

Cinders

magazine

VOLUME ONE ISSUE TWO

Galentine's

ladies celebrating
lady friends

GILMORE REVIVAL * CRAFTERS * TV FRIENDSHIPS



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Hi Everyone,

Happy Galentine's Day to one and all! Galentine's day is a great concept created by *Parks and Recreation*'s wonderful Leslie Knope, it's a day for celebrating lady friends rather than romantic partners - something I think is an important thing to do.

I don't know where I'd be without the ladies in my life and I'm happy to be able to sign off on the second issue of Cinders for you all! This month we look at friendships on television, online and how friendships can lead to writing an award winning book series.

We have some great content and some new contributors who we are delighted to have on board!

Since the last issue was released our world has seen a lot of change, that just makes us want to write more, to challenge more and to make more noise. Cinders is made by women and we are nasty and noisy and we wear what we like. We're not going anywhere.

Our first issue got a fantastic reaction from all of you and we are so grateful to everyone who read, shared, attended launches or gave us any support in any way.

To my family who baked food and taped events, to my friends who read and shared; to all of the new friends I have made through this project: I'm incredibly lucky to have you in my life. This one is for all of you.

Méabh



Cover Image by By Fedor Leukhin (Just friends) via Wikimedia Commons

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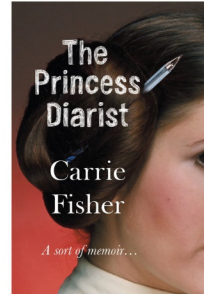
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WE'RE READING ...

The beginning of 2017 meant one thing for us and that was getting down to business with all of the amazing books we received for Christmas! Check out our book reviews on page 43 for more books that we are recommending - here are some of the books that we are glued to for this issue!

What is Not Yours is Not Yours by Helen Oyeyemi

What is Not Yours is Not Yours is a very long title for a great book. Written by Granta Young Novelist of the Year 2013, Helen Oyeyemi, it collects some of the most beautiful and intelligent short stories we have ever read. None of them are traditional and all of them are weird, but every single story will have you wishing that you could read a novel about the characters. From lovers who give each other books to students at a puppetry school, this book has everything. Read it.

The Bear and the Nightingale by Katherine Arden

The Bear and the Nightingale is a thing of beauty. If you like fairytales, especially Russian ones, then this story is for you. It wraps up the unstable stepmother, with the mysterious child and sends them off on wonderful adventures in the Russian snow. We read it after numerous different internet sources recommended it and they were not wrong! Main character Vasilisa is wonderfully brave and stubborn, and because of her we couldn't put it down. You won't be able to either.

The Princess Diarist by Carrie Fisher

We were deeply moved by Carrie Fisher's death in December of last year, and hearing so much about her incredible life inspired us to read her memoir, *The Princess Diarist* which was only released in 2016. The book was inspired by old diaries Carrie kept while filming *Star Wars* in the 70s and her looking back on that time while filming the new series. It's vibrant, and funny and incredibly honest and paints a wonderful picture of a girl who was watched by the world but was much like every other girl in her questions and worries and joys. Well worth a read.



WE'RE WATCHING...



The Crown

With an all-star cast featuring superb direction, writing, lighting and of course, acting *The Crown* is in a league of its own. It's no surprise that Netflix's latest installment is up there with one of the most expensive television shows to be made, but its money well spent. The series focuses on the pressures placed upon the Royal family, up to and during the new reign of Queen Elizabeth II. Claire Foy superbly portrays the other side of the Queen. She shows what a strong and independent woman she is in an era where men completely dominated the political sphere. We also love Elizabeth's schooling her male drivers on her impressive, mechanic skills something that she learnt during WWII. We cannot deny our admiration for the other strong matriarchs in the family from Queen Mary to the Queen Mother Elizabeth either.

Edgar Allan Poe's Murder Mystery Dinner Party

Ever wonder what would happen if some of world's most renowned authors came over to Edgar Allen Poe's for a dinner party? Murder and mayhem, of course. It's no surprise that the web series has been a treat filled with puns, laughs and even a few tears. Each episode leaves you on complete edge as to which author will be murdered next and most importantly who is the murderer? The show's an extra treat for any Lizzie Bennet Diaries fans out there because not only does the show feature Ashley Clements (Charlotte Bronte) but Mary Kate Wiles (Annabel Lee) too. There's also other surprise appearances from LBD alumni, that's sure to make you make you smile. We recommend you binge watch as soon as you can.

This is Us

In a world filled with strife, *This is Us* is a show that we need more than ever. The series focuses on five adults; Jack, Kate, Randall, Rebecca and Kevin all aged 36 (but not at the same time). All of them share their birthdays on the same date and based on that theory alone, they share similar character traits. We don't want to reveal too much because spoilers, but this series is a sweet enduring show about life, love and family.

WE'RE LEARNING...

Crochet

This month, thanks to the talents of Teresa Mulhern - a part of the Cinders family - I've been learning how to crochet - it's my new hobby for when I'm sitting in front of the television. Plus it means I have cuddly things to wear now! - Méabh

The Perfect Cookies

I've also been experimenting with making proper - like the ones you get in a bakery - chocolate chip cookies. With the help of Google, YouTube and Pinterest, I've been indulging my sweet tooth and making fun versions of the cookies, experimenting with the recipes and adding even more chocolate. - Méabh

Hitting the stage

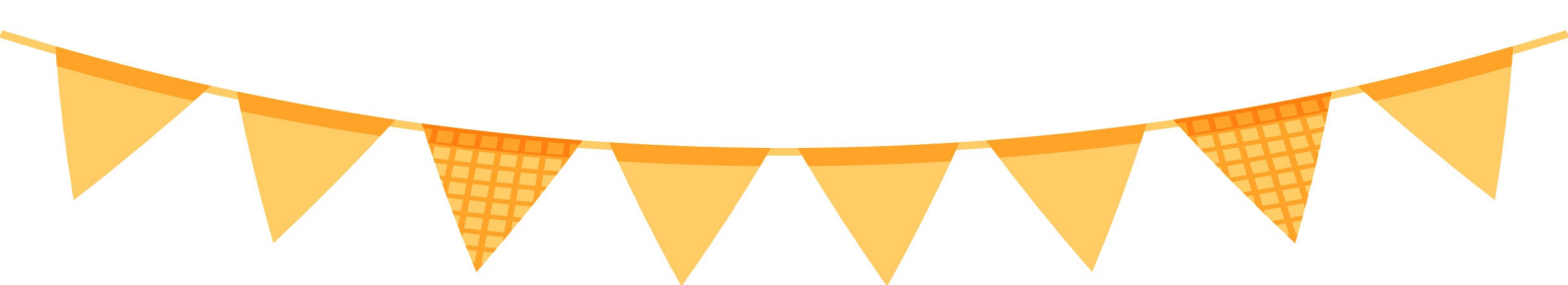
For the last few months, I along with others at the Gaiety have been tackling performance art through acting. It's different and definitely something out of my comfort zone, but I think it's something that I needed to do. Not only has it helped boost my confidence, but it enabled me to explore a new side to myself that I didn't know existed. I have also met the loveliest group of people as well as understanding a new method of storytelling that is improv. - Grainne

Budgeting

Not fun at all, but essential for the financially strapped and sometimes frugal. I used to get by on special offers or whatever was easiest to cook, but now I learnt, especially in the last few months that budgeting is important. Not only have I saved on a few cents, but I've discovered lots of cheap and nice dishes along the way. - Grainne

Lemon Drizzle Cake

One day I will perfect this recipe, until then I will rely on blogging skills of Donal Skehan. But my ever evolving Lemon Drizzle Cake still seems to be a firm favourite with family members and mostly, myself. - Grainne





WE'RE LISTENING TO...

Gilmore Guys Podcast

Have you got latent *Gilmore Girls* cravings? Then this is the podcast for you! Gilmore Guys is a podcast about, you guessed it, *Gilmore Girls*. However it's hosted by two guys - Demi Adejuyigbe and Kevin T. Porter. The initial premise was that Kevin had seen all of *Gilmore Girls* and was introducing it to Demi who had never seen any, however that's gotten more muddled as the podcast has gone on. At this point they've done every episode of *Gilmore Girls* but you can listen back to every episode, and it's a great way to catch up on the show and listen to their many thoughts about a Year in the Life. They've now debuted their new show *Bunhead Bros*, which looks at the short lived life of ASP's *Bunheads*!

La La Land Soundtrack

No matter what your thoughts were about *La La Land*, whether you loved it, hated it or were completely indifferent to the concept of a modern day jazz musical, I deny you not to smile and tap your feet when the soundtrack comes on. With beautiful gems like Emma Stone's moving rendition of Audition - The Fools Who Dream and pick me up melodies like Another Day of Sun, it's a musical that you can listen to over, and over and over again. Both Emma Stone and Ryan Gosling are fantastic and John Legend absolutely steals the show (pun totally intended).

Wyvern Lingo

Homegrown heroines Wyvern Lingo are an absolutely incredible Irish trio who are tearing up the Irish music scene at the moment. You've probably already heard their breakout single, Letter to Willow. Having already toured with fellow Wicklow man, Hozier, they are a fantastic addition to our playlists. Their incredible harmonies mixed with their brilliant lyrics will make you a fully fledged fan after just one listen. These Wicklow ladies are the absolute real deal and will have you singing along everywhere you go!

HAPPY Galentine's Day LADIES

Cinders editor, **Méabh McDonnell**, explains her take on 'Galentine's day' and the importance of celebrating female friendships and being seen as a woman in today's society.

"FEBRUARY 14th, Valentines day is about romance, but February 13th, Galentine's Day, is about celebrating lady friends." Those were the words of the great Leslie Knope, America's most optimistic government worker and protagonist of the late, great, Parks and Recreation. I think that Galentine's Day is a day to take note of the positive female relationships in your life and let those women know just how much they mean to you.

