

Karen McCombie grew up in Aberdeen, Scotland, where she learnt to walk at an angle of 45 degrees against the biting north wind. Her hobbies were drawing, keeping scrapbooks, writing short stories and wearing thermal underwear (except for the three days in summer when it was warm). Her primary-school teacher, Miss Thompson, once told Karen that she should be an author when she grew up. Karen thinks Miss Thompson was only trying to be nice, but is very, very glad she turned out to be right.

As an adult, Karen studied graphic design and communication, before landing a job as a trainee magazine journalist at a Scottish publisher. A few years later, she packed up all her worldly possessions and cat, Cecy, and headed to London for a job with teen magazine *Just 17*. She worked for several other magazines - including *Sugar* - before she thought about trying to write a book. She still lives in London, writing books for a living (hurray!), surrounded by cats as well as a husband, who likes to type silly lines into her stories when she's not looking. Karen and her husband have a lovely little daughter called Milly, who thinks her mum's job is to make Playdough cookies.

As an artist, Karen is the author of the best-selling *Ally's World* series, as well as the *Stella Etc.* books and *Marshmallow Magic* and the *Wild Rose Rouge*. She's also written several books for older teens, including *My Funny Valentine* and *In Sarah's Shadow*. Karen loves writing and her fattest cat, Bysshe, loves to watch her writing. The only problem is, he likes to get right up close, and often the keyboard disappears under folds of ginger fur as Bysshe settles himself down for a purr and a stare.