**Writing Women**

**Alli Sinclair and Kaneana May**

[Start of recorded material at 00:00:00]

Kirsty: Hello, everyone. Good evening, my name is Kirsty and I’m one of the librarians at Wyndham City Libraries. I’d like to begin tonight by acknowledging the Wadawurrung, Woiwurrung and Booiwurrung people of the Kulin nation as the traditional custodians on the lands on which Wyndham is being built. On behalf of our guests, I’d also like to acknowledge the Wadawurrung, Biripi and Worimi peoples as the traditional custodians of the lands they are joining us from. We pay our respects to their elders; past, present and emerging.

Tonight, we are joined by authors and screenwriters, Alli Sinclair and Kaneana May. Alli’s newest book *The Codebreakers* introduces a group of Australian women codebreakers in World War Two, and her previous titles include *The Cinema At Starlight Creek* and *Burning Fields*.

Kaneana’s newest book *All We Have Is Now* revolves around a modern group of friends, healers and businesswomen, and her previous works include novel *The One* and TV scriptwriting for shows including “Home and Away”. I’m excited to hear what they say, and we’ll leave you now in their capable hands.

Alli: Hi, everyone. Thank you for coming along tonight, and it’s great to be having another chat with you, Kaneana. Have you frozen? No. [Laughs]

Kaneana: No. So, I thought that there was a little trailer coming on for 15 seconds. [Laughs]

Alli: [Laughs] All good.

Kaneana: But maybe it’s not . Lovely to talk to you, Alli.

Alli: Yeah. And thanks, everyone, for coming along and joining us, and I hope you all are nice and warm, and cosy. So, so I thought – actually, I might do a little bit of a longer bio with you, Kaneana, if that’s all right? So, Kaneana’s – she studied television production at university, and she graduated with first class honours in screenwriting. She went on to work in the script departments of “Home and Away,” “All Saints” and “Headland.” Kaneana has had two women’s’ fiction novels published by Halpin-HarperCollins, *The One* in 2019 and *All We Have is Now* in 2021, and I love them. They’re fabulous. [Laughs] She lives in the Mid North Coast of New South Wales with her husband, three kids and an energetic Labrador. She’s currently working on her third manuscript. So, kind of busy?

Kaneana: [Laughs] Kind of busy, yes. It’s funny, I was listening to a podcast just recently of – the male writer was just talking about what you wish you could get done before you had kids if you had of known, [laughs] and I can relate to that.

Alli: [Laughs] If he’s in a [unintelligible 00:03:02] type of world. [Laughs]

Kaneana: Yeah, if you realised how much time they were going to suck out of your life. But yes, as you know, Alli, it’s all a balancing act at the moment. But before we move along, I’m going to give a longer bio of Alli, who is a multi-award winning and bestselling author whose fact-based fiction explores little known historical events – and don’t they. What? Alli’s books have been voted into the top 100 Australian novels of all time, and when she’s not writing novels, Alli is working on international film and TV projects as a screenwriter and a producer. And I can assure you, listeners, that she is always busy; Alli and I check-in with each other every now and again, and she always has like 100 projects on the go, so she’s balancing a lot of plates in the air – a lot of balls. Whatever she’s balancing, there’s a lot of them.

Alli hosts the Writers at Sea cruise retreat for writers and presenters, running workshops internationally. Her books explore history, culture, love and grief, and relationships between family, friends and lovers. She captures the romance and thrill of discovering old and new worlds and loves taking readers on a journey of discovery – and you do that so well, Alli. And another thing that Alli does amazingly is welcome new writers into the, I’m going to guess, writing community. I’m only fairly new to this, but Alli was one author that was happy to take me under her wing along with so many others that I’d met through the Romance Writers of Australia. So, do you think that’s where we first met or was it online? Or was it at conference? I’m not quite sure because I think –

Alli: It’s all so intermingled because there’s almost, I think, what; nearly 1,000 members of the Romance Writers Association? And we all mix outside of that organisation as well. So, it would have been somewhere along the line we’ve crossed paths. But it is, it’s great to see the journey that you’ve taken and how it’s all evolved since your first book. It’s really cool to be able to watch it.

Kaneana: Thank you. Yes, for so many years as an aspiring writer, you’re watching from the outside not really knowing exactly how it all works on the inside. And if there any aspiring authors with us tonight, I would definitely recommend joining the Romance Writers of Australia, the organisation offers so much: they’ve got always supportive members, there’s opportunities like contests and online forums. And it was actually at my very first Romance Writers Conference that I did pitch my first book *The One* and was lucky enough to get a deal from that, so I definitely owe them a big, big thanks. So, it’s a great organisation to get into.

Alli: Yeah. And it’s good actually because they embrace authors of any genre. I mean, a lot of authors are romance authors, but my brother’s a writer as well and he writes what he calls, “Explode-y fiction,” so he writes spy books, so there’s lots of explosions and car chases, and whatnot. But he has benefited so much as well just hanging out with other writers and kind of meeting your tribe, I guess, and finding that support, which is really cool. So yeah, if there are aspiring writers out there, definitely, definitely worth looking into for sure. But Kaneana, with the books that you write, can you maybe tell us a bit more about the kind of stories that you love to write?

Kaneana: Yes. Well, I think I write stories that I would want to read, is the biggest thing. I have always wanted – even when I was younger – and I didn’t even know at this stage that I wanted to be a writer, but I used to always have these little books that I would tinker away – and I’m talking like primary school age. I remember distinctly this black one with red around the edges, and I’d carry it around, and I just used to write stories about friends. So, I think as I’ve grown, my stories have just grown – and usually they’ve just grown with age essentially. I’ve got too manuscripts that are on my computer that wouldn’t have seen the light of day, I imagine. I tried to get them published and all that kind of thing, but I think that they were just my practise manuscripts.

But one was a young adult, the next one was a new adult and then I went to *The One*, and the characters in *The One* are a little bit younger than the characters in *All We Have Is Now*, so I must just keep slowly getting older to where I might go, “This is what I want to write about; issues that are facing myself and friends of mine, and people.” I love women’s issues, I know lots of people don’t generally – well, that some people have a really big aversion to the title, “Women’s fiction.” I don’t, I usually go, “Well, I’m probably going to love that book.” But I love reading about how women are working their way in the world, about strong women, about women’s relationships with friends, husbands, parents, children, all that kind of thing; I love exploring all that.

So, my stories so far have always had romance in them, but I wouldn’t say – especially in *All We Have Is Now*, that’s not the main thrust of the storyline; it’s just an outer part of it, each of my three main characters has a love interest, but it’s more about the friendship in this – this is my latest one here: *All We Have Is Now*. A bit blurry.