I truly believe that Galentine's Day is something that we need.

We need a day to celebrate the other women in our lives, whether they are our mothers, our sisters, our daughters, our best friends, our cousins or our nieces; because we all have some positive female relationships in our lives and it feels so good to celebrate those.

How many of us have said, or thought, the words 'I don't really get along with other girls.' or 'I'm not really a girls-girl' or the queen-bee of them all: 'I'm not like other girls'. I'm willing to bet most of us have. I know I have. And it begs only one response: 'What's wrong with "other girls"?'.

This is a foundation stone of feminism. How can we believe that women are equal with everyone else when as teens we spend our time trying to distance ourselves from one another?

I believe that this is a narrative created by young (mostly male) screenwriters who have descriptions of impossible 'Manic Pixie Dream Girls' who 'aren't like other girls' and are ten a penny in their movies.

These are girls who typically: listen to the music the boy likes, don't wear makeup unless the boy likes it, has an impossibly upbeat personality all of the time, and likes whatever obscure author/concept/movie that the boy likes. She is his dream woman. A complete fiction.

But every girl who goes to see this movie comes away with one single goal: to become the girl who is 'not like other girls'.

Because we all want to be unique and memorable. And this male hero is telling us that completely distancing ourselves from other girls is the only way to do it.

Now everyone wants to be unique, to put their own stamp on life, that's not a crime. In fact it's a good thing, but why must we do it at the expense of other girls? Why can't we all be awesome together?

There are more articles than I could count that talk about this phenomenon, but I'm not going to talk about them here. Instead I'm going to give you my teen perspective on it.

WE NEED A DAY TO CELEBRATE THE OTHER WOMEN IN OUR LIVES, WHETHER THEY ARE OUR MOTHERS, OUR SISTERS, OUR DAUGHTERS, OUR BEST FRIENDS, OUR COUSINS OR OUR NIECES; BECAUSE WE ALL HAVE SOME POSITIVE FEMALE RELATIONSHIPS IN OUR LIVES AND IT FEELS SO GOOD TO CELEBRATE THOSE.

The reason I thought I 'wasn't like other girls' was because as a teenager I had bad relationships with some girls who were my own age. Girls who jeered me, girls who made fun of me, girls who made me the butt of every joke they 'whispered' to their friends. These girls often seemed to be popular, were fashionable, had the right make up and spent - to my mind - most of their time talking about makeup, clothes and boys.

Let me point out - those were all things that I was interested in. I like makeup - but would be the first to say I don't know much about it. I adore clothes and will frequently binge watch Project Runway, and talking about relationships and whether a boy liked me or not was one of my teen self's absolute favourite past times. But when I would hear those girls talking about it, I felt like those things were no longer 'mine'. How could they be when these girls who had made me feel so bad were clearly experts in them?

So I decided that I would be different. I wouldn't be like these girls. I would be 'different'. I made a point of it too. I once wore a pair of dungarees (which really weren't in fashion at the time) to a non-uniform day simply to show just how much 'I was not like other girls', and to show how much I didn't care what anyone else thought of me. Which is complete rubbish. Of course I cared. If I didn't I wouldn't have selected it so carefully. I was so determined to be seen as 'unlike other girls' that I was making elaborate statements about it.

Which is ridiculous. It's ridiculous because most of the positive relationships in my life were and are with women. I used to say because I have two brothers and no sisters that I understood boys better than girls. But looking back through my life my closest friends have almost always been women. I have had many male friends but the women out-number them, no question.

My problems at the time were with me. With figuring out where I fit in the world. And I decided that it was better be 'unlike other girls' than celebrate my friendships with them. That was something I had to work through by realising the many incredible women who surround me, I was able to.

Both then and now, the people who had some of the most positive influences on me are women. From teachers, to friends to my mother who is definitely the most positive female relationship in my life - I mean, we're not Lorelai and Rory Gilmore - but no one gets me like my mother does.

While that may not be true for every girl, I do believe that the women in our lives shape us positively. I'm not saying that every woman that we meet is going to be someone that we will like, but that's true of men too, so why feel the need to say that we're 'not like other girls'?

Even when I think back to the girls of my childhood who I 'didn't want to be like', for each of them there were older girls, cousins and teachers and aunts, women who I desperately wanted to be like, women I admired and confided in. Women who took the time to talk to me and inspire me.

And I wish there had been a day where I could tell them just how much I wanted to be like them. A day when I could tell them that I *do* want to be like other girls. A day where we celebrate our friendships and each other. That's why I believe Galentine's day is something we need.

How many of us have let our female friendships slide because we were feeling competitive; because we were more interested in our romantic relationships; or just because we didn't make the time to see each other? I know I've done it myself more times than I'm proud of, but that's why I believe that Galentine's Day is so very necessary. I'm lucky to know so many incredible women, from my mother, to my aunts, my cousins to the fantastic people who work on Cinders and my very good friends.

So I'm taking this as an opportunity to say to all of you fantastic women in my life: happy Galentine's day ladies.

I love you.

FAVOURITE FICTIONAL FEMINISTS

LESLIE KNOPE

Leslie Knope is the world's most optimistic government employee. She is also a staunch feminist, wants to be Gloria Allred when she grows up and is one of the most competent and hard working characters to ever grace our TV screens. Portrayed by the wonderful Amy Poehler in NBC's *Parks and Recreation*, Leslie is a woman in a competitive field for women but she manages to never be competitive with the other women in her life. She excels at building them up and celebrating them, and is the creator of the wonderful, Galentine's Day, which we take as inspiration for this issue! Leslie is kind, hard working and extraordinarily passionate about where she lives and works. Leslie works tirelessly -- and often thanklessly -- to make Pawnee a better place and almost always does it with a smile on her face. Leslie is the opposite of what we are so often shown in a female character on television today. She is sincere and uncynical and does her best in every situation. I want to be her when I grow up.

JO MARCH

Jo March is my literary hero. That's something that is true for most girls. The protagonist (mostly) of *Little Women*, Jo is a wonderfully complex character, a woman who has deep ambitions and dreams but one who is unable to completely follow those dreams because she is a woman in a world where men hold power. Throughout *Little Women* she laments the fact that she is not a boy and wishes that she had the power and agency that men have in this world. In Gillian Armstrong's 1994 re-imagining of the story, Jo March is an ardent feminist who desperately wishes to go to college and wishes to be recognised as a writer. She doesn't want to be a writer just for the recognition and the fame (although she is interested in that) she also wants financial independence, recognising that with the satisfaction of being able to earn her own keep she gains a sense of purpose. Although throughout the novels her family remains her top priority and her willingness to make practical sacrifices for them stands as an example of her strength.

REY

We were a long time debating whether we should include Leia here or Rey but ultimately we decided to go with Rey, because, while we love Leia and always will, we wanted a chance to talk about our newest addition to the Star Wars family. Leia will always be our hero, the fast talking princess who wouldn't take shit from anyone, but Rey is a horse of a different colour. Rey has the tenacity and is slightly jaded by a world that abandoned her to fend for herself as a child. She still manages to be sincere and enthusiastic when she finds herself wound up in a plot to save the Empire and once she becomes embroiled in the story she is determined to do her part in the rebellion. Rey is the ultimate mis-direct in film, considering we were clearly meant to think that Finn would be the Jedi from the promotion of *The Force Awakens* - but we were given a wonderful surprise when it was Rey who was able to free herself from Kylo Ren's clutches. That moment when the lightsaber comes sailing out of the snow to her remains one of the most cheer-worthy shots I have ever seen in the cinema. We can't wait to see what she does next.

INEJ GHAFa

Inej Ghafa is one of the most badass acrobats you are ever likely to meet. The acrobat turned assassin is one of the six main characters in Leigh Bardugo's *Six of Crows* duology. Assassin she may be but she also has a heart of pure gold. Her steadfast loyalty to her crew is matched by her stunning abilities with her knives. Inej is a wonderful character whose harrowing backstory involves being sold into slavery and being forced to work in a brothel as a teenager. But the most remarkable thing about Inej is that none of these things break her. She remains the heart of the crew that populates the *Six of Crows* world and is often both their moral conscience and their most deadly asset. If that weren't enough she has a wonderfully open and fun friendship with fellow protagonist Nina. Both ladies share a caring friendship that isn't often seen between female characters in fantasy novels. Long may it last.

YU SHU LIEN

If you haven't seen *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, then you need to. Probably the most famous of the wuxia martial arts movies, it is a beautiful delight. But not only that, the film has a strong feminist theme running throughout it. The lead character Yu Shu Lien, played by Michelle Yeoh, is a martial arts expert and bodyguard who is tasked with taking a sacred sword (the sword of Green Destiny) to an old friend of hers. The sword is later stolen by a masked thief and she undertakes the task of retrieving it. And no one ever says the line - 'but you're a woman'. It is an accepted fact of the story that she is a bodyguard and highly skilled fighter and no one ever questions it. It's incredibly refreshing. She and another character, Yu Jen have a wonderful conversation about the merits of being able to choose your future path. Jen envies Shu Lien's ability to go and be a bodyguard and laments that she must make a profitable marriage. (It's later revealed that Jen is in fact the thief who has stolen the sword and is an accomplished martial artist herself). The film presents four very different types of women who manage to be strong and capable without sacrificing their femininity. Shu Lien is a measured, kind character, who is clearly disciplined and struggles with guilt over her past relationships and how they may affect relationships she wants to have in the future, while Jen is impulsive and loving but shows great discipline and passion for learning. Even the antagonist, Jade Fox, has a complicated back story that gives her character a great deal of nuance. *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* is a feast for the eyes and will make your feminist heart sing.

