

New Australian Author Book Release

HERE

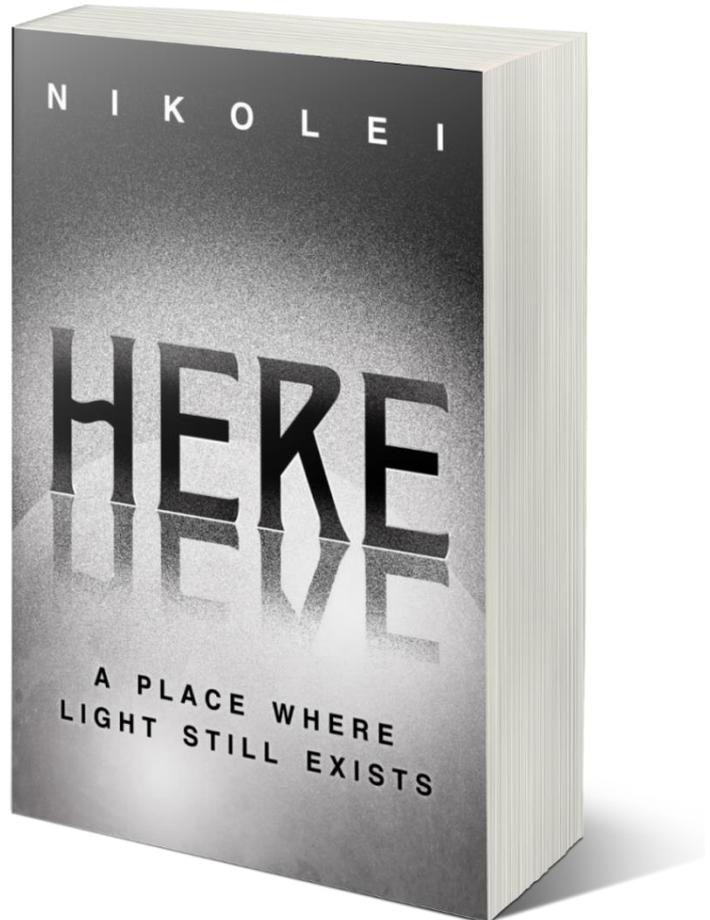
NIKOLEI

With his religious beliefs waning, Roman must find new faith in his relationships, and his own abilities to survive powerful enemies in a quest to return the light to Earth...

In the long, pitch-black winter, Roman shelters in the cathedral where he trains to be an ordained priest. But with resources dwindling, he receives a vision of a compass direction in a dream and must set out in the cold darkness to find 'Here' - a place where the light still exists.

Although Roman doesn't believe what the locals claim; that *Here* is Heaven and Hell on Earth, he knows it's a special place which may be the source of the darkness but may also save the light from vanishing forever.

A spiritual quest of enlightenment and discovery as Roman is challenged by his convictions and his alliances while fighting his own conflicts within. This brave tale of facing fear and weakness to gain strength is a great journey by new author Nikolei.



Visit shawlinepublishing.com.au for more details on the author, Nikolei.

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A Conversation with Nikolei

When did you first realise you wanted to be a writer?

The all-boys Catholic school that I attended had a policy for the school formal that said only students with a female date were permitted – coming alone was not allowed, and God forbid you'd take a male date. I wrote a petition letter about it. It gained traction, even with the teachers, culminating in the school allowing one to go to the formal without a date. It showed me the power of writing and gave me a passion for doing it, hopefully for the rest of my life.

What would you say is your interesting writing quirk?

Whenever I struggle to find motivation to write (i.e. always), I'll put on a song. By the end of the song, the challenge is I need to be sitting down with my writing materials, ready to write. I think it works for me because it's easier to hit 'play' on a song that I like, than to think about the writing I have to do.

Where do you get your information or ideas for your books?

In general, plot ideas come from whatever I'm reading or watching at the time. As a kid, I would act out these stories on my trampoline. I now do the same thing when I'm hiking, until the stories branch off into my own original ideas. Travelling also gives me ideas, especially for setting, while my job as a Disability Support Worker always gives me inspiration for colourful characters.

When did you write your first book, and how old were you?

I first wrote a book when I was twenty-one. It was a fanfiction novella for 'Avatar: The Last Airbender', and I wrote it as a birthday present to my boyfriend at the time. Looking back the ideas were interesting, but my writing has thankfully improved.

How did you find the publishing process?

It was disheartening at first to see all those rejection emails, but it's always comforting to hear the stories about famous books not getting published after until X number of attempts. It was also reassuring that the consensus in the feedback I was getting was 'Here' was an interesting read, but the publisher was not ready to publish it at the time. If you're receiving rejections, it's more likely that you haven't found the right place to publish, rather than there being a problem with your writing.

What was one of the most surprising things you learned in creating your book, "Here"?

I learned that, at least for me, writing is a way for my mind to process what is going on in my personal life. This is mostly unconscious, like a dream. I remember telling the premise of 'Here' to an Italian roommate I met overseas.

She asked, 'Oh! So, it's about a guy bringing light back to Earth. Is that based on your own experience of finding the light at the end of the tunnel?'

I was stunned. I'd never thought about it before, but of course that's what it was!

What do you think makes a good story?

A good story is one which grabs you from the start, and only tightens its grip as you read on. That's partly to do with feeling immersive, such as a story which has key details.

What was the biggest challenge when writing the book?

As I was backpacking for seven months around the Americas, it drew out the editing process. I would be sick of looking at the same material but feeling too exhausted to start anything else. Now I'm grateful that, as I read through 'Here', I remember different places where I was.

Did you have any interesting experiences whilst writing, editing, or publishing your book, "Here"?

I completed my second draft, then took my laptop with me so that I could edit 'Here' while travelling. When I was in Mexico, I was missing my mother, so I decided to add a penultimate chapter. In it, Roman finds the Worm King, who helps Roman enter his mother's dream to talk with her and let her know that he is okay.

It ended up being singled out by my readers as a favourite chapter as it gave the story heart and a bookend to the early chapters.

Do you have any suggestions to help others become a better writer? If so, what are they?

Practice. It will improve everything. For description, make a list of details of what you want to describe and pick the key detail. For dialogue, try to act out your characters and imagine what they would say.



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