

[MAIN](#)

[NEWS](#)

[SPORTS](#)

[ARTS](#)

[FEATURES](#)

[VOICES](#)

[EDITORIAL](#)

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[RYERSON HOME](#)

[Ryersonian ARCHIVE](#)

[STAFF](#)

[ARTS](#)

Grad gets emotional as first book is published

By Samantha Martin

Ryersonian Staff

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Gayleen Froese has gone from Holstein cow mascot to published author in less than 10 years.

Touch, her debut publication released in September, uses a combination of mystery, magic and murder to pull its readers in.

But how did this Radio and Television Arts graduate from Ryerson to become an author?

The 33-year-old, who has been writing since she learned how to hold a pen, split her time at university between audio and advanced writing classes.

She began writing for radio after graduation at a country station where she also dressed up as a huge fuzzy cow for some extra cash. From there she began work in advertising and communications. In addition, she is also a musician with two albums on the market.

Not about to waste any time, Froese began writing Touch during her lunch breaks.

She has spent more than five years working to get her supernatural fantasy published, putting her pride aside and writing letter after letter, submitting manuscript after manuscript and making adjustment after adjustment.

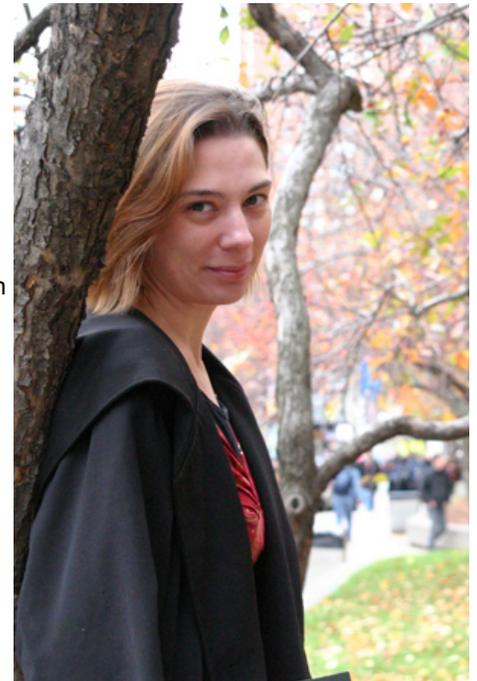
"You have to jump through the hoops," she said. "Even though you come home to three rejection letters in the mail, you just have to keep going."

Finally, four years after she began writing Touch and dozens of letters had been sent to publishers far and wide pleading for them to read her manuscript, Froese was surprised to hear that Newest Press, just across the river from where she lived in Edmonton, was accepting manuscripts.

She immediately took her lofty 500-page package to the office, but when she dropped it in the box, she heard it hit the "slush pile" of manuscripts that would be seen before hers. She left thinking she would never hear from them again.

One year later she received a call from Newest Press asking whether she still wanted them to publish her book.

"Well, you know, I cried," said Froese, thinking back on the momentous occasion.



JenGerson/Ryersonian Staff
Gayleen Froese, a radio and television graduate, is both a novelist and a musician. She was in Toronto for a reading of Touch.

After hearing the horror stories of authors having their introductions and endings changed by their publishers, Froese was happy to discover that her book remained her own throughout the editing process.

Genuine human emotion and Froese's dry wit propel the story of Anna Gareau, who comes across a mysterious hand gun and pretends to be a police consultant to explain its presence. The wrong people hear her lie and she ends being assigned to investigate a murder in the city of Victoria -- and she can't back out.

"I had a dream about the two main characters. They were in a hotel talking about mystery or murder," said Froese, who then woke up ready to begin writing her first novel.

What makes Froese's story so interesting is the mysterious gift her main character possesses. Her psychometrist powers allow her to see the past through a single touch.

Froese said novel writing is not so far removed from her schooling in radio and television.

"A lot of the skills are transferable," she said. "There was always an emphasis on trying to put yourself out there."

Froese said she learned to paint a picture through conversational language at Ryerson, even using some of the scripts she wrote at school to create the fictional world of Touch.

Froese visited Toronto last week, intending to speak Wednesday evening about the differences between television and publishing. However, a storm prevented her plane from landing until the early morning hours of Thursday. She was able to make her reading at Another Story Bookshop that night and meet her Toronto fans.

The past year has been full of accomplishments for Froese.

While working in Saskatchewan's health communications she was also learning the profession of Public Relations through correspondence from the University of Victoria, recording a third album, Sacrifice, and making final edits to her first book.

The novel, which tells its story though contradictions between reality and magic, is not about to be Froese's last as long as she can help it. She is currently in the process of writing a sequel -- during her lunch breaks, of course.

[Back](#)

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