ZOE WASH BURNE

Zoe Washburne is the coolest first mate in the 'verse and we dare you to find anyone more capable and intelligent. Zoe is first mate to Captain Malcolm Reynolds of the star ship *Serenity* on the late lamented *Firefly*. (It's all on Netflix- watch it now). Zoe is a war veteran and is the steadiest character we meet in the *Firefly* universe. She's one of the crew's best fighters, can manage everyone on board and one half of the best relationship on the show. Her husband, Hoban 'Wash' Washburne, is the ship's pilot and is completely loving and supportive of his wife. Wash and Zoe's relationship never brings up the fact that she outranks him at work or that she is much more competent fighter than he is. They have moments - like all couples - where things aren't perfect but they work through it maturely and only with a small amount of bloodshed. Zoe also has strong relationships with the other women on the ship, acting like a big sister and confidant to Kaylee and River but always remaining the reigning matriarch on *Serenity*.

BIPOLAR DISORDER: TWO SIDES OF ONE COIN

Bipolar disorder is a serious psychological disorder that has gotten a lot of media coverage over the last few months. Psychologist **Teresa Mulhern** gives us a deep insight into the effects of bipolar disorder on those who have it.

STEPHEN Fry, Russell Brand, Demi Lovato, Chris Brown, Carrie Fisher, Ernest Hemingway, Marilyn Monroe, Sinéad O'Connor, Britney Spears, Beethoven, Van Gogh, and Catherine Zeta Jones; what do these people have in common? Apart from being very successful in their respective careers, each of these people has a very serious psychological disorder - bipolar disorder.

About 0.5 per cent to 1 per cent of the general population have a diagnosis of bipolar disorder. It's estimated that 40,000 people in Ireland suffer from bipolar disorder, which begins between the early teens and forties and affects men and women equally. Bipolar disorder is a very serious psychiatric illness in which a person suffers from depression, which can last for weeks or even months, which then alternates to periods of "highs", or mania which can vary in its' duration. Some people have very few bipolar episodes, experiencing a long period of stability between them, while others have far more frequent bipolar episodes and may experience "rapid cycling" with four or more episodes a year.

While each of us may experience mood swings, they don't compare to the severity and intensity of the mood swings experienced by individuals with bipolar. These mood swings often negatively impact their daily lives by impacting sleep, activity levels and unusual behaviours. For example, the manic episodes (highs) can involve a person being agitated, overly energetic, unable to sleep, feeling jumpy or wired, racing thoughts or engaging in incredibly risky or dangerous behaviours. Conversely, the depressive episodes can involve a person feeling hopeless, having low energy, unable to concentrate, chronic aches and pains, eating too much or too little, sleeping too much or too little, and suicidal thoughts.

Bipolar disorder falls into four distinct categories, including bipolar I disorder, bipolar II disorder, cyclothymic disorder, and "other specified and unspecified bipolar and related disorders". Bipolar disorder involves episodes of mania that last at least 7 days and are so severe that they can require immediate hospitalisation.

With this diagnosis, an individual also experiences depressive episodes, which generally last at least two weeks. It's not uncommon to see an individual with this diagnosis show both manic and depressive symptoms at the same time. Bipolar II disorder, however, does not have the same levels of mania as those with bipolar I disorder, instead, they experience hypomanic episodes, a less severe manic episode than those experienced by those with Type I.

Those with bipolar II disorder also experience depressive episodes with this diagnosis. Cyclothymic disorder has several periods of hypomania in addition to depressive symptoms, which last for at least 2 years. However, the symptoms are just below the diagnostic requirements to classify them as a hypomanic and a depressive episode.

Finally, individuals with the diagnosis of "other specified and unspecified bipolar and related disorders" demonstrate some of the manic, hypomanic or depressive symptoms, but don't fit the previously outlined categories.

ONE WAY OR THE OTHER, THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY OF TREATING BIPOLAR DISORDER IS WITH MEDICATION.

What causes bipolar disorder? Well, there's some debate on that – some say it's purely in the genes, some say that certain events trigger bipolar episodes, others say it's a result of substance and alcohol abuse and others maintain it's a result of a chemical imbalance within the brain.

One way or the other, the most effective way of treating bipolar disorder is with medication. However, there are some additional treatment options that can be used in conjunction with medication which have been shown to positively impact those suffering with the disorder. These treatments include counselling, cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT), and acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT).



If you have experienced any of the issues discussed in this article please contact your General Practitioner.

Please find the phone numbers for Childline here: 1800 666 666

Samaritans: If you are in need of immediate support call: 116 123

Remembering Carrie Fisher

Renowned writer, mental health activist, feminist and film star Carrie Fisher sadly passed away in the closing days of 2016. Co-editor **Grainne Coyne** took a moment to remember the woman who inspired so many of us to be better and stronger.

2016 was a year that brought many highs and lows. It offered us a lot of cool experiences, and it gave us a lot of trouble too. All the beauty of life happened in 2016, and that includes the bad stuff and the good stuff. And for fangirls, like us, one of the most difficult big news events was the passing of Carrie Fisher. For many of us at Cinders, there is no icon closer to our hearts. Carrie Fisher was a hero to me for so many reasons, that I find it hard to summarise in to words. Yes she was a Princess and eventually General Leia, but she was a woman in the entertainment industry that was unapologetically herself.

Carrie was born into one of Hollywood's most infamous couples, at the time, Debbie Reynolds and Eddie Fisher and with that, she had fame thrust upon her. But then, at still a young age, she became famous by her own work with the instant success of the Star Wars franchise. While I have read much about her over the Christmas period it was what Carrie said in many interviews that stood to me in particular. I of course will not forget the first time I watched *Star Wars Return of the Jedi* (Not the correct order I know) and was in complete awe of Princess Leia kicking or rather strangling Jabba the Hutt.

But seeing Carrie Fisher interviewed in 2014 where she spoke candidly about her weight and returning to

Star Wars and Hollywood was when my admiration for Carrie, not Leia, truly began.

With all the hype and promotion for *The Force Awakens*, Carrie was everywhere and for a fangirl like myself it was a pure delight. There are many tidbits and interviews that stood out during this time, but for me the most memorable example, that explains what a wonderful person Carrie truly was, was how she explained bipolar disorder to a young boy at Indiana Comic Con.

"It is a kind of virus of the brain that makes you go very fast or very sad. Or both. Those are fun days. So judgement isn't, like, one of my big good things. But I have a good voice. I can write well. I'm not a good bicycle rider." So, just like anybody else, only louder and faster and sleeps more. That's it."

Her advocacy for mental health was huge, she spoke about it so candidly and thwarted so many stigmas surrounding it in the process. She was proof that it was okay not to be okay, but more importantly that it was okay to talk about not being okay. "People relate to aspects of my stories and that's nice for me because then I'm not all alone with it," said Carrie.

"STAY AFRAID, BUT DO IT ANYWAY. WHAT'S IMPORTANT IS THE ACTION. YOU DON'T HAVE TO WAIT TO BE CONFIDENT. JUST DO IT AND EVENTUALLY THE CONFIDENCE WILL FLOW."

Carrie was a script writer, script doctor (she worked on both *Hook* and *Sister Act*, something I have just learned), actress and feminist to boot.

She even said a better way of improving scripts was by "making the women smarter". Her daughter Billie Lourd also spoke of how her mother raised her without gender and to not think of men and women as different.

"She once told me, 'I never sat you down with a credo. It was more about leading by example.'"

She will be sorely missed by many for her wit, kindness and hilarity as well as the oodles of talent

and refreshing attitude that she brought to Hollywood and the entertainment industry.

There are many inspirational quotes that I could attribute to Carrie. While the quote that Meryl Streep closed her Golden Globes speech with is a close second, there is one other quote from Carrie that stays particularly close to my heart:

"Stay afraid, but do it anyway. What's important is the action. You don't have to wait to be confident. Just do it and eventually the confidence will flow."

I will General Fisher, I will.



THINGS I WISH I'D KNOWN ABOUT MY PERIOD...


Periods are one of life's most annoying aspects which can be both painful and inspire many questions. Gynecologist **Dr Caitriona Fahy** gives us answers to some of the most common questions about periods.

MENSTRUATION. There, I said it. Yuck. Because that's the general reaction, isn't it? Periods are not usually a topic for polite conversation, and indeed if for some awkward reason the topic should arise, we squirm around it uncomfortably until we can quickly change the subject (*Yes Mum, please buy me some you-know-whats at the supermarket, but please can we not talk about it?!).* Therefore it's unsurprising that quite a few myths can arise around a subject that everybody knows about, but nobody really talks about. So this article is about addressing a few myths, answering a couple of those "Is this normal?" questions, and basically telling you a few facts about "women's problems" that you won't get from an *Always* ad (which by the way I find terribly patronising, but don't get me started...). In short, these are the questions that crossed my 13 year old mind, the answers to which would have been handy to know back then.

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SO CAN WE ALL STOP BEING
EMBARRASSED ABOUT THIS PLEASE?

Periods are a normal part of a woman's life

Puberty is a tough time. Your body starts doing some weird things. Why is there hair there? Are those breasts? And now I'M BLEEDING FROM MY VAGINA?! WHAT. THE. FUDGE?! Proof, if ever it was needed, that God is indeed a man. Yes indeed, it is one of Nature's crueler jokes that becoming a woman involves this gross event. And you're telling me this happens every month?? Yes. Now let's move on. 50% of the world's population either gets a period, used to get periods or will someday get periods.



