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**Joan Hessayon Award winner Brigid Coady triumphs
with debut novel *No One Wants to be Miss Haversham***

Brigid Coady has triumphed with her contemporary novel *No One Wants to be Miss Havisham*, published by HarperImpulse, for which she has been awarded The Romantic Novelists' Association's (RNA) prestigious Joan Hessayon Award for new writers. Brigid was presented with her award and a cheque for £1,000 at the RNA's Summer Party, held today at the Royal Overseas League in London.

The Joan Hessayon Award is generously sponsored by gardening expert Dr David Hessayon OBE, in honour of his late wife Joan, who was a longstanding member of the RNA and a great supporter of its New Writers' Scheme.

The judges for the award, which included new RNA Chair Eileen Ramsay and outgoing Chair, Pia Fenton, together with adjudicator and former RNA Chair Anthea Kenyon, found the final decision difficult to arrive at, as the standard of entries was very high.

However, they agreed that the winning novel was outstanding, and selected it for its 'sheer originality and wide range of emotions'. "I had the occasional lump in my throat as well as laughter, and I wanted to rush back to it", the judges said. "*No One Wants to be Miss Haversham* is a great story, well written, fast paced and suspenseful. Great chemistry between hero and heroine – loved it!"

No One Wants to be Miss Havisham follows the story of Edie Dickens, a divorce lawyer who doesn't believe in love and happily ever after. Haunted by the Ghosts of Weddings Past, Present and Future, she must change her ways before her best friend's wedding or

end up being damned to an eternity watching others' happiness. Can she learn to love in time?

The judges commented, "Eddie's character comes over well. She changes gradually, as did my image of her, slipping backwards occasionally, but as each link of the chain falls away you feel the warmth which is building up into her true self."

Outgoing RNA Chair Pia Fenton said of the shortlist, "This year's list of contenders once again demonstrates the depth and breadth of the work produced by RNA authors and I am absolutely thrilled that we have another superb group of graduates from our New Writers' Scheme. The New Writers' Scheme is unique to our association and it's wonderful to see that it really works. Congratulations to all the authors on the shortlist!"

She continued, "We offer our special congratulations to Brigid for her winning novel. The story is based on Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* and this modern adaptation is done extremely well."

The inspiration for the novel came when Brigid realised that she was tired of going to weddings and then seeing those marriages crumble. She confesses to being an obsessive watcher of the television show 'Say Yes to The Dress'. She says it is 'research'.

Although Brigid was born in the UK, she was raised around the world and spent most of her childhood reading. Living in London, her writing is mostly done during her commute to work as a project manager in Kent. She's a voice-over artist, loves country music and had her own radio show.

Commenting on her inclusion in the shortlist, Brigid said, "I've been a member of the RNA's New Writers' Scheme for over ten years and it is amazing to be nominated for the Joan Hessayon Award. The award shows that the RNA's support for new writers really does work. It was my dream that one day it might be my turn. This year it is."

The full shortlist for 2015 was:

Karen Aldous	<i>The Vineyard</i>	Carina
Caitlyn Callery	<i>The Bankrupt Viscount</i>	MuseltUp

Ashlinn Craven	<i>Maybe Baby</i>	Crimson Romance
Brigid Coady	<i>No one Wants to be Miss Havisham</i>	HarperImpulse
Joan Fleming	<i>What the Future Holds</i>	Tirgearr
Kathy Jay	<i>What If He's the One</i>	HarperImpulse
Natalie Kleinman	<i>Safe Harbour</i>	White Glove (originally published by Saffhet)
Nikki Moore	<i>Crazy Undercover Love</i>	HarperImpulse
Margaret Pardoe	<i>Meant for Each Other</i>	DC Thomson novella
Janice Preston	<i>Mary & the Marquis</i>	HMB Historical
Caroline Roberts	<i>The Torn Up Marriage</i>	HarperImpulse
Heather Rosser	<i>In the Line of Duty</i>	New Generation Publishing (originally accepted by Attica Books)
Georgina Troy	<i>A Jersey Kiss</i>	Accent Press
Jules Wake	<i>Talk to Me</i>	Choc Lit
Gwyneth Williams	<i>Echoes in the Sand</i>	Endeavour Press

Cover images for all the novels, together with author photographs, can be found at:

http://www.romanticnovelistsassociation.org/news/media_centre

About the Romantic Novelists' Association (RNA) and the New Writers' Scheme

The RNA was formed in 1960 to promote romantic fiction and encourage good writing and now represents more than 700 writers, agents, editors and other publishing professionals.

The New Writers' Scheme has been run by the RNA since 1962 and is unique among professional writing associations. It aims to encourage fresh talent in the writing of romantic novels that reflect all aspects of love and life, contemporary or historical.

Manuscripts submitted under the scheme are from unpublished authors and are read by an experienced writer or editor who provides invaluable feedback. Any manuscript that is subsequently published as a debut novel is eligible for the Joan Hessayon Award. All eligible books are judged by a panel of experienced RNA members who are already published authors.

Winner of the 2014 award was Jo Thomas with *The Oyster Catcher*, published by Accent Press.

A list of past winners of RNA awards can be found at www.romanticnovelistsassociation.org

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