Alli: I love that cover, it’s gorgeous.

Kaneana: Yeah. So, I was very happy with this cover. So, this was my debut, *The One*, and that’s how it originally looked when it came out, but they’ve since released it in the smaller version, which it’s made it into Better Reading’s Top 100, so it’s in Big Ws across Australia for the moment, and only for $12 at the moment, which is great, isn’t it? For the whole year.

Alli: [Laughs]

Kaneana: And then they match now, so are very pretty and match. [Laughs]

Alli: They’re gorgeous, yeah.

Kaneana: What about you, Alli? Can you tell us a little bit more about the types of stories that you write?

Alli: Yeah, I’m definitely drawn to historical stories, but like you, I love writing about strong females finding their way in the world, finding out about themselves and also changing the world around them, and making it a better place as well. Yeah, and I think also the historical settings are really important to me as well. I do kind of have a fascination for, I guess, modern history, so last century. Research is definitely something I love; I probably could spend all day researching and not writing [laughs]. Eventually I do have to write.

Kaneana: But I think I’d be scared that would happen because I take my hat off to anyone that puts a historical element in there, because it’s amazing how much facts within the story that – yeah, I think that I would get lost very easily.

Alli: Yeah. And I’m also petrified of getting something wrong, so [laughs] I’m triple checking things all the time, so it does take me a lot longer to write. But it is definitely something that I love – the historical side of things. But yeah, first and foremost it’s women, it’s finding stories about women who have done amazing things in this world. And the more I research stories, I uncover a whole lot of other stories about women who have been forgotten in history, so I guess it’s kind of been my mission to uncover these stories, so we actually get to learn about them. And I think that’s one of the things with *The Codebreakers*, is I’ve had so many people say to me, “I never knew we had codebreakers let alone female codebreakers in Australia.” I didn’t know either, and then when I found out I was like, “Are you kidding me? [Laughs] I need to know more about this.”

Kaneana: So, because you are highlighting things that aren’t really well known, so how are you finding out about these issues to begin with, like the codebreakers?

Alli: Yeah. Well, I wrote *Burning Fields* in 2018, so that was set in post-war Australia, and in Queensland – up in the sugarcane fields – and my main character had worked in Brisbane for the Australian Women’s Army Service. And after I’d written that book, I was like – because you wouldn’t mind setting a book during the war here – so good old Google, “Australian Women’s Army Service, Brisbane, World War Two,” and this little, tiny article came up about these codebreakers for Central Bureau, and I’m like, “What is this? What?” And then that just kind of sent me down the rabbit hole. And I don’t have a problem calling up experts and saying, “Hey, I’m a writer, I need some more information. Any chance you could help me out?” That kind of thing. So yeah, it’s been really great to be able to get the information that way and also to track down the real-life codebreakers, which has made a huge difference to the story because it makes it way more authentic, because I can ask them all those questions –

Kaneana: Anything

Alli: Yeah, exactly. I mean, yes, there were some great textbooks that I could read and find out the nuts and the bolts of the situation that they went through, but to be able to actually talk to them and say, “Well, how did it feel? And how did you cope with this?” To get those real-life stories makes a huge difference. But like in *The One*, right – you would have drawn on a lot, I guess, past experience working for TV?

Kaneana: Yeah. So, the idea for *The One* came – I’m going to go back to that clip that you were just talking about, don’t let me forget.

Alli: OK.

Kaneana: So, with *The One*, it was a conversation with friends up here. So, I used to live in Sydney and work in television, and before that I studied television production, so I was amongst that world. But then I had kids and moved to the country – well, this is my hometown – and it was a conversation that a couple of women were having about the current season of “The Bachelor,” and something they said really twinged with me because I realised that they didn’t understand how – the behind the scenes production side, which I realised without really realising how much I knew about how production was created and manipulated, and things like that, so it was just a – I started thinking, “What must it be like to work on a show like ‘The Bachelor?’” And the first character that came to mind was Darcy, who’s my young producer, who is gung-ho about moving up the career ladder, and the whole story kind of came from there.

So, I didn’t work on reality television myself, but I worked in production, and I learned all the production side of things at uni, but I was also lucky that a lot of uni friends ended up working on reality TV, so I was able to ask them some questions. But then, like you, I was Googling any article I could read about behind the scenes; I read books that ex-contestants had written or had had written, I watched behind the scenes clips. So yeah, Google was a very happy friend of mine too. But yeah, it’s funny how the kernel of the idea just sparks – and that’s what I was going to ask you, was – so, did that little – like just that little clip that you read, is that what kickstarted *The Codebreakers*? Were you actively looking for a story?

Alli: I was actively looking for a story; I always am. [Laughs] I’ve got a very big file of probably stories for the next 10 years if I can write them. I am one of those people who I can’t – the ideas come easy, it’s the writing that’s the hard part. So, if I get a new, shiny idea, then I actually spend a bit of time and I write the idea down in a file, and then I just pop it aside and just leave it. Sometimes I come back to it, sometimes I don’t.

Kaneana: So, you let yourself do that?

Alli: Yeah, I do, because otherwise it will just annoy me until I get it down on paper. [Laughs] But yeah, that little article definitely kickstarted the whole codebreakers thing, and when I realised that no one else had written about it in fictional form, I knew that this was the story. And I think as writers – I don’t know – I mean, some writers feel like the stories find them and there’s others that sort of come from within, but this one – from the minute I found out about it, I kind of felt like I had a bit of ownership on it. Do you know what I mean? It was kind of like, “This is my story, [laughs] no one else is having it. Hands off.”

Kaneana: Stay away.

Alli: Yeah. But it did, it kicked off a couple of years of research. I got to speak to a lot of the members of Central Bureau who are all in their 90s. So, Central Bureau was the intelligence organisation that was in a mansion in a very nice, leafy suburb of Brisbane, and the women worked out in the garage out the back breaking codes and working with Bletchley Park and intercepting Japanese morse code, and those sorts of things. So, it just was quite almost fantastical that this actually existed, and we didn’t know about it, so that – just once I got wind of that, there was no way I was going to let that one go [laughs] at all.

Kaneana: I bet. So, with your main character, Ellie, did she come to you fully formed or did you decide what kind of qualities your main character to have? How did you go about bringing her to life?

Alli: Yeah, sure. She did come to me fully formed because I had gotten to know – there’s three remaining female codebreakers – and I had spent a long time interviewing them over a year and getting to know them and learning about their life stories. So, I think when I started writing Ellie I kind of took all the elements because there were a common thread with the women because they were all from the country, they were from very, I guess, conservative families, they had never lived away from home, they were in Brisbane for the first time, and of course there’s 100,000 international troops in Brisbane; they had fun between the hard work. [Laughs] But they were also very trustworthy people, so there were quite a few common elements that I knew that Ellie had to have because that just seemed to be, I guess, what the army was looking for with these women.