So can we all stop being embarrassed about this please? Without this turning into too much of a biology lesson, getting a period once a month, is a sign that, physically at least, your body is now ready to reproduce (though almost certainly you're not ready mentally, indeed some people never are). So that egg that your ovaries carefully released, didn't get fertilised this month, and that lovely nourishing womb lining that was growing there, just in case you did become pregnant and needed somewhere cosy to store a baby, is no longer needed and literally sheds away. So that's what your period is - the unwanted lining from your womb. Lovely, I know. But this is normal. It happens to your mum. It happens to your sister. It happens to your friends. It happens your teachers. Nothing to be ashamed about, it's a biological event. And yet, we buy tampons with the secrecy of someone purchasing Class A drugs.

I haven't gotten my period yet.... Am I normal?

Reading this and feeling a bit left out? Well the good news is, there's a wide range of "normal". Interestingly, the average age of puberty is earlier now than it was 50 years ago, something we think is probably due to younger generations being better nourished than their parents and grandparents. Now, for most girls, puberty starts somewhere between the age of 8 and 14. As a general rule, breasts and hair come first, and your period doesn't usually start until about 2 years after these start to develop. There are lots of reasons why you might be a little bit slower than some of your friends to develop, very often it can be a family thing. So if your mum or sisters were later in starting their periods, you might be too. However, if you've reached the age of 13 and there's no sign of any sort of changes at all, or if you've reached 15 and you've gotten breasts but still with no periods, then that's something that you should speak to your parents about and see your doctor, so some basic checks can be done.

THERE ARE LOTS OF REASONS WHY YOU MIGHT BE A LITTLE BIT SLOWER THAN SOME OF YOUR FRIENDS TO DEVELOP, VERY OFTEN IT CAN BE A FAMILY THING, SO IF YOUR MUM OR SISTERS WERE LATER IN STARTING THEIR PERIODS, YOU MIGHT BE TOO.

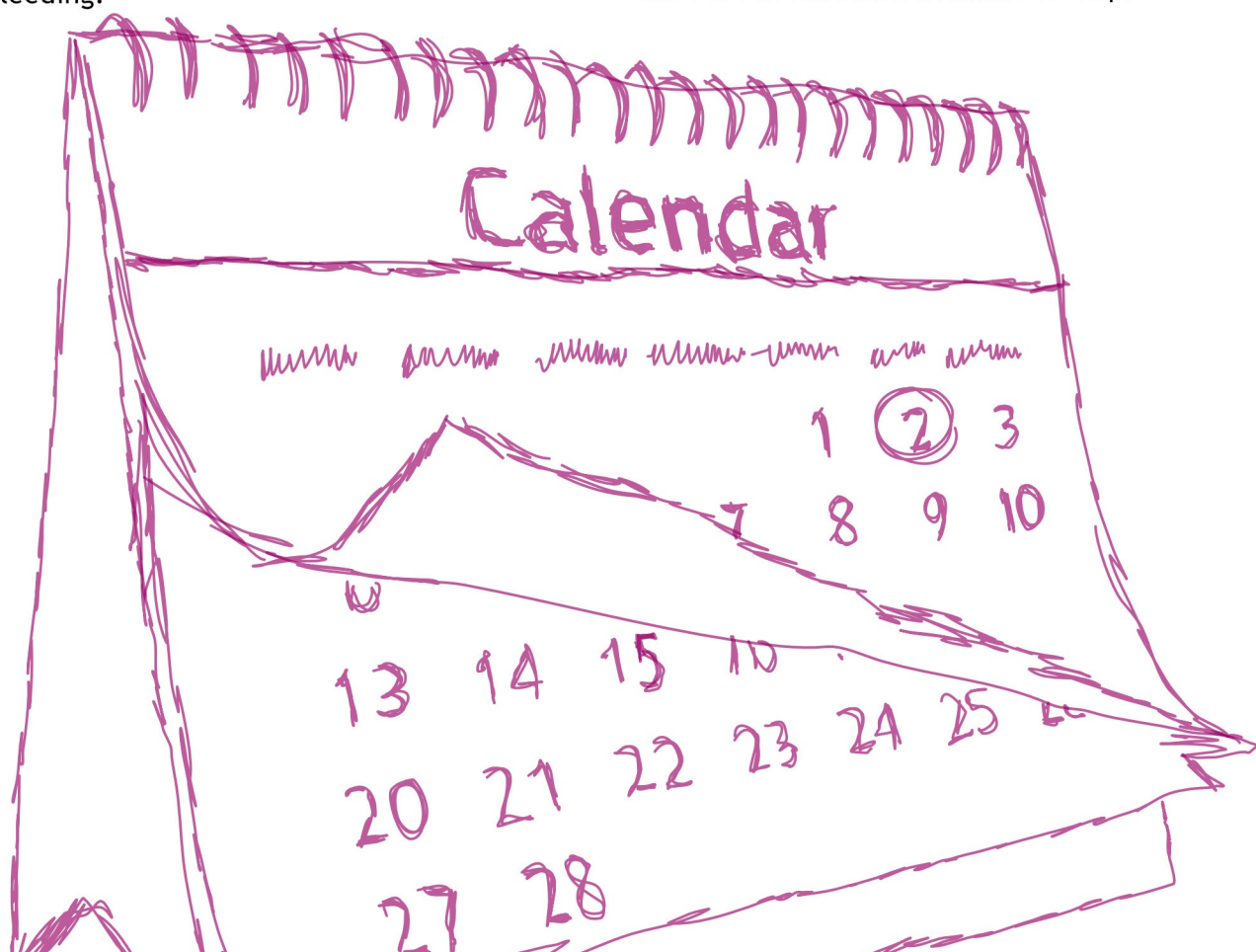
What's a "normal" period?

This is a tricky one, because again, there's a wide variety of what is actually considered "normal". The so called average is a 28 day cycle, meaning that your period comes every 28 days, and lasts 5 to 7 days. Some women will have very regular cycles, and know exactly when their period will happen each month. Some women have irregular cycles, which may differ by a day or two each month, or even weeks. It's not unusual when girls first start having periods for their cycles to be very irregular for the first year or two. If it happens that your periods stay heavy for their full duration, if they last longer than a week, if you have to change pads or tampons more often than every two hours, or if you need to wear two pads together or pads and tampons at the same time to stop blood leaking onto your clothes; then you may have particularly heavy periods, something which doctors call menorrhagia. Apart from being a nuisance, if your periods are constantly heavy, you may eventually become anaemic, or have a so called low blood count, because you're losing all your iron every month. This will leave you feeling pretty tired. Again this is one of those things that you should see your GP about, as it is a problem that can often be quite easily treated. This is because your ovaries might not yet ovulate, or produce an egg, every month, and then you get an irregular pattern of bleeding.

It's a good idea to keep a calendar, or use an app, to track your periods. That way, you can avoid nasty surprises, but also notice trends more easily, and it's very useful if you ever need to see a doctor about your periods. How heavy your period is varies from one woman to the next. The first two days are usually the heaviest, and then it gets lighter afterwards, and may be only light "spotting" or "staining" for the last day or two. At its heaviest, some women may pass clots with their bleeding, which can be a dark red or even black colour (see I told you this would get gross).

Is my period supposed to be this painful?

As you may have noticed from this article, again, normal is different for different people. Most women will get some sort of period pains, though it can be much worse for some than others. Again, the cramps are usually at their worst for the first day or two. The combination of a hot water bottle and some chocolate is a tried and trusted method of pain relief for many! It's OK to take some simple pain relief like two paracetamol tablets or some nurofen too and this should also help. It may seem counter-intuitive, but exercise is also a good way of dealing with period pain, even if you just feel like curling up on the couch with Netflix. If your period pain is such that it means you're missing school or college because of it, then this is probably more than your average cramps. Again, talking to your GP about this can help, as there are medications available to help.



My period never came this month... Is that normal?

As I've already mentioned, your periods may be quite irregular for the first one to two years after starting, so don't panic if it doesn't come every month from the start. And indeed some women may always have an irregular cycle, for various reasons, but this is not something that is considered unusual in your early teenage years. However, if you usually have a regular cycle, and then miss a period, then there is a possibility that you may be pregnant. Just to clarify, you need to have sex to become pregnant - if you have had unprotected sex in the previous month, you may be pregnant, if not, then you're not - simple right? You can get pregnant the first time, by the way, you only need to do it once. If you think this may be a possibility, do a pregnancy test and talk to a family member you trust, do not ignore the issue, please. But I digress ... contraception is a whole other talk!

I'm a virgin, can I use tampons?

Yes. Using a tampon does not mean that you lose your virginity, having sex does that.

Tampons may cause the hymen to stretch or tear a little, and can be tricky to get the hang of in the beginning. It is usually better to try using them at the start on the heaviest day of your period, and always start off with the "lightest" tampon, the ones with the applicator are the easiest to use. Follow the instructions on the packet, and don't worry if you can't manage them straight away, they can take some getting used to. And while we're on the subject....

Can tampons get lost inside?

Some people worry that tampons can somehow float into the abdominal cavity and become "lost" inside - fortunately this is not possible.

The only place the tampon goes is into your vagina, and it stays there (unless you put it somewhere else, and believe me you would know if you did!). A tampon cannot migrate into your womb, because the cervix, which is the neck of the womb, is a tightly closed hole (it only opens when you're in labour).

AND INDEED SOME WOMEN MAY ALWAYS HAVE AN IRREGULAR CYCLE, FOR VARIOUS REASONS, BUT THIS IS NOT SOMETHING THAT IS CONSIDERED UNUSUAL IN YOUR EARLY TEENAGE YEARS.

There is no connection between the vagina and the abdomen where your bowels and stomach are, so a tampon cannot make its way in there either. So the only place for it to be is in your vagina.

If you cannot find the string when you try to remove it, just feel gently inside and it's probably there. If you can't feel the string, you will still probably feel the tampon and you can just take it out that way.

