

White knight writer

DOMINIQUE BRADLEY

First-time novelist Astrid Fleming sits in a coffee shop.

She is a study of industry, tapping on her laptop in her corporate pantsuit and Prada eyeglasses. One hand reaches for her cappuccino, while the other works the keys.

It's not hard to picture her in the dynamic world of investment banking in New York, a world that she recently left behind.

Not too far though, as she's an investment consultant in Rivonia, but she keeps the stress at bay teaching yoga in Fourways.

As she notices me her friendly smile is sudden and welcoming.

Her novel, which she unveiled on her wedding day to the unexpected delight of her husband and guests, is called *White Knights*.

"Writing has always been my creative outlet," says Fleming.

"When I studied at varsity I played good cop, bad cop with myself... do I choose my passion - writing, or do I study for a BCom and get a job that pays the bills?"

Finance won and Fleming has never regretted her choice, as it was a structured corporate life that gave her remarkable opportunities like living in London and New York, and offered her writing a unique level of dedication.

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"I am such a geek," she says with a laugh. "I actually kept a worksheet to keep myself in line.

"They say, on average, it takes a first time writer seven years to finish a book but I'm not doing so badly. It only took me six," she says with a wink.

The novel's protagonist Emma Cooper is loosely based on Fleming's own experiences in the corporate finance world.

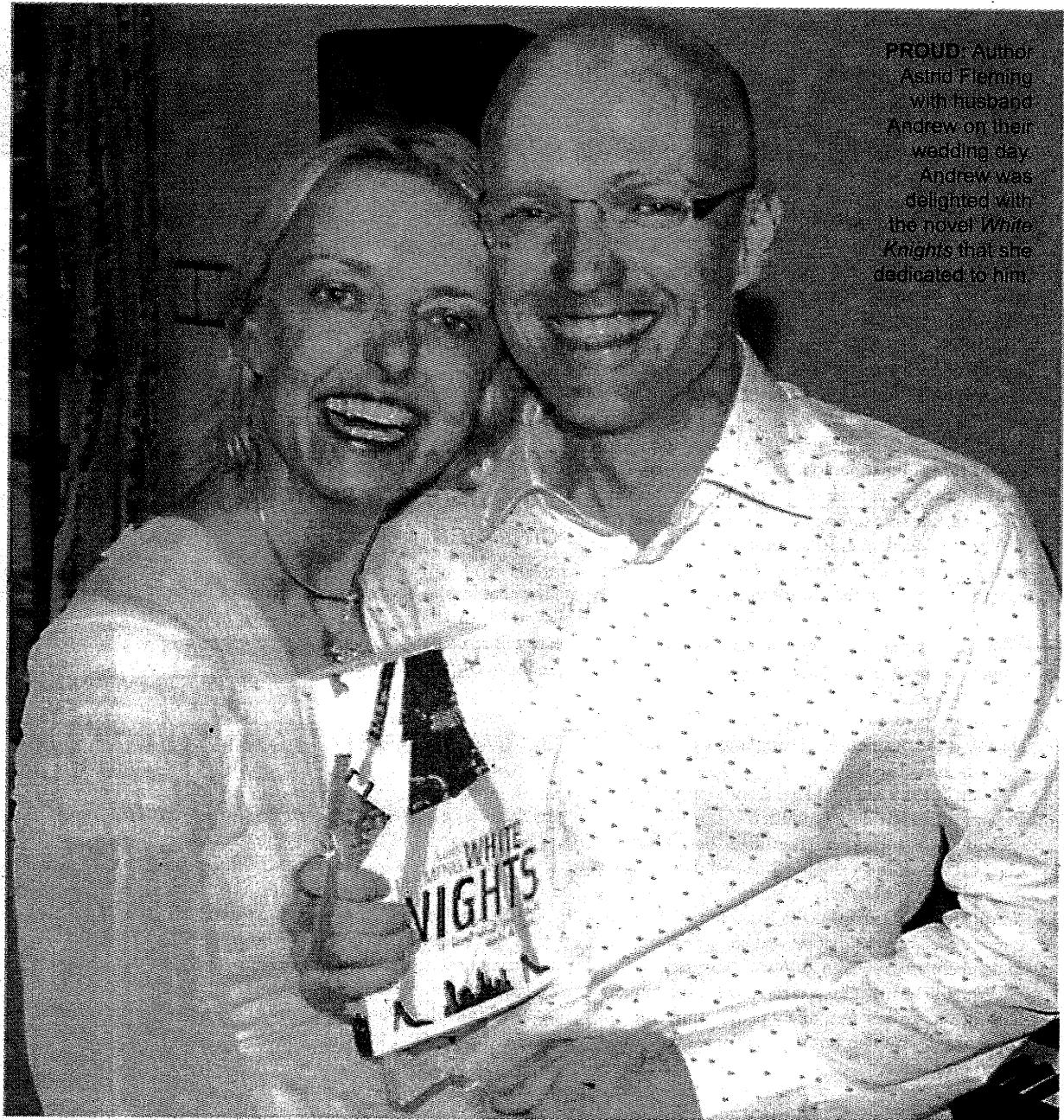
Leaving her home in London and her love in Africa, Emma heads to New York to pursue the life of a high-flying investment banker in Wall Street.

She soon discovers just how cut-throat, manipulative and seedy that world is, and needs to examine just how far she is prepared to compromise, before compromising herself.

She dedicated *White Knights* to her own white knight, husband Andrew.

The official launch will be in March when, true to form, Fleming has hinted at more surprises in store.

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PROUD Author Astrid Fleming with husband Andrew on their wedding day. Andrew was delighted with the novel *White Knights* that she dedicated to him.