

1. When did you know you wanted to become a writer?

You know, it was really early on in my life. My mum was good friends with the late Julia Darling and she would take my sister and I to play with Julia's kids at their house. I remember asking my mum what Julia's job was and when she told me she was a writer, I remember being blown away that you could *actually* make up stories for a living. I was about 9 or 10 and I was utterly sold on the idea. It was my dream ever since.

2. You wrote from quite a young age. Is there anything you look back on now and wished you hadn't?

Oh yeah! We all have our secret notebooks full of terrible teenage love poetry....(mine are in a trunk in my wardrobe!) I think the worst thing I ever wrote was an adaptation of Bram Stoker's Dracula, when I was a teenage goth...all the characters were 90s era metal-heads who smoked roll-ups and listened to Korn. I thought I was being so clever, putting Cradle of Filth lyrics at the start...I still have that somewhere if you need blackmail material!

3. Talking about music, do you listen while you write? What are you listening to right now?

I'm actually listening to a Finnish black metal band called Kalamankantaja right now (that roughly translates as 'Death-bearer'). They're really atmospheric and sombre black metal. That's really my favourite music to write to, that or instrumental music - Julia Kent, Hildur Guðnadóttir, Ulver, that sort of thing. I currently have 11 different 'writing' playlists on Spotify.

4. How do you go about constructing a novel? Is there much planning involved?

I never plan anything. All of my writing begins with an image, a scene or an idea. I just sort of lollop into it, writing until things start taking shape and characters emerge naturally, usually beyond my control, same with the plot. The story tends to drive itself, I just facilitate...it sounds a bit pretentious but I've tried plotting stories before and it killed them stone dead. Paraphrasing Joe Hill - plots are where characters go to die.

That's not to say it doesn't work for anyone else, or my way is any better...it's just the only way I can work.

5. How difficult is self-discipline for writing?

Difficult. It's like anything, if you want it to be any good you have to work hard; you can't just sit back and wait for the muse to take you by the hand. You have to sit at the computer, especially when you can't be arsed and just get on with it. When it's easy, that's the good bit but the flesh on those bones is grindstone stuff. I'm a single parent and have 2 jobs as well as kickboxing training twice a week so my self discipline has to be rigid. I don't give myself much in the way of slack! But chasing a dream is a marathon, not a sprint.

6. What about reading? Do you get much time for that?

Again, if you want to be any good, you have to read and read widely. I believe you can't write well if you don't read. I listen to a lot of audio books as well when I'm driving, cooking and cleaning the house; a recent study showed your brain behaves the same way as it does when you're reading as it does when listening to an audio book. There's nothing more pleasurable, however than lying back in a clean bed in a tidy house with a good book and a cat on your lap.

7. What are you reading right now?

I'm listening to *Girls on Fire* by Robin Wasserman, this really intense story of a destructive friendship between 2 girls in early 90s America. I put it on 1st thing in the morning and listen in the shower, it's that good. I'm also a huge fan of Scandi-crime and currently utterly consumed by Thomas Enger's 'Cursed' on my Kindle.

8. Which book has had the biggest emotional impact on you in your life?

Oh 'The Dead School' by Patrick McCabe is so profoundly bleak it's left a permanent wound which re-opens every time I read it; it's a truly wonderful book. I first read it when I was about 18, I was a chef then, I used to sit in the library and read before my shift started, it terrified and fascinated me in equal measure in the way only Patrick McCabe's work can.

It takes a lot to make me cry, I'm a pretty emotional person but tears don't come easy. I blubbered my way through 'The Green Mile' by Stephen King and the end of 'It' to an extent. I've always been jealous of writers who can have that sort of effect on readers and have strived to be able to do it myself...although I'm a long way from King's mastery of the written word.

9. What about fear, has a book ever kept you awake at night?

Yeah, a few. *The Shining* was one, I still get prickles over my skin when reading the scene with the dead old woman in the bath and the hedge animals. I read 'Del-Del' by Victor Kelleher when I was 12, a YA story of demon possession which scared me so completely, it cemented that scaring others with words was exactly what I wanted to do with my life. The last thing that got me was 'Dark Matter' by Michelle Paver.

10. Who is your writing idol? Who would you most like to read your book?

Stephen King is my ultimate literary hero- a writer who has the ability to terrify then move in the space of a few paragraphs. I think I wouldn't be able to get up from the floor if he read my book. Lauren Beukes is another one; she's one of those writers that could entrance me with a birthday card, she's that good. It's a special kind of magic, that sort of ability.