If you can't feel it, is there any chance it fell out or that you may have forgotten that you removed it?

While tampons cannot get "lost", it is still important to change them every 4-6 hours, or sooner if they're soaked through. A retained tampon can be a source of a nasty infection and therefore important to change regularly.

This list is not meant to be exhaustive, but these are a few of the more common questions I've encountered.

Remember, as I've said at the start of the article, your mum, aunts and older sisters are all having periods too, so if there's something you're not sure about, ask them- they've probably experienced the same problems too!

There are a few things that it's worth talking to your GP about, in summary, your period shouldn't cause you to miss school, work or college on a regular basis, and if it does, seek professional help, as these things are often very manageable in a straightforward way.

Revival reactions: An Ode to Rory Gilmore

Gilmore Girls fans approached last November with an incredible amount of excitement and trepidation. We couldn't wait to see how our favourite *Gilmore Girls* would fare after ten years. Co-Editor Grainne Coyne gives us her impressions on the one and only Rory Gilmore. Warning: MAJOR SPOILERS for *A Year in the Life* ahead.

WHERE does one even begin? Honestly, I don't know, because Rory Gilmore is a character that means a lot to me. Never have I related to a character more than I have with Rory. So of course, like many a *Gilmore Girls* fan I was over the moon about the revival and even more so the hype surrounding it. When the trailer and teasers revealed that Rory was a lost lamb in the world of journalism, love and life, I got even more excited, because guess what? I can relate. So last November I sat down with my junk food, ready to binge the 6 hours. And even though I spread my return to this wonderful show over the course of two days, I felt a little lost when it was over. Not just because the build-up that lasted a year came to an end but the heroine I related to and rooted for seemed gone to me.

Rory Gilmore was a shy but confident girl who had to work hard from the beginning of the series to prove her worth constantly (it grinds my gears when people said she had everything handed to her). She was constantly studying and striving throughout her time in Chilton and Yale and while she struggled to balance that with her personal life, she always found a way.

She made many mistakes, but who hasn't, and they were understandable ones as well, and when it came to the whole Dean debacle, she was in the wrong but she owned up to it. Yet there was something lacking about Rory in the revival and I feel it was mostly to do with the handling of Rory's relationships throughout the four episodes.

The whole "oh I forgot I have a boyfriend, Paul" was funny to begin with but to drag it out over the course of the whole revival was just cruel and frankly un-Rory-like. Even if he wasn't "the right fit", and break ups are hard, the Rory I saw over the course of seven seasons would have the decency to be fairer to Paul. And while I wholly admit that I am not team Logan, I did accept the likelihood that something romantic was going to happen between them in the revival. When it became apparent that was the case in "Winter", I didn't mind it too much, ignoring the fact that Rory had a supposed, "serious" boyfriend back in America. However, when it was revealed in "Spring" that Logan was engaged to Odette, that's when I really felt my love for Rory start to wane. Yes it takes two to tango and Logan is just as much at fault (more at fault, really) but the lack of empathy Rory had for Odette really grained at me.

We've also seen a similar storyline play out before with Rory's first love Dean. However, the then younger Rory was consumed with guilt straight away for what occurred and ended what was going on between her and Dean (they started it again, but that's when things ended with Dean and Lindsay). But in the revival Odette was depicted as this other woman who stood in the way of Rory and Logan's "love story" and Rory showed nothing but bitterness towards her because of it. This was irksome because in the season 7 finale; Rory chose herself, Rory chose her ambition, her dream to become a journalist instead of choosing to marry Logan. I loved Rory for that and that was the choice that made sense at the time, because her life was only just beginning then.

BUT THE RORY IN A YEAR IN THE LIFE SEEMED DIFFERENT AS IF THE COURSE OVER TEN YEARS ALTERED HER COMPLETELY, WHICH I CAN BELIEVE, BUT NOT TO EXTENT OF MAKING HER COLD HEARTED.

But the Rory in *A Year in the Life* seemed different as if the course over ten years altered her completely, which I can believe, but not to extent of making her cold hearted. Rory lamented constantly that she was okay with the casual, secret nature of her relationship with Logan, but she then treated his fiancée with nothing but responses of disdain; "she's there", because of "her" etc. etc. As if Odette was not a real person (seriously she wasn't, we saw nothing but her back in "Summer", that's it) the lack of guilt from both Logan and Rory was beyond irritating. Even if it was a "marriage of convenience" that Logan was forced to endure (which I don't buy because Logan is rich guy who has a lot of options available to him and it was never specifically stated that way anyway).

Rory seemed to be more annoyed that she was being treated as second best or as the other woman to his fiancé. This is of course within her right to be, but from the very beginning it was clear that she made that choice to be that person in relationship with Logan in the first place. Now granted she did ask if Logan had to get married during their admittedly, cute montage with the Life and Death brigade. But instead of a "no, I want to be with you Rory", he gave a vague, "it seems that way" response. How is that even romantic? I was relieved when she finally chose to end that relationship for good and to go focus on writing her book on her own terms, which reminded me of the Rory I loved. (I will comment on those final four words later).

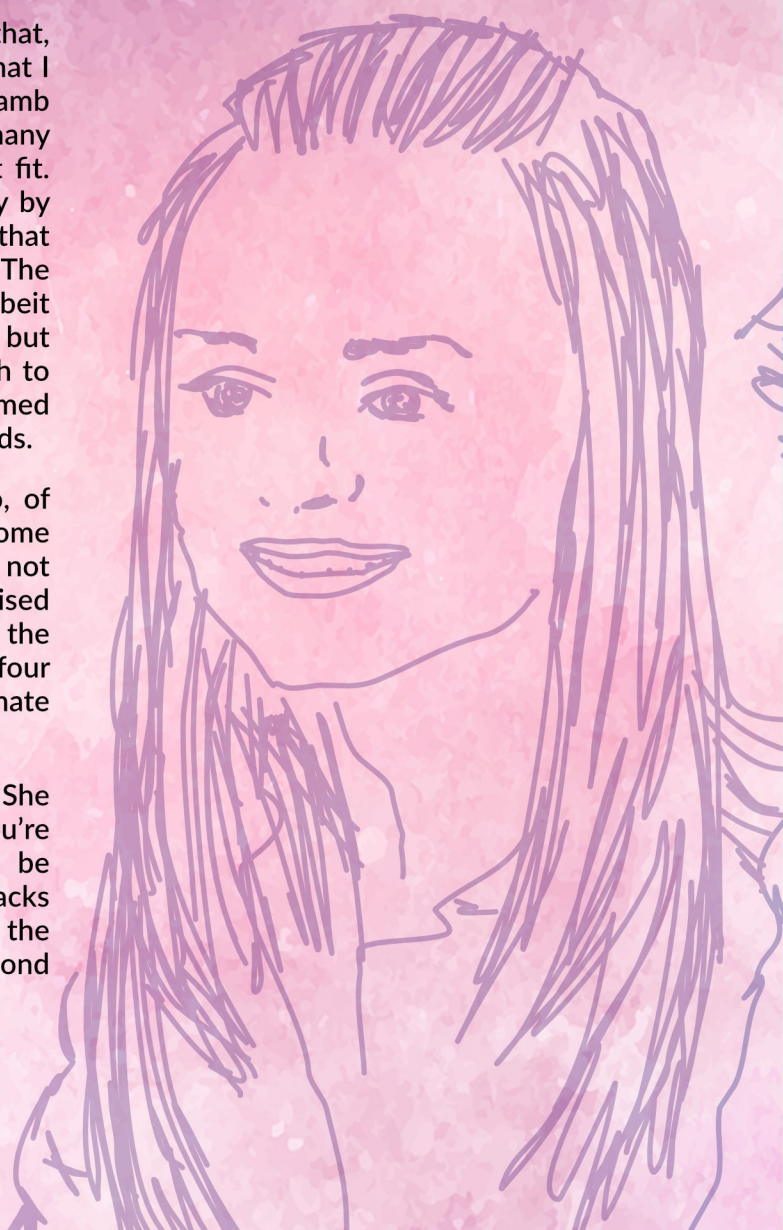
So while I feel the criticism surrounding Rory's life is somewhat justified, the criticism surrounding her failing career not so much. The main irritant stems mostly from Rory's whole attitude towards work in general and the fact that she's not a big shot journalist already. There was a pretty harsh recession the moment Rory left college (I remember because that's when I entered college) and while she landed a great gig with Obama's campaign, it still could not be a worse time to try and enter any job market, never mind journalism. Take it from someone who has done countless internships, the lack of enthusiasm Rory felt at the end of "Spring" towards her career options was completely understandable.

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She didn't handle it well for sure, but even with that, that's the Rory I relate to and that's the Rory that I loved from the original series. Rory was a lost lamb for most of the revival being offered many opportunities, but nothing seemingly the right fit. But things seemed to finally work out for Rory by "Winter", she was going to write something that only she could; the tale of the "Gilmore Girls". The series looked like it was going to end perfectly albeit the ambiguity surrounding Jess and Rory, but despite that, it looked like she was on the path to becoming a successful author. The ending seemed almost satisfying, and then, those final four words.

Was I thrilled about the ending for Rory? No, of course not. Did it make sense? Upon some reflection yes, but still like many, it's definitely not what I envisaged for the relatable and much idolised Rory. Rory seemed even more lost and upset at the end of revival than she did throughout the four seasons of that year, and for that to be the ultimate ending for her was a big disappointment.

But despite all of this, I still love Rory Gilmore. She will always be proof to me that just because you're shy and introverted doesn't mean you can't be confident and ambitious, and despite many setbacks you can always find your way. So despite the questionable ending, I don't doubt for one second that the Rory I know and love will find her way.