So yeah, she did come fully formed. There were a few times when she surprised me as well, but that’s the joy of writing too. But what about your characters in *All We Have Is Now*? How did you go with your characters? Did they come fully formed or where did the idea come from?

Kaneana: Well, I think for *All We Have Is Now*, the setting was what came first, and it was kind of a conscious decision because I had been – the previous book in *The One,* working on this behind the scenes of the reality show; it was kind of like bright lights and a little bit intense because it was on, on, on, on, on. So, it was very busy with what was happening on the camera and behind the camera, and making sure I could cover all that, but I personally wanted to have a bit of a calmer and kinder story because it’s a long time to be involved in that story, especially when I’m, at that stage, when I started writing the one, I’ve got three kids; and my youngest was only four months old, so I was balancing writing, doing very small snippets, so constantly thinking about it, but just getting it down.

So, I wanted to really – sorry, my chair – wanted to make sure that I wanted to go into a bit of a calmer environment, so I think I was just thinking about what I could do. So, by the time I was starting to write this second book, my youngest – who is now two, and she was going to a preschool that was an hour round trip from here –

Alli: [Laughs]

Kaneana: – so, instead of coming home I would go to the local library, which was – a Mid Coast library is in Taree, so I would drive her into town and then I’d go to the library, and I started doing some research. So, I was flipping through magazines, and I was attracted to all these wellness magazines, and I started thinking about creating a wellness centre, which I had coincidentally been to a wellness centre years before out at Wingham, which is another local town, which is where I set my sixth novel, *Healing Hands* – is my wellness centre that I created. It wasn’t that, but I kind of got the idea from there. And Wingham’s a little bit alternative and it really likes to be able to embrace the different, and it felt like it was the perfect place to set this story. So, it was the setting for me that came first, and then I was looking at what kind of characters do I need? What services do I want the three women to offer? Which kind of affected their characters as well.

Sorry, Kirsty, in here to jump in?

Kirsty: Yes, I just thought while you were talking about your process of developing the novel, we had a question that kind of fed into that a little bit.

Alli: Perfect.

Kirsty: So, Faye is asking Kaneana, “How did you go about transitioning from writing for screen to writing kind of prose and novels?” Faye has produced and written work for community theatre for many years, and has suddenly found herself – sorry, I’m making an assumption – starting to write historical fiction mystery novels, so was wondering if you could let us know a bit?

Alli: Fabulous.

Kaneana: The process – it’s hard to think about what actually happened because when I was writing for “Home and Away,” I was still interested in writing novels back then, so it wasn’t ever something completely separate. I did all creative writing subjects at uni, and sometimes we would have to do screenplays, but other times we would have to do prose fiction. So, I think it was something that I kind of learnt at the same time hand-in-hand, and just would learn the craft differently. And yeah, it is vastly different, I know that. And I think now because I’ve been writing the manuscripts, if you got me to do a screenplay I’d probably struggle to some extent and have to write it, and then delete stacks out that you don’t need in a screenplay. But I always also – when I started working in TV – was doing courses with Writing New South Wales, or back then it was New South Wales Writer’s Centre, because at that stage I wanted to write for young adults because I was only just in my early 20s and I still hadn’t left that age group, so I was still really heavily working and trying to learn that craft as well.

So no, I don’t know if I’ve got exact tips on how to move from it because it was something that I kind of learnt simultaneously, and it was just more – as I said, I’ve got two manuscripts that are just on my computer, and I think they were my practise ones, so I had heavily worked on the screenplays, but then I started writing seriously when I had my first child, and would write in sleep time. And it was me writing stories, and it was just me outpouring and trying to figure it out, so I think it was just more practise than anything.

Alli: Yeah. Well, I’ve got three manuscripts sitting on my computer – will never see the light of day. And same, I played with genres as well; I think the first was very Bridget Jones-ish, the second one, it was women’s fiction, but I haven’t read it now. I was actually thinking about it the other day, and I’m thinking, “Yeah, I can see why that never got [laughs] the attention of an editor.” And then the other one was more like an action-adventure, Indiana Jones type one. But yeah, it takes a while to, I guess, find what fits. So, I’ve only taken up screenwriting in the last couple of years, and yeah, it is – they are totally, totally different animals, but I think also the commonality though is your characters; your character development and the pacing, and the dialogue, like they are things that are very, very similar. But was it Ruth that asked the question? Sorry –

Kirsty: Faye

Alli: – I missed your name. Faye. Sorry, Faye, I don’t know why I said Ruth. But Faye, I mean, if you’re interested in writing novels, I think really the best thing is to sit down and open a Word document, and just go for it. And no doubt you’re a reader, and that’s really the best training that you can have for writing novels for sure. I’m sure, Kaneana, you’d agree there, yeah, is read –

Kaneana: Yeah.

Alli: – and read widely, like don’t read just in the genre that you’re interested in writing in; I think it’s also good to read a few different genres. And if there’s books that appeal to you, it’s great to be able to sort of study them and see bits that you love, but I also think it’s important to also examine the books that don’t appeal to you as well, because sometimes it doesn’t appeal to you maybe because it’s just not a genre that you like or it might just be a certain element of writing that just wasn’t working? So, it’s really good to sort of find the good, I guess, good and the bad, and sort of have a look at those and discover what works, and what doesn’t work because I think knowing both is really important. But honestly, just open up a Word document or get a nice gel pen and a pretty writing pad, and just start writing.

Kaneana: Yeah. If you’ve already been working in community theatre, you would have a great sense of story, I think.

Alli: Yeah.

Kaneana: So, you’ve already got a lot of the skills there. Another thing that I find useful – because, as I’m going to complain again about being time poor – so, like my to-be-read pile is huge, but I do listen to a lot of audiobooks, and I think that listening to the story really helps you like hear the story; you’re imagining it in your mind like you would be a screenplay, but you can pay attention to how authors structure their scenes out, and hear their voices and things. I think listening to a story is just another thing that’s really useful in learning the craft.

Alli: Yeah. Yeah, audiobooks are fantastic for that.

Kaneana: Poor Alli, you probably don’t go anywhere anymore now in lockdown that you – no, you guys are out of lockdown, aren’t you?

Alli: [Laughs] No. Well, the gyms are open again, so now I can start listening to audiobooks in the gym, and I actually find it’s really good because what it does is – if I’m getting up to a really exciting part and I’m like on the bike or the trainer thing, then I’ll stay on it a little bit longer because I just want to know what’s happening. So, actually, audiobooks are great for that [laughs] and great with [unintelligible 00:28:22] –

Kaneana: [Laughs] They’re good for exercise.

