

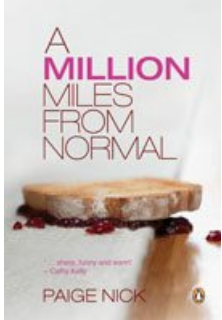
Paige Nick - not quite *A Million Miles from Normal*



By [Herman Manson](#)

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King James copywriter Paige Nick, author of the just-released *A Million Miles from Normal* (EAN: 9780143026518), wears a necklace with a little silver penguin around her neck. Her first novel has just been [published by Penguin Books](#) and she is happy to flaunt it. [\[competition\]](#)



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Debut

Her debut follows the life of Rachel Marcus - a copywriter recently single and recently fired from her job at an ad agency in Jozi - as she flees to New York to start a new life and prove to herself and everybody else that she is not a complete disaster.

Life takes some less than ideal turns. There is the crap ad agency where she spends her days working on ads for sanitary pads and avoiding her new-age-obsessed boss (his swami joins him wherever he goes). Her dating life is similarly disastrous (and entertaining). Readers follow Rachel as she survives disaster upon disaster, only to emerge stronger than before.



Paige Nick: King James copywriter by day, author by night.

The book is an easy-to-read and entertaining romantic comedy, chick lit as Nick calls it, but the advertising angle brings in an audience that goes beyond the average *Cosmo* reader. She acknowledges that not many people take light fiction seriously but she believes that chick lit can be smart and engaging.

As hard to make people laugh

In any case, she says, it is as hard to make people laugh as it is to make them think. She worked hard to create the best book she could and got lucky in finding both an agent and a publisher to help her get it off the ground.

Advertising plays an important function in the book; Rachel is a copywriter and works in a (an admittedly conservative and old-fashioned) ad agency, and Nick says the book stays loyal to basic agency processes.

Nick plays with a number of advertising industry clichés, ranging from the raging coke habit of Rachel's office partner Justin to quirky client feedback on campaigns of the "We love the concept - now change everything!" variety. Ok, so it's not all clichés.

Advertising is changing, she admits, and while that is a good thing, it also makes it, well, boring. "Bosses today are no longer funny," says Nick. "They are business-orientated and tuned in. Where is the fun in that?"

Internship at age 18

Nick, currently a copywriter at Cape Town agency King James, got her first job in advertising at the age of 18 when an internship at Hunt Lascaris turned into a permanent job offer one year through her AAA course. Her mother had to drive her to work at first since she didn't yet own a licence or a car.

Advertising, confirms Nick, has always been her first passion, and writing followed. Over the past 16 years, she has worked on the accounts of, among others, Allan Gray, kulula.com (she was part of the team creating [Kulula's hilarious answer to FIFA's bullying tactics](#)), BMW, Nashua, Windhoek Lager, Cosmopolitan and Levi's.

The novel is not autobiographical, Nick insists, even though one of her former art directors has already called to say he is buying two copies of the book, one for himself and one for his lawyer (tongue-in-cheek - one hopes)! Some of the dating horror stories really happened to her, and the reason Rachel got fired is based on a true story, though it happened to somebody else. The characters in the book consists of an amalgamation of characters from her past and present, including a former high school history teacher who was the basis for one the agency clients in the book. It's about 80% fiction, and 20% embroidering around real personalities.

Reveals international truths

And, while the book is written to be light, it also reveals some international human and advertising truths, according to Nick.

Nick started writing the novel in 2008 after attending a course in long format writing. She contacted an agent, Ronald Irwin, who originally insisted he wasn't taking on new clients but ended up helping her through two revised drafts and then set up publisher meetings at the Cape Town Book Fair, where Penguin expressed interest. The rest, as they say, is publishing history.

Interestingly, Irwin instructed her to launch a blog if she were hoping to attract a publishing deal. She did, and the result is <http://amillionmilesfromnormal.blogspot.com> - a smutty, hilarious read that has also served as inspiration for her second book that she is already in the process of writing.

Nick promises to be an entertaining addition to the local literary scene. She firmly believes in not taking herself or the world too seriously, and her writing delivers that message: "Enough with the long faces!"

Bizcommunity.com, in conjunction with Penguin Books, will be **giving away five (5) copies** of Paige Nick's debut novel, *A Million Miles from Normal*, to five lucky readers. We will also be running **five exclusive excerpts** from her book over the course of the next few days. To enter the competition, read the first excerpt and find out how to purchase the book if you're not a lucky winner, go to <https://www.bizcommunity.com/AMillionMilesFromNormal.html>.

ABOUT HERMAN MANSON

The inaugural Vodacom Social Media Journalist of the Year in 2011, Herman Manson (@marklives) is a business journalist and media commentator who edits industry news site www.marklives.com. His writing has appeared in newspapers and magazines locally and abroad, including Bizcommunity.com. He also co-founded *Brand* magazine.

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