Revival reactions: Modern Little Women

The new *Gilmore Girls* revival gave fans a lot of feelings and big reactions but the biggest impression that it left on editor Méabh McDonnell was its similarities with one of her favourite classics, *Little Women*.

LITTLE Women is the first 'grown up' movie I can ever remember watching and it truly stuck with me. More than 15 years later and it can still make me cry. But that first viewing was like opening a door to a world I never knew existed.

I couldn't remember ever watching a story that had so many female characters, all of whom had distinct personalities that complemented one another and challenged one another. It is a story filled with women who know what they want in life, who have passion and tempers and fights, mostly with each other.

I used to go through phases of deciding which sister I wanted to be more like: poised and tactful Meg who had a burning social conscience despite wishing she had more out of life? Or maybe Jo, strong and passionate Jo, the determined character who most of us wanted to be at some point in our lives? Or perhaps I wanted to be Beth, meek and unassuming, but who was the most musically gifted of the four? And there were days I wanted to be Amy, stubborn and headstrong, the artistic free spirit who always knew what she wanted out of life. I never quite chose one but instead took elements from each of their personalities and embraced them as my own. I loved this story of clever competent women who had genuine hopes and dreams and I wasn't sure if I would ever find something quite like it.

I WAS A GILMORE GIRLS OBSESSIVE FOR A LONG TIME BEFORE I REALISED THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THESE TWO STORIES.

Then, many years later I encountered *Gilmore Girls*. Here was another story about ambitious, talkative women working their way through life. I watched the show on tv, bought the DVDs and consumed them on a loop for about three years running.

I was a *Gilmore Girls* obsessive for a long time before I realised the connection between the two stories that meant so much to me. It wasn't something that I realised until the first time I watched the new *Gilmore Girls* revival in November. Laying aside some of the issues I had with the piece, on the whole I was happy to have Rory, Lorelai and Emily Gilmore back on my screen and to see where their story had taken them.



The biggest realisation I had after viewing it was that I had just finished watching a re-telling of *Little Women*, right down to Rory committing her childhood stories into a book, á la Jo March. And much like I always wanted to be like the March sisters I have always wanted to be like Lorelai and Rory.

But those weren't the only co-incidences that occurred to me. Both stories are led by impressive matriarchs in Marmee and Emily Gilmore (or Lorelai, depending on how you look at it). These women's driving principle was always their family and raising it as best they could. Both have a strict moral code and while they don't always agree with their daughters they almost always want what is best for them. Another similarity is Lorelai's relationship with Christopher, the childhood boyfriend whom she out grew – much like Jo and Laurie.

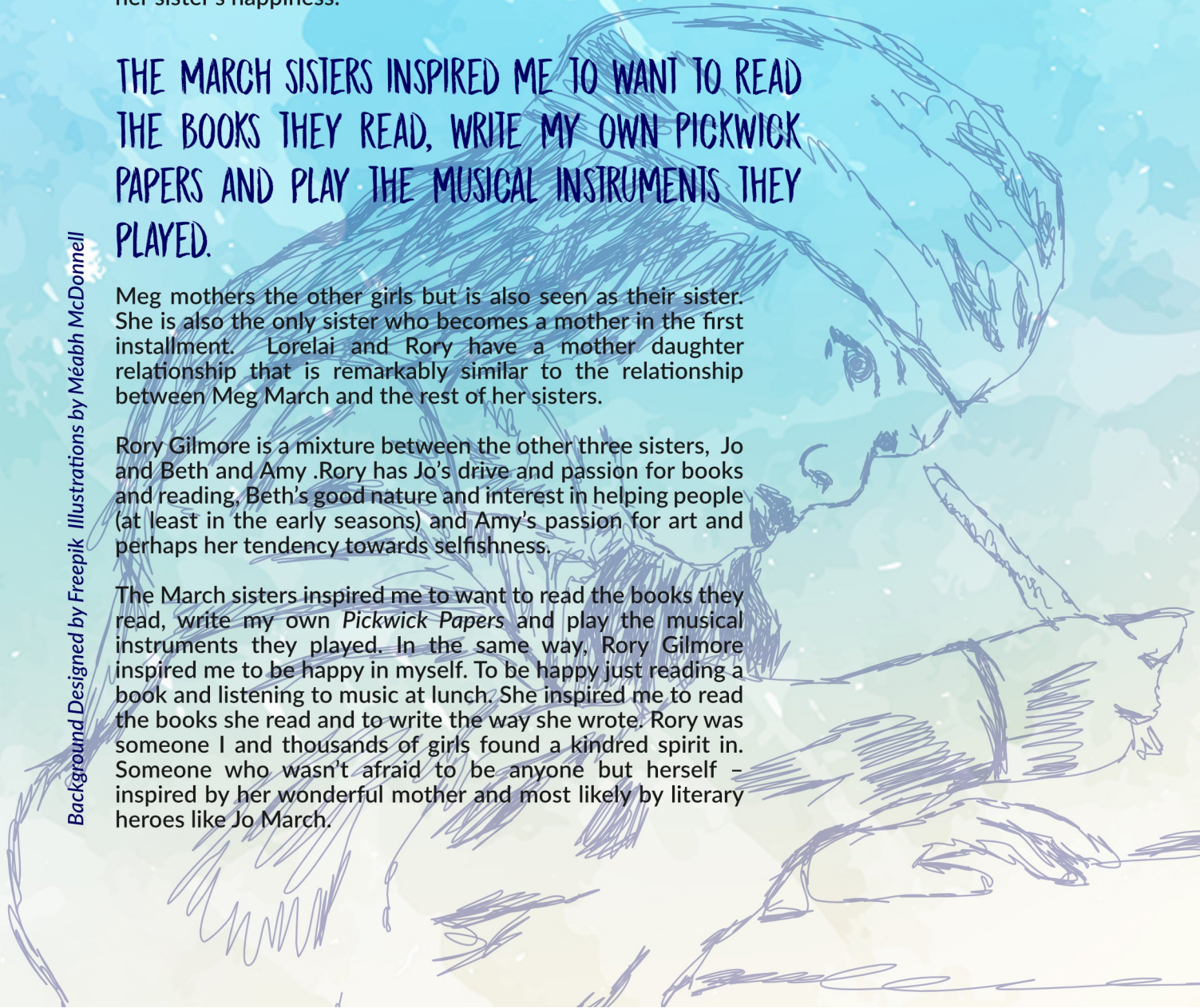
But ultimately Lorelai Gilmore is the mother who made a home out of music and books and laughter for herself and her daughter. This is not only like Marmee of *Little Women* but also the relationship the four sisters have for one another. Lorelai brings fun and theatricality into Rory's life the same way that the March sisters enliven each other's happy lives in Concord, Mass. The beauty and grace that Lorelai conducts herself with is matched by Meg March's consistent striving for her sister's happiness.

THE MARCH SISTERS INSPIRED ME TO WANT TO READ THE BOOKS THEY READ, WRITE MY OWN PICKWICK PAPERS AND PLAY THE MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS THEY PLAYED.

Meg mothers the other girls but is also seen as their sister. She is also the only sister who becomes a mother in the first installment. Lorelai and Rory have a mother daughter relationship that is remarkably similar to the relationship between Meg March and the rest of her sisters.

Rory Gilmore is a mixture between the other three sisters, Jo and Beth and Amy. Rory has Jo's drive and passion for books and reading, Beth's good nature and interest in helping people (at least in the early seasons) and Amy's passion for art and perhaps her tendency towards selfishness.

The March sisters inspired me to want to read the books they read, write my own *Pickwick Papers* and play the musical instruments they played. In the same way, Rory Gilmore inspired me to be happy just reading a book and listening to music at lunch. She inspired me to read the books she read and to write the way she wrote. Rory was someone I and thousands of girls found a kindred spirit in. Someone who wasn't afraid to be anyone but herself – inspired by her wonderful mother and most likely by literary heroes like Jo March.



And it's Jo who Rory takes the most inspiration from. Jo March was inspired by the books she read and is driven by her sole ambition: to be a writer, to be a successful writer. Rory's ambition throughout the *Gilmore Girls* series is to be a journalist, and to be a foreign correspondent. However both Jo and Rory suffer set backs in their ambitions. Rory seems to have undergone an entire career turn around in the revival, *A Year in the Life*, abandoning journalism for writing. Jo on the other hand finds some success with the publication of her own dramatic fiction, but it is in writing her own story where she finds the most fulfillment and success. And this is where Rory finds fulfillment in *A Year in the Life*.

This was the moment that made me realise the connection between *Little Women* and *Gilmore Girls*. Both Rory and Jo ultimately find their calling in telling, not other people's stories, but their own. And that would have been more than enough of an ending for me.

THEY FEEL REAL. LIKE GIRLS WE MIGHT KNOW,
LIKE THE GIRLS WE ARE AND THE GIRL THAT I
WANTED TO BE.

But the story didn't end there, as we all well know. Jo March's story didn't end with *Little Women* either, she went on to have children in *Little Men* and watch those children become adults in *Jo's Boys*. The story keeps on going, in a circle, much like it's implied that Rory and Lorelai's will continue to. The *Gilmore girls* will keep on living their sparkling, pop cultured lives that celebrate female family relationships as did the March family.

Both *Gilmore Girls* and *Little Women* celebrate bright intelligent women who have ambitions and hopes for their futures while also appreciate the importance of hobbies and interests. They are passionate about books and music and stories and are refreshingly flawed. One of the most refreshing aspects of both *Little Women* and *Gilmore Girls* is although the girls try to do the right thing (most of the time) they make mistakes, they fight and they aren't always admirable. They feel real. Like girls we might know, like the girls we are and the girl that I wanted to be.

Jo March inspired me to read and Rory Gilmore inspired me to write.