Alli: Yes, it would be nice to be out of lockdown. [Laughs]

Kaneana: You know that I often listen to thrillers on audio; I find thrillers really scary to read and I think my eyes want to rush over the page, but because [laughs] in an audiobook you can’t rush forward, you’ve just got to stay with the story. I think that’s really good – of the intensity in my chest. I don’t listen to too many, and my thrillers probably aren’t even that hardcore thriller-ish, but I get scared at the drop of a hat.

Alli: [Laughs] Do you? Yeah, I love thrillers, I really enjoy them. And I think Australia’s got some amazing thriller authors, and we’ve got lots of amazing authors across all genres, but I do love our thrill authors. But yeah, no –

Kirsty: Sorry, Alli, Faye’s just said, “Thank you to you both. I have already got two completed in three quarter of a draft, so just concerned I’m taking it too far with description, which I relied on scenes on actors for.”

Alli: That’s great because actually, description is probably one of the – or to me, I don’t know about you, Kaneana, but I find descriptions really hard. Dialogue comes easy, but descriptions are –

Kaneana: Mm-hmm.

Alli: – really working it. What about you?

Kaneana: Absolutely, the same. [Laughs] The dialogue bounces out and then I’ll put, “XX: come back and fix this up.”

Alli: [Laughs] Yeah, that’s what I’ll often do.

Kaneana: And add something about – today I was adding something to a hospital scene – and this is a great book –

Alli: [Unintelligible 00:29:57] fantastic.

Kaneana: – so there’s a whole range of them; they’re all sitting right on my desk as I’m in the mix of trying to get things done. So, that one’s an urban setting, so you can look up hospital and it tells you things that you can hear in the hospital, like all your five senses. It gives story ideas [laughs] randomly. And then there’s a rural setting, so a bit more country stuff.

Alli: I love *The Emotions Thesaurus*, that one; that was probably sitting there next to you. [Laughs] There you go.

Kaneana: You’re right, that is the best one.

Alli: Yeah. [Laughs]

Kaneana: But yes, so I find dialogue really easy as well, which I always thought came from screenwriting because you didn’t have to add in all the stuff, because isn’t it funny how long it can take you sometimes to write something about how they moved across the room? [Laughs] You’re like, “Uh, [the content is? 00:30:50] –

Alli: So, how many times can you describe the same action in a different way? [Laughs]

Kaneana: Yeah. Well, yeah. When *The One* was going to print, it was actually the type – is it the typesetter?

Alli: Mm-hmm.

Kaneana: Is that the last person that’s looking at it?

Alli: That’s a proof-reader.

Kaneana: Sorry, proof-reader, of course. The proof-reader picked up that I had used the word stomach 87 times, so that was flagged to me. My editor hadn’t picked it up and she said, “Look, I don’t really think it’s a problem, but I thought I should pass on if you want to relook at it.” So, I was, “Stomach?” But I was – characters were feeling sick to the stomach, or they felt something in the pit of their stomach, or dropped their stomach, or even there was things like a hand tracing along the stomach; things like that. But I went, “Oh my gosh.”

Alli: But it is. I mean, I think every writer I know has – and it depends on the book – but we all have like our favourite phrase or word that we use in that particular book, like in the early drafts. I know in, I think it was *The Codebreakers*, probably I had a lot of people nodding, so many nods. [Laughs] So, had to go back and change that. That’s where those thesaurus books are really fantastic. But yeah, I think just about every writer I know has a pet word. I’m working on a new manuscript at the moment, but I’m not far enough in yet to find out what my pet phrase is yet. I’m sure I’ll find it. [Laughs]

Kaneana: Yes. Yeah, I know. Isn’t it funny when you read back, you go, “Oh, there it is again?” [Laughs]

Alli: Yeah. [Laugh]

Kaneana: Or if it’s three times in the same scene, you’re thinking, “What was I thinking?”

Alli: Yeah.

Kaneana: Cassie’s written here, “For both Alli and Kaneana, talking about writing, how do you pick your subplots?” So, Alli, I’ll let you go first.

Alli: That’s a really good question. When I plot, my outline’s usually about at least 10, 12 pages, which for the people who love to write by the seat of their pants and not quite – it just freaks them out that I could go into that much detail, but I need it. So, that’s kind of the main story, and then I find that the subplots often kind of just surface; I actually don’t plan those ones out so much. So, this new book I’m writing at the moment – this woman’s turned up on the page – I’m like, “Who are you? What are you doing here?” But I know there’s going to be something, like there’s a reason that she’s there. And I haven’t figured out what it is yet, but I think it will sort of be like a secondary plot, and she’ll actually end up being a major – if that makes sense – a major secondary character and have quite an important relationship with my main character. But yeah, so often I don’t plan them out; they come. Or sometimes I’m researching, and I find another story that’s – I can weave in with the main story as well, so yeah, sometimes they’re just happy accidents.

Kaneana: Yeah, I guess you’ll sometimes will definitely have to come to do with the historical element, and therefore it’s time specific as well.

Alli: Absolutely, yeah. Yeah. What about you?

Kaneana: Yeah, it’s funny because I did – for *All We Have Is Now,* one of the main stories, which I don’t talk about in any of these chats because it’s something that happens halfway through the story, but it’s a massive thread of my story. But I knew that I needed to kind of balance it out with other subplots, so I actively did go looking for subplots of that; what I wanted. So, there’s three women, Olive, Elsie and Bree, and they’re all very different women, which I guess we should talk about that too, Alli; how we write different voices, because that’s something that you’re always told when you are learning writing that “how are these three women – how do you make them sound different and have different kind of voices?” So, I know in *All We Have Is Now*, I purposefully made my ages a little bit different; they’re not too much, but just a little bit to give me an allowance of age and maturity, and therefore a bit of what they’re interested in as well.

But sometimes that is difficult to make sure that like, for myself, they were all in the wellness world, they all kind of had a shared vision of healing and peace, and all that kind of thing. But you need to make them all very different, so I had –

Alli: Yeah.

Kaneana: – someone that was a Pilates teacher, one that was a nutritionist and one that was a counsellor. So, they all had their storylines that interlinked within the business, but I also – which is something that I’ll think about in terms of scene from scriptwriting, is that I know that I need scenes that aren’t in the business place, and these – seems to be happening elsewhere. So, then I had to think about what their family lives were like and really kind of fleshed out what their family looked like, and what that dynamic could offer, or what kind of – so, one of them has an Alzheimer’s storyline of a mother that’s suffering Alzheimer’s, and that’s just a story that – or a subject, I should say, that is just close to my heart because my grandmother had that, so I watched it as a granddaughter. And I’ve often thought about how hard that must have been for my mum and all her siblings to watch their mum kind of there in front of them, but not there in front of them emotionally.

