

Your debut novel got signed by HQ HarperCollins on your first manuscript acquisition (congratulations!). Did you expect such a fast response? What was the first thought going through your mind when you heard the news?

I was shocked and delighted to be offered a deal so quickly, within a day of submitting the work. I was prepared for a long wait, so it really was a dream come true. Sitting down with my family after hearing the news was the most surreal experience.

What inspired you to write *Little Darlings*?

The book is inspired by a folk tale that I had an idea to retell into a short story with a contemporary setting. The story got longer and longer, and the characters so well developed that I realised I had a novel on my hands.

What was the first thing you did after writing the last sentence of the book?

This is a tricky one, because I wrote the last sentence of the book more than once! During the editing process almost all of the words were changed. The first time I wrote the last sentence, I immediately sent the book off to my friend to read, to see what she thought. Then I probably opened up the document and started making changes, because that's how I seem to work. Setting the book in a form that cannot be changed is a scary thing for me.

***Little Darlings* is your debut novel, to be published in the coming Spring and already has a high potential of becoming a worldwide bestseller. Do you feel any pressure because of that? Do you think it is harder to write the second book after the first one has been such a success?**

I'm really happy to hear that you think it might be a success once it goes on sale! Getting a publishing deal is only the first step. After that, if real readers want to buy it I couldn't ask for more. If it sells well, I shall be totally bowled over. As for pressure, I certainly feel that it is tricky to become fully immersed in the next novel while engaging with publicity for the first one, but this is part of the job, and I enjoy it.

The book will also be turned into a movie. If you would be doing the casting, who would you pick to play the role of Lauren?

I would love to do the casting, but alas I don't think they will let me! Actors I would choose for Lauren include Claire Foy, Eva Green and Andrea Riseborough.

***Little Darlings* is not just a psychological thriller combined with elements of folk tale, it is also a highlight of challenges, fears and emotions every new mother has to face. Do you believe there is not enough debate in the modern society about this problems? Do you think your book will open up some of those necessary conversations?**

I hope it will, I really do. In conversations and in early reviews of the book, some people have been impressed that it shows the darker side of childbirth and early motherhood, but others have been repelled by it for that very reason. I think it is important to have this side of humanity adequately represented in Western literature, as it tends to be glossed over, to many people's detriment. When it comes to living through an experience, I personally appreciate having as close to a realistic expectation as possible, and I achieve this through reading widely. If new motherhood is whitewashed, then we as authors, if not exactly lying, are cheating our audience of an aspect of truth.

How does your writing atmosphere look like? Do you have any special writing rituals?

I only have a certain amount of time to write, when my children are at school, so I tend to write in a kind of frenzy. Perhaps later in life I will have the luxury of developing some rituals!

During the most creepy scenes, do you get chills when writing them? Do you ever scare yourself?

Yes! Although I am the boss of the novel, I gave the characters a kind of autonomy in the draft stage. During the writing process they would sometimes behave in ways I hadn't consciously anticipated, which was very scary indeed!

Why are thrillers and crime novels so popular amongst the readers in your opinion?

These kinds of books are comforting, in a very real way. The frightening things are happening on the page, and not in the world around us, which allows us to vent some of the anxiety we feel when we look at the news or read the papers. It's escapism, but at the same time it allows us to be frightened in a safe way, a way that helps us to cope better with those feelings when they happen for real, and to put things in perspective. Readers can be relieved that the story is not happening to them!

Which book are you currently reading?

I am reading several, as I usually keep one in all formats! On my e-reader I have a book called *The Gloaming* by Kirsty Logan, and on audiobook *Transcription* by Kate Atkinson. Sally Rooney's *Normal People* is waiting for me in hardback on my bedside table.

Talent or hard work – which is more important in your opinion?

Talent is nothing without hard work.

Your favorite word or phrase?

'I can see both sides.'