So no matter what my reaction is to *A Year in the Life* or how I may still harbour hopes for Jo and Laurie, I will always be grateful for them and their stories.

And the curtain will never fully fall on these girls for me.

STARS HOLLOW
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Creative crafty people

Calling all crafters and upcyclers! Cinders crafts guru, **Rose Joyce**, has scoured the internet for five YouTubers whose DIY videos will have you making over every one of your belongings all weekend long!

MAD STUFF WITH ROB

Are you addicted to fandom related DIYs? Then Mad Stuff with Rob is the one for you. From Game of Thrones to Pokémon to Harry Potter this channel is a treasure trove of fandom crafts suitable for all skill levels.



THEMISSALLIECAKES

Now, here is my personal favourite. Themissalliecakes is a self-confessed disnerd. Her channel specialises in Disney craft videos, and so much more. Her positivity is infectious and her DIYs are fabulous and affordable. You'll be decorating your room with Disney crafts in no time.



SEA LEMON

Jennifer of sea lemon is a self-confessed nerd at heart. Everything from home décor to DIY notepads are featured on this channel, she has a special expertise in bookbinding for all you stationary addicts out there! Sea lemon is the perfect place for people who love crafts that are practical and pretty.

2 CATS & 1 DOLL

2 cats & 1 doll is the perfect channel for anyone who loves cute crafts, such as amigurumi and not having to sew! Some of the videos are inspired by aspects of Japanese culture. There are so many different craft ideas on this channel, from headphone customisation to back-to-school DIYs you'll be eating them up. I mean that literally, some of the crafts look good enough to eat!



GGAETZZ

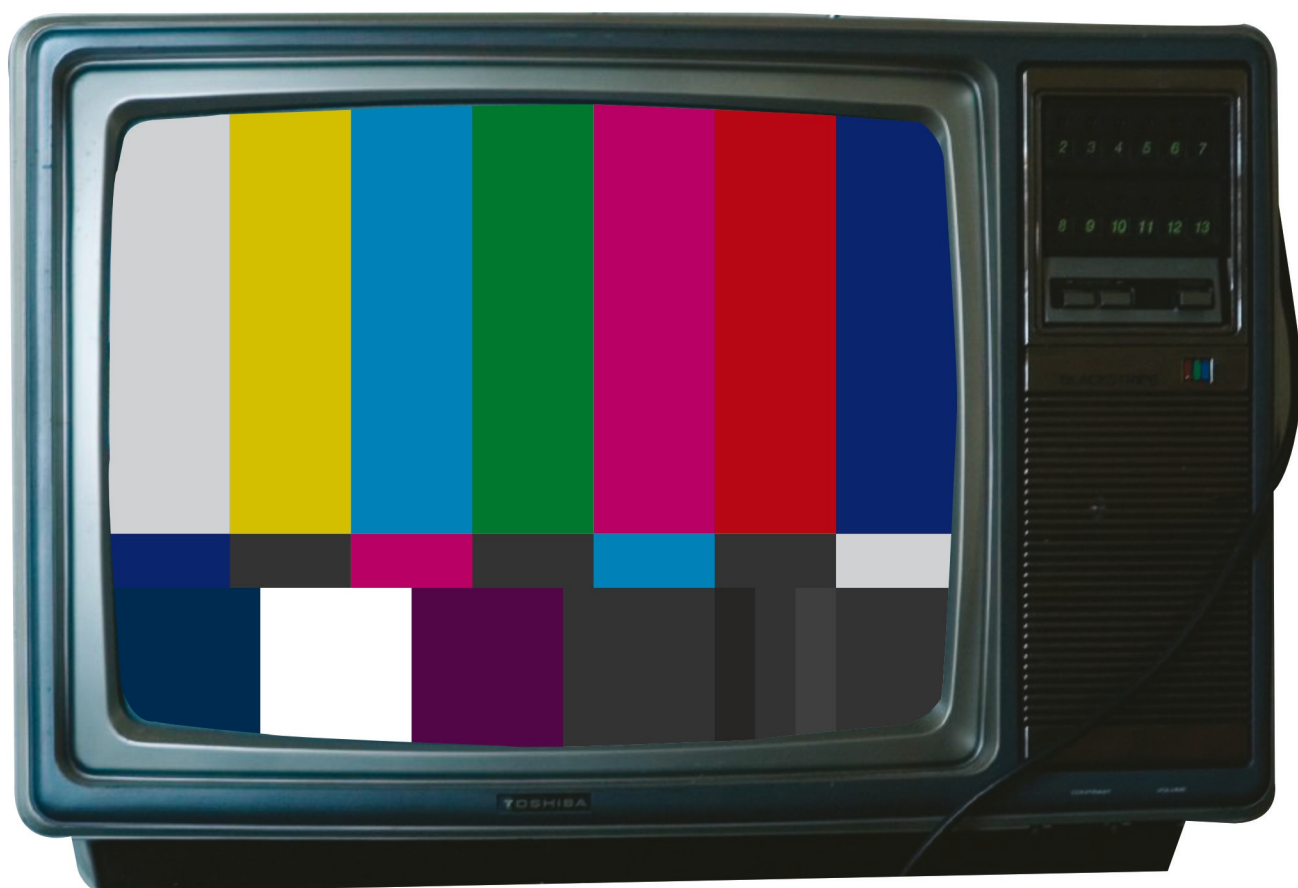
Are you someone who dreams of one day making your way to San Diego to experience Comic Con? Then this is the crafty YouTube channel for you. It focusses on DIY cosplay props and movie props .specialising in crafts inspired by Once Upon A Time I would recommend for any fan of the show to check out this channel.



Ed. - A special fave of ours is Mary Kate Wiles (of the Lizzie Bennet Diaries and Poe Party!) Craftversations, a great crafting show where she interviews people as they craft together! Click on any of the above and you'll be taken to the channel!

ULTIMATE 00s HEROINES

Last month we looked at some of the best television heroes of the 90s. This month we travel back in time ten years into the future where co-editor **Grainne Coyne** looks at some of our absolute favourite kick-ass heroines from the 00s!





RORY GILMORE

RORY still holds a special place in many an introvert's heart. Who cannot relate to a girl whose favourite pastime is reading a good book in a quiet corner? However what was most admirable about Rory was that her shy nature and sweet demur did not get in the way of her ambitions, if anything it helped her achieve them even more. Whatever obstacle faced her, she managed to always overcome it. She was told that she would probably not do well at Chilton prep school; she later graduated as the school's Valedictorian. She was told she was not cut out for the world of journalism and should probably pursue something else (a huge blow considering this was what she had built her whole life towards). And yes this was indeed a big knock for Rory, but she eventually came back fighting, soon becoming Yale's college newspaper's editor and from there gaining a job as a reporter for Obama's campaign.

This show did a great job of portraying Rory as a multifaceted character, who despite her seemingly perfect nature made many mistakes (some bigger than others), but grew from them into an accomplished young woman. Yes, there were the many romantic trials and questions as to who was the right man for Rory. But really the most important relationships throughout the series was of course with her own mother, Lorelai. Fiercely independent Lorelai raised Rory for most of her life on her own and without support (except when it came to Chilton). Their relationship without question helped Rory pursue her own ambitions and face any obstacles in life and love head on. But most importantly through Rory, *Gilmore Girls* portrayed that confidence can come in many shapes and forms and that you can succeed by simply being yourself and to any shy girl that was obsessing watching the series during the time that was a big deal.



SLEEPOVER CLUB

IF ONE show reflected the dynamics of group female friendship for tweens, *The Sleepover Club* was it. Filmed Down Under, the sleepover club portrayed the lives of five tween girls (Frankie, Fliss, Kenny, Lyndz and Rosie) and the slumber parties held at each other's houses. The five girls could not be more different to one another in personality, but that didn't mean that they weren't completely loyal to one another. The girls each have their own difficulties to face. Whether it's the loss of a parent and the grief that comes with that or even the strains that can come within different family dynamics the

girls are there for each other through thick and thin. They go through the headaches of every young teen like those that come with first crush and that unrequited love (even more so awkward when said crush, likes your best friend instead). The show handles each of these issues in a mature way with each episode's story being told through one of the character's own perspectives. *The Sleepover Club* is a show that definitely speaks to all of us when it comes to all of the above teen dilemmas and is still memorable today and not just for its catchy intro song. (Fun fact the girl who played Rosie is actually the same actress who now plays Clarke on *The 100*).

LIZZIE MCGUIRE

THE sweet Disney show that made Hilary Duff the star she is today. Lizzie appeared on our screens in the early noughties fresh off the bat with a new perspective on the awkwardness of becoming a teen. Each episode focused on the friendship dramas, first crushes, first heartaches and just the awkwardness of being a teenager in general. What made *Lizzie McGuire* so popular aside from its wit and the cartoon drawing that conveyed Lizzie's internal monologue was just how relatable Lizzie was. Lizzie had close group of friends, an annoying little brother and of course the clichéd, but relatable embarrassing parents. It was realistic because her supposed "enemy" throughout middle school, Kate Sanders was actually once her best friend.

And despite their many "Mean Girls" nuanced moments, a class trip to Rome made them fast allies and eventually friends, which was good timing considering it was Lizzie's cinematic debut. Not only did the film heal the rift between Lizzie and Kate, but Lizzie also found the confidence in herself to embrace who she truly was. The film and much like the series is filled with embarrassing and awkward moments for Lizzie, but when it came down to it Lizzie was able to toss it aside and stand up sing, when it really counted the most. Sure it's not a typical ending for a hit teen series, but it reflected perfectly how far Lizzie had come and what lay ahead for her in high school and beyond.