So, that was something that I wanted to explore, so I went on a lot of forums, and then you can read so many articles about these elements, so that’s why I get so impressed with historical, because I can draw myself out at some point, but I think with historical, I just keep digging deeper and deeper, and get stuck.

Alli: [Laughs]

Kaneana: I don’t know where the roof is anymore. Yeah, so another storyline I did was addiction, because obviously, you need there to be drama. You can’t have all these happy family lives at home, you need there to be something that’s going to be challenging your character and something that they’re going up against, and something antagonising them, so you are looking for subplots. But for me, it’s something that I’d – so far, because I’m not that – I’ve only got the two books out, it’s things that I’ve been interested in enough to want to research. So, I don’t know you go when you’ve got 10 books under the belt, and you’ve covered a lot of your tough topics.

Alli: [Laughs] Yeah. Yeah, it’s interesting. Actually, I was plotting out another story the other day that was just not going to leave me alone until I actually started writing it down, and I think because I do write very similar characters, even though they’re all in different situations and different timeframes, and those sorts of things, but there are always these things that they have in common; that they’re strong, they’re sort of pretty much ahead of their time, they’re quite independent thinkers, they all want to change the world to make it a better place. So, there’s a lot of, I guess, personality traits that I really love in my characters, and so now –

Kaneana: And you want your readers to be rooting for your characters too in that they’re – that’s all [unintelligible 00:38:48] –

Ali: Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, so when I was doing this outline the other day and I looked at it, and I went, “OK, I really need to change it up somehow,” because it was starting to sound like other characters in other stories. So yeah, there does come a time where you just – yeah, I have a really great character questionnaire sheet that I use – I don’t know if you use those at all. So, I actually give it to my students in my workshops as well when we do character development, and instead of asking, “What colour hair do they have? What colour eyes?” Those sorts of things; it’s more things like, “When you walk into a room, what’s the first thing you see?” Which you think, “Yeah, that’s nothing much.” But when I was doing *The Cinema At Starlight Creek*, my main character in the 1994 story – because it’s set in 1952 Hollywood and 1994 in Queensland – she is a location assistant. So, for her, when she walks into a room, like she is assessing everything, how the light comes through the window and how a camera crew could move around the space, and all those sorts of things.

And her love interest – he is a metal sculptor – so, when he walks into a room, it’s a totally different way of looking at things, so he’ll be looking at the textures and those sorts of things. So, it’s quite interesting to do those character questionnaires for your different characters because sometimes you can find the differences and also the bits that bring them together as well. So, that helps me to develop characters that aren’t always the same, even though they might have similar traits, in strong women, I need to find other ways to make them really different from one book to the other.

Kaneana: Yeah. Well, it’s funny, one of the characters in *All We Have Is Now*, Bree, she’s the youngest of my three and is a bit flirtatious, and likes the males, and my mum found her really abrasive and was like, “I don’t like her,” but my sister read it – and she’s my younger sister too – and she was like, “No, I love her, she’s got so much energy.” So, it was something that you have to go sometimes, “Oh well, who’s – “ like one person might appeal to someone that mightn’t appeal to another, but just have to go with it. I felt that she was the right person for the story and didn’t want to make her like too similar to other two, so felt like, no, I have to make her quite strong, and what she’s like, to try and get their voices different. We’ve got another question here, Alli.

Alli: Cool.

Kaneana: It’s from Isabel. She says, “Did you follow a standard formula when starting out? I’m a super beginner and am learning towards things like strict story arcs, et cetera.” When you were starting out, did you always plot it out?

Alli: Yeah. Oh gosh, no. My first time – wow – [laughs] I –

Kaneana: [Laughs] First published one, we’ll say.

Alli: First published one. No, well, actually, no, well my first one I ever wrote was 155,000 words long – most novels are 80,000 to 100,000 – and it was kind of semi-autobiographical. I used to live in South America, so my main character ended up going to South America in all her adventures there. I knew nothing about writing, I didn’t know there were any organisations. So, this was back in 2003, I think. So, I mean, I think I just – I was a reader, so I just opened up the document and off I went. And then it wasn’t until probably about two years later, and I was introduced to someone who was an author and who was a member of RWA, and she said, “No, there’s organisations, you can go and learn the craft,” and I went, “What? I didn’t know this existed,” so it opened up a whole new world. So yeah, I mean, I did study the crafts, but I think also – I think you study and write at the same time. I think some people think, “You have to know the craft before you can write,” no, I don’t think so. I think if you’ve got a story, just get it down on the page, and then you can learn the technical side of things as you’re writing or afterwards before you do your next edit.

But yeah, you don’t want to bog yourself down by only reading craft books and not actually writing, because I know a couple of people who do that. [Laughs]

Kaneana: I buy craft books but then don’t read them.

Alli: Yeah, I’m guilty of that.

Kaneana: I think they’re just lovely and shiny, and I use the ones I was just showing, but actual craft-craft books, I – or I’ll find that I’ll be reading like chapter two and then something sparks, and then I go off and write instead of keep reading. But I actually don’t –

Alli: Yeah. While you – I’m going to go and grab a really good craft book I want to show people. Hang on. [Laughs] Keep going.

Kaneana: I was just going to say that I didn’t follow a strict story arc, but I think I was lucky because when I was working in television, I got a really [unintelligible 00:44:20] hands on experience of working in the script departments and in the story room. So, I was learning the feel of story, I think, so I was learning about where to place commercial breaks and how stories had to be interwoven together, and how much to reveal before moving on. So, I think now, often even when I’m creating scenes for myself, I keep thinking, “I need to break here or I need to breakaway, or I need to add a little bit of a teaser so that they will want to keep pushing forward in the story.” So, for me it was about learning the feel of the story, which I think also happens when you’re reading books all the time, when you’re listening to audiobooks, even when you’re watching movies and TV shows –

Alli: It’s adding [unintelligible 00:45:05] –

Kaneana: – it’s all about learning the feel of a story for me.

Alli: Yeah. Yes, I often will be lying on the couch watching a movie, and the husband will be like, “Doing some research, are we?” I’m like, “Yeah, just trying to learn this character arc.” [Laughs]

Kaneana: [Laughs]

Alli: But this book is my go-to. I don’t think it’s in print anymore, but you can get it as an e-book, but the library might actually even have a copy. To me –

Kaneana: I’ve seen that one before.

