the event that the number of eligible stories is not sufficient to make the publication viable (see conditions 15).

**Tips from the contest coordinators:**

* A sample scoresheet is available from the contest website. Check it out to see what the judges will be looking for—perhaps there are some improvements you can make before entering.
* Run a spell-checker over your entry—but then ask a friend to read it, too, to check for any typos or errors you’ve missed. There are 15 easy marks available for spelling, grammar and punctuation, so make sure you get them all.

**Tips on formatting your entry:**

* Download the formatting sample from the contest website to see what your entry should look like.
* Make sure your story doesn’t fall outside the required word count. We use exact computer count. To ensure fairness to all entrants, we can’t accept even one word outside the mandated counts.
* To make the page numbers start at 1 on the manuscript, and not on your title page: have the page numbers start at zero, and then untick ‘Show number on first page’.
* Finally: *please* don’t spend hours stressing over the formatting. The requirements are simple and easy to achieve—if in doubt, ask for help.