Alli: You have or haven’t?

Kaneana: Yeah, I have.

Alli: Yeah, to me it’s the only craft book [laughs] to read. It talks about goal motivation and conflict, and once you understand it – I mean, like we as readers and viewers, and writers, we all kind of know it, but don’t know we know it, if that makes sense. So, you know like when you’re reading a scene and something’s not quite working, well, it’s usually because we don’t know what the character’s goals are or why they want those goals, or what the problem is to stop them from getting those goals. So, this book kind of dives into it, but it uses movies as examples, which is always a great [laughs] thing.

Kaneana: Yeah.

Alli: And it actually focuses on The Wizard of Oz – and yes, you will never look at it the same again, but for any writers out there, that’s a really, really, really good craft book to have.

Kaneana: I think I must have done a workshop with someone that’s used it because I’ve filled out the goal motivation conflict form before. But for those that – oh, my ear. [Laughs]

Alli: [Laughs] For those of you that don’t really understand what that means, it’s kind of like – for an example for one of my books is that the character of Olive wants the secret – wants her past to stay hidden; she doesn’t want people to know anything about her past. And the motivation for that is that she doesn’t want to deal with the emotional side of that, that she feels if she talks about that, she will breakdown, and the conflict is that someone walks in from her childhood who can unravel the whole secret. So, it’s just you need to have them have a goal and that something – and you’ve got to have a valid reason for why they are motivated to want that goal, but then you’ve got to have some conflict to get in the way. So, you can do that for every scene essentially, can’t you, Alli? Is that the –

Alli: Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, and I always find if I’m writing a scene and it’s not working for me, I go back and I start looking at the goal, the motivation, the conflict, and always I can find that missing piece of the puzzle. So yeah.

Kaneana: Isabel’s gone on to say, “There’s a lot of ideas. Do you plot it all out first in order then flesh it out further? [Unintelligible 00:48:07] from – to a certain extent you’re outlining?”

Alli: Yeah. No, I’m really comprehensive about it, like it’s in a lot of detail. And I’ll say this because I know people just go “what?” but I lived in South America for a long time, so I’m fluent in Spanish, and I find that when I’m first thinking of an idea, I actually get my nice, little favourite gel pens and a nice writing pad, and I actually start writing down my ideas in Spanish. And I don’t know why, but I think it just flicks off another side of my brain that just kind of frees up my brain so that the inner editor’s not going, “No, that’s not going to work,” blah, blah, blah. And it’s just using a different part of my brain, so then of course, then translate it into English. But yeah, I mean, my plots are usually – like my outlines are probably 10 to 12 pages. But it’s also been really helpful as well because I’ve actually sold books off like a five-page outline, which yeah, [laughs] can come in handy instead of having to write the whole thing to begin with. You eventually have to write it. So, what about you?

Kaneana: Yes, Alli. I’m definitely doing that next time because I don’t do that at all. Yeah, you would think that working in TV, I would be a huge plotter, and I do plot to some extent, however, I find – I think because in TV, and when I was learning in TV – I imagine it’s quite different now because commercial breaks were huge when I was there, which you don’t essentially have anymore. I imagine they plot them to some extent, but they wouldn’t have had the pressure on them that they did back then for people to come back after the ad breaks. So, you’d always have really big scenes or cliff-hangers – a smaller cliff hanger – like big cliff hanger at the end, but then there’s smaller dramatic arcs throughout so that people would come back. So, often I’ll get these scenes that I kind of think about as spotlight scenes, and I’ll write the spotlight scene because that’s what something – that’s come to me.

And I think this is also come because of when I was writing with small children – I would only have a very certain snap time – so it would be this idea, “I’ve got to get this idea down.” And then so I would go next time, “I should probably seed such-and-such in earlier so that it kind of is pulling a thread through that you’re going to see later,” and then you go, “And then I should add this coming later,” which is all kind of like the plotting of television; is pulling this thread all the way through.

Alli: Yeah.

Kaneana: So, I would go back and forth, back and forth, and then something would happen in that scene, I think, “What if I do that in the scene before or the scene after?” And just kind of I move around like that like crazy, which is not something that you should do, I don’t think.

Alli: I don’t know, it works for some people. My brother – he writes like that – he has a little bit of an idea as to what he’s going to write about and then he will just write scene 20 first, and then write scene one next, and then scene 13, and then 43, and I don’t know how he does it, but it’s the only way he can do it. It just – well, it drives me nuts thinking about how he does it, and it drives him nuts thinking about how I’m so linear and have to [laughs] – so we’re all so different.

Kaneana: See, one thing that’s really turned me off it is that for *The One*, I had the ending in mind for a significant way through, like I knew what I was aiming towards for quite a long time, which was really helpful, but for *All We Have Is Now*, I didn’t know how to end it, which I keep thinking now, had I had plotted it out and had an outline, I would have known what the ending was. So, I felt like it was really hard to kind of pull it all together when I didn’t know exactly what I wanted to do. And the manuscript I’m working on now for – I have only known the ending just recently, and I’m like, “I am never doing that again, it’s too hard [laughs] to try and figure it out.”

Alli: [Laughs]

Kaneana: And I think it also kind of spurred me on when I heard that Jane Harper starts her – like decides her ending first, then works backwards. I was like, “I’m –

Alli: Does she?

Kaneana: – definitely knowing my ending.” I don’t even write any stories like Jane Harper, but I think it’s a brilliant approach.

Alli: Yeah.

Kaneana: Yeah, I do think knowing that end scene is something that’s pretty important for me now after having felt like I had to dig really hard to find it.

Alli: But I also think we kind of evolve as well; we find what works and what doesn’t. And I think what works – a way of working on one particular book doesn’t work for the next book sometimes.

Kaneana: Yeah, probably though. True.

Alli: Yeah, with *Luna Tango* – so a lot of my books are dual timeline – so with *Luna Tango*, what I did was I would write two chapters of the contemporary story, then the chapter of the historical story, so I kind of wrote it as it is in the finished book, and that worked really well. But then I went to write *Under The Spanish Stars* – the next one, which is also dual timeline, I found I couldn’t do that. So, I actually just wrote the 1940s story and then I just wrote the contemporary story, and then what I did once I had those, then I kind of wove them all together, and alternated the chapters and tweaked it a little bit. It’s like two books; both dual timelines, but both really different ways of writing it.

Kaneana: Yeah.

Alli: Yeah. I just saw Isabel actually has kind of added to her question, “Do you think a spotlight approach works more for the type of Netflix readers we have become now?” Well, that’s interesting: time poor, plot heavy. You can go with that one first [laughs].

Kaneana: Look, I don’t think it’s probably ideal, if I’m honest; it’s been what’s worked for me. And I think that that’s just juggling young kids. I think working in order would probably be a bit more helpful. I mean, I think plotting out the big scenes – and that’s essentially what I do to some extent, but then I don’t follow the procedure all the time, and then I get – and I think it is because of the snatched moments – and I kept thinking that – Alli, you’ll probably laugh at me, but when the kids were really little, like when I was writing *The One*, and I think my eldest was in kindy and the other two were at home, I kept thinking, “It will be so easy when they’re at school.”

Alli: [Laughs] Yes, I’m laughing.

Kaneana: And now they’re at school, like my youngest has just started school this year, and I have managed to somehow work three days at a school myself. So, I’m coming home, I’m picking up kids – we have activities every afternoon, it goes until late at night. And I have to exercise otherwise I become a really grumpy, grumpy wife and mother, so I have to get up early, so then I’m, “I’ve just got to get to sleep because I’m going to go psycho if I don’t get my exercise in.” And then I’m like, “Where was all those hours?” I kept thinking that I was going to have all these endless hours of fun time, so I still kind of feel that I am time poor. But my mum would say that I shouldn’t complain about it because I’m “attracting the time poor-ness,” that I should say, “Got plenty of time, there’s no rush.”

Alli: [Laughs] Yeah. Well, I find sometimes – so my kids are teenagers, they’re at high school now, so sort of that 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. is just awesome, but I also think sometimes because I do have that time, I can waste it going down that research hole, and yes – and that sort of thing. So, I’ve been using the Pomodoro method – I don’t know if you’ve heard of it before, it’s brilliant. So, the idea behind it is that like as adults, we can kind of concentrate for 25 minutes on one project and not get distracted, and we can be really productive in those 25 minutes or half hour, or whatever, then you have a five-minute break. So, it’s kind of like writing sprints, and it’s like not getting distracted by email, not getting distracted by, “Yeah, I need to go and research such-and-such,” it’s like if you need to research something, you write it down, and then you allow that time for researching later.

And I find when I do this Pomodoro method, which kind of developed like – you’re way too young to remember, but some of you out there might remember it – in the ‘70s they had like – it was an egg timer, but it was actually in the shape of a tomato, and of course Italian for tomato is pomodoro, so I don’t know why, I don’t know why they started that, I guess it’s just the egg timer business. But yeah, and it does, it works really, really, really well. And I’ve found for me, it gets me focused and I actually utilise my time [laughs] in much better ways.

Kaneana: I mean, this idea might be off it, but I know when I was recently trying to finish – yeah, it’s good.

Alli: Thanks for doing that.

Kaneana: I was recently trying to finish this manuscript that I’m still trying to finish, but I’m much closer than I was, but I’d heard Sally Hepworth say that she was doing the nifty 350, which she had someone she – another writer she had copied that from, and saying that she was being productive with this – getting 350 words done rather than saying, “I want to write 2,000 words today, I’m just going to do them in 350 word sprints,” which I’ve never done before, but I was doing it earlier this year because I was feeling really overwhelmed with not having enough time. But if I’d write it in my diary, “350,” with a tick, and then over the week, I was noticing that I was getting a lot more words than I would have without making myself accountable. So, I guess it’s kind of that same –

Alli: Yeah.

Kaneana: Instead of going, “I’ve only got 25 minutes,” you’re like, “I’ve got 25 minutes,” and I was like, “Oh, I’ve got 25 minutes, I could probably get 350 words done,” rather than thinking, “I’ve got to pick the kids up in 25 minutes, I shouldn’t start anything.” Yeah, like, “Quick, get in and make some.”

Alli: Yes, exactly. And I think that’s the thing, is with writing, it’s such a mental game. I used to work as a mountain climber and they always say that climbing a mountain is “80 percent mental and 20 percent physical,” and it is very, very true. And I think with writing as well, it can be quite a mental game, like just – yes, just changing the wording, like you said before, it’s, “I’ve only got 25 minutes before I pick up the kids,” it’s like, “Yay, I’ve got 25 minutes, I can get my 350 done.” So yeah, it’s quite interesting how it all really boils down to words, I guess, and how we use them.

Kaneana: Yeah. Isabel said here, “Do you ever work to wordcount goals in a tomato session?” So, do you normally goal like that? Or do –

Alli: Yeah, I set out – I can usually – for me, on a first draft, 2,000 words a day is usually what I aim for when I’m working on a new manuscript, and I know that will take me usually about four tomato sessions. So, I do work for the 25 minutes, and look, some days it easier to reach to my goal than others.

Kaneana: Yeah.

Alli: But I usually won’t finish for the day until I’ve hit my 2,000 words. So, sometimes it will take me four tomato sessions, sometimes it will take me three, sometimes it will take me six. But I always – I’m quite pedantic about hitting those goals. But look, I also recognise that there are some days where you’re not going to get anything done because you’ve got to go and pickup your kid from school because there’s – [laughs] the plumber’s coming.

Kaneana: Well, last weekend I spent – so, last Friday I spent seven hours at a zone athletics carnival. [Laughs]

Alli: [Laughs]

Kaneana: Yes, there’s all those things. I did the same when I was writing I think – it’s the manuscript that I’m working on now, but it might have been *All We Have Is Now* too; I would have the 2,000-word goal. And then on a really good day when I had six hours, I could sometimes get like three, three and a half, to four, but then if that happened, I would find that the next day would be a really low day.

Alli: [Be forceful? 01:01:39]. Yeah. [Laughs]

Kaneana: It was like I’d used all those words. It was bizarre how I kept thinking, “I’m going to be so ahead,” and then I would just – for some reason just wasn’t in the right mind frame or felt burnt out, or just couldn’t get it down.

Alli: Yeah.

Kaneana: But yeah, I was aiming for 2,000, which I mean, sometimes I didn’t reach because –

Alli: Life. [Laughs]

Kaneana: [Laughs] But yes, I find that it’s harder to – when you are in that first draft and you’re marking it off, you can feel quite productive, but then when you’re just working with the structure and making sure it all goes, you go, “Oh my gosh, these words haven’t even changed, I’ve just been tweaking little sentences here and there.”

Alli: But that’s the bit I love; I love the editing. I find writing the first draft just uh, I can’t tell you how much I detest it. [Laughs] So, this draft is just –

Kaneana: Oh, it’s so much to [unintelligible 01:02:37] have it.

Alli: – so painful. What about you?

Kaneana: No, I love writing. I love where it’s all a massive possibility and I can – later Kaneana’s going to fix it all up. I can just get lost in these magical words and think – and then, because that Kaneana puts in these double X crosses that edit Kaneana has to find and fix, that’s why I’ve got this list next to me at the moment with pages back and forth of things where I’ve gone, “This doesn’t make sense, you’ve got to add this. In the wrong point of view, could add a scene. Add this at such-and-such. Add, add, add, add.”

Alli: Yeah.

Kaneana: So, you’re listing things that you’re like, “I’ve got to go back to that and figure it out.” I find the editing harder.

Alli: Yeah. No, it’s funny. Yeah. No, I’m the opposite; I love my editing. [Laughs] So, we’re all so different. So, Fay’s got, “It’s refreshing to listen to you both about juggling family work and writing.” Yeah, [laughs] thanks, “Focus and motivation with the hope of not being interrupted is my biggest enemy most of the time. Yeah, love the tomato idea.” Yeah, I highly recommend it; it’s definitely worth the try, Fay, for sure. For sure.

Kaneana: I have seen that tomato too that Anita put up; I have seen that before.

Alli: You have?

Kaneana: Yeah. [Laughs]

Alli: Your [grandma? 01:04:10] might pick one. [Laughs] Yeah, [she? 01:04:15] can. Oh gosh, it’s 8:40. Does anyone else have any other questions that they would like to add in?

Kaneana: I’ll ask you quickly, Alli, whilst – if anyone is popping anything in – what was the most rewarding thing – I’m going to ask – of writing *The Codebreakers?*

Alli: You make me all teary. I’ve gotten to know the codebreakers very well, and there’s one particular codebreaker, Coral, who lives a couple of hours away from me. So, Coral the codebreaker; how cute’s that? She’s kind of become like my grandma. So, I lost my grandparents quite a few years ago and I’ve always missed not having them around, and I think that’s why I also write a lot of granddaughter-grandmother stories as well. So, when I sent a copy of *The Codebreakers* to my codebreakers to get their feedback and everything before it was released, and then Coral rang me up and she was crying, [laughs] and I said, “Are you OK?” And she goes, “I’ve just finished it.” And I said, “Is it OK?” And she goes, “I loved it,” she goes, “I was back and being a 19-year-old in love again,” because if anyone reads *The Codebreakers*, there’s a beautiful story which was inspired by Coral; she actually met her husband, who was one of the codebreakers, and he got shipped to the Philippines.

And they actually discovered that they could – as they were doing their proper work with the codebreaking – on either end of the codes there was what they call a “filler text,” and that was kind of “my dog’s tail’s yellow and I had pancakes for breakfast,” or whatever, I don’t know, in between the codes. So, as it got scrambled, if it got intercepted by the enemy it kind of wouldn’t make any sense. So, they realised that they could actually send little messages to each other through the code in the filler code on either side of the real code.

Kaneana: Don’t you love that?

Alli: I know. And it is, it’s such a beautiful story. But every time she talks about her husband, Sandy, it’s like this 19-year-old falling in love again. So, for me, the most special thing was to have the real-life codebreakers read it and love it, because if they didn’t love it then I don’t know what I would have done [laughs] to be honest because – yeah, anyway. But no, they did. And that to me was definitely, definitely the most special part of *The Codebreakers* as well, and them getting their time in the limelight as well because they’ve been interviewed on “The Project,” they’ve had stories in Woman’s Day, so they’re really just loving the limelight at 96. They’re finally getting their time in the sun, which is really, really cool. [Laughs]

Kaneana: It’s so good they hung on, isn’t it? Because I’ve heard you speak about it before and I just thought, “I hope that you’re going to talk about Coral,” because she’s – I love that story. It’s just so special.

Alli: Yes.

Kaneana: And she must just be so touched that you took so much time to really create the perfect story and really do it all justice as well.

Alli: Yeah, absolutely. And I think that was the thing, like once I met them and they were really supportive of me writing this story, I then kind of end up feeling like I was a bit of the caretaker for their story. And it was really interesting writing a book and having like pressure that I put on myself to really do their story justice because it was just too important to get it wrong. So, I really, really, really wanted them to be happy with the story. Yeah, but just quickly, like when “The Project” came to film and I was with Coral, and we’re leaving, and I’m leaving with the camera crew – and she’s in a retirement village – at her door kind of like at the top of her voice she goes, “Goodbye my camera crew.” [Laughs] So, they’re like [unintelligible 01:08:42] –

Kaneana: [Laughs]

Alli: She’s like a celebrity now. [Laughs]

Kaneana: Her time in the spotlight.

Alli: Yeah, yeah. Well, what about you with *All We Have Is Now*? What’s been the best part of the book for you?

Kaneana: There is definitely a best part for me, but it links to the part of the story that I don’t speak about in these –

Alli: Yeah, apologies. [Laughs]

Kaneana: – that’s fine – in these events. So, this is just for the guests, that you’ll have to go out and read it to find out what I’m talking about, and it will be obvious. But the book is dedicated to some really special people which link in with that story, and that whole process was really emotional, and definitely the most rewarding and very special, and I think will always be really special to my heart, this story.

Alli: Oh no, I’ve got goosebumps. [Laughs] Yeah, it’s beautiful.

Kaneana: Yeah. So, definitely very rewarding. It’s so nice to have it out in the world, isn’t it, Alli? And then you just move onto the next story. [Laugh]

Alli: Yeah, that’s right. I know, there’s always a new story vying for our attention. But yeah, which is – I think that’s one of the beauties of what we do, is that we get to immerse ourselves in different worlds and meet lots of different characters. And then also, when it’s not COVID stuff going on, is also to meet readers and hear their stories as well, and it’s really great.

Kaneana: Definitely. Yes, so we’re very, very lucky.

Alli: We are indeed. Yeah.

Kaneana: So, I think that we might be having to wrap it up now. Are we doing that ourselves, Kristy? I know she’s kind of [that? 01:10:33] one.

Alli: No, here’s Kirsty.

Kaneana: Oh, Kirsty. Sorry, I forgot your name.

Alli: Hello.

Kirsty: [Laughs] Thank you so much for tonight, this has been a wonderful talk and you’ve been so generous with your time. I know everyone in the chat meeting has really enjoyed it. Thank you, everyone, for coming tonight. Alli and Kaneana’s books are available at any good bookstore, but also at the library. I’m sure there will be 50 holds on them now after tonight’s talk, but –

Alli: [Laughs]

Kirsty: – put in your reservation quick and you’ll get to read those. So, thanks once again. Keep an eye out for any of our future events and have a good night.

Kaneana: Thank you. Thanks for joining us.

Alli: Thanks for having us. Thanks for joining us, everyone. [Laughs]

[End of recorded material at 01:11:34]