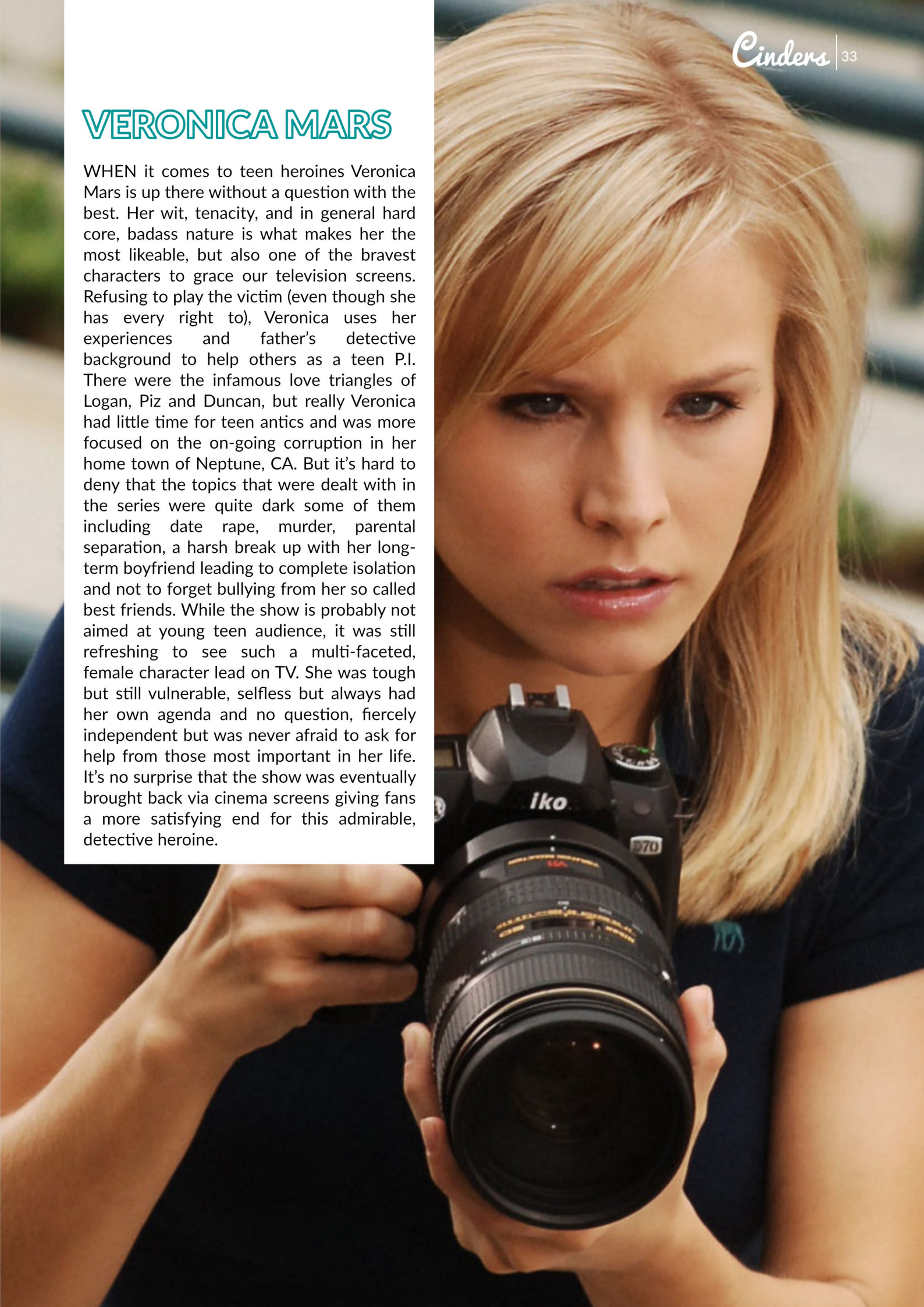
GINGER FOUTLEY

WHILE many are quick to forget that about the noughties gem that is *As Told By Ginger*, the hit series was nominated thrice for an Emmy and its intro song was sang by the great, Macy Gray. The show is told through the eyes of aspiring young writer Ginger. Ginger eloquently talks about a variety of things in her journal up and to and including the anxiety of being noticed/popular to not being allowed to shave her frizzy lizzies (looking back it's ridiculous, but it is a sad reality these were serious pressures for a lot of a young girls then and even today). The show also focused on other life trials that Ginger faced such as mean popular girls, to her loyal friends, the difficulties that can come with parental divorce, new family dynamics especially when one parent starts to date again and of course, the love and the heartbreak that can come from that. But the show's real hero is single, working nurse mom Lois. Not only does she do a fantastic job of raising two eccentric children, she's always there to give the most profound life advice a child can ask for. So much so, this has a massive impact on Ginger eventually leading her to becoming a bestselling author by the end of the series.



VERONICA MARS

WHEN it comes to teen heroines Veronica Mars is up there without a question with the best. Her wit, tenacity, and in general hard core, badass nature is what makes her the most likeable, but also one of the bravest characters to grace our television screens. Refusing to play the victim (even though she has every right to), Veronica uses her experiences and father's detective background to help others as a teen P.I. There were the infamous love triangles of Logan, Piz and Duncan, but really Veronica had little time for teen antics and was more focused on the on-going corruption in her home town of Neptune, CA. But it's hard to deny that the topics that were dealt with in the series were quite dark some of them including date rape, murder, parental separation, a harsh break up with her long-term boyfriend leading to complete isolation and not to forget bullying from her so called best friends. While the show is probably not aimed at young teen audience, it was still refreshing to see such a multi-faceted, female character lead on TV. She was tough but still vulnerable, selfless but always had her own agenda and no question, fiercely independent but was never afraid to ask for help from those most important in her life. It's no surprise that the show was eventually brought back via cinema screens giving fans a more satisfying end for this admirable, detective heroine.



THE FANTASTIC FRIENDSHIPS OF **CRAZY EX-** GIRLFRIEND

Have you watched *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*? If you haven't, where have you been? We know it's easy to say that about anything, but *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* is a show that critics are raving about for good reason. **Grainne Coyne** gives us the lowdown on why you shouldn't miss this fantastic musical that never holds back.

I FIRST heard of *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* when Rachel Bloom (co-creator and main star of the show) won the Golden Globe for Best Actress in a Television Musical and Comedy in 2016. Her endearing speech about being rejected countless times and how the CW took a chance on the musical/comedy, enthralled me and I wanted to find out more. From there I watched the trailer for it which featured the opening tune "West Covina" and I'll admit, I wasn't sure what to think of it initially. But after its arrival on Netflix and *Cinders'* editor Méabh McDonnell's recommendation, I decided to binge watch and I'm so glad I did.

I can't stress how brilliantly this show deals with feminism, sexism, LGBT relationships, bisexuality, racism, the differences between healthy and unhealthy relationships, and most importantly mental health. But for me what they've handled best in the most recent episodes of season two is the complications that can come within female friendships.



While the show does focus on the romantic interests or rather obsessions of the main character Rebecca Bunch, it recently explored the dynamics and difficulties that can come with female friendships.

It brilliantly executed this through Rebecca's closest friendship of the series, that of her colleague Paula Proctor. In the first season Paula was Rebecca's right hand woman in her many shenanigans especially when it came to winning the heart of Rebecca's object of affection, Josh Chan.

However when Paula realises that Rebecca's obsession with Josh is unhealthy, rather than romantic, Paula takes a step back to focus on herself and getting into law school. While most shows would be happy to continue to keep Paula in that sidekick role, *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* gave Paula a voice of her own one that was outside of Rebecca's "crazy" plans. Through this the show brilliantly portrayed the reality of what's it's like when two friends start to pull apart – through miscommunication, life ambitions and changes within themselves.

So it was no surprise when this happened to Paula and Rebecca, as the main foundation of their friendship was formed on many joint, secret attempts to woo Josh.

However, it also meant that the main focus of their friendship was constantly on Rebecca's troubles as opposed to what was going on with Paula. This is a dilemma often faced by many friendships, when the entire focus seems to be on one person's needs as opposed to the other's and as Paula put it to Rebecca during their big fight; "I give you take!"

Throughout the series it's evident that whilst Rebecca is severely insecure and has many "underlying issues to address", she is very self-involved and was completely unaware of some of the difficulties Paula was going through.

Paula eventually ends up confiding in her fellow student Sunil instead, while Rebecca continues to bond more with her new "girl squad" Valencia and Heather (the song about their new found girl squad, 'Friendtopia' is also brilliant).

While Paula is also guilty of not communicating directly with Rebecca, it's understandable to an extent why that was the case. Sometimes we can be afraid to discuss extremely personal items with our closest friends for fear of judgment, but also that the basis of the friendship could change as a result of this.



It eventually all comes to a head when Rebecca mistakenly blames Paula's distance towards her on feeling excluded from her new girl squad. Rebecca soon realises that's not the case when Paula angrily reveals that she's upset with her because Rebecca has never been there for her, when she needed her the most. Of course they make up after an episode apart but not without stubbornness on both parts told through the song "You Go First".

IT EVENTUALLY ALL COMES TO HEAD WHEN REBECCA'S MISTAKENLY BLAMES PAULA'S DISTANCE TOWARDS HER FOR FEELING EXCLUDED FROM HER NEW GIRL SQUAD.

Eventually Rebecca realises that she was mostly to blame and sincerely apologises first. This character growth on Rebecca's part was displayed when Josh finally understood how much Rebecca is there for him, but instead of running straight into his arms, Rebecca chose to be there for Paula when she was going through a difficult time. This was huge for Rebecca considering the whole reason she moved to West Covina in the first place was to win the heart of Josh Chan.

I also love that despite Valencia initially being Josh Chan's girlfriend, when Rebecca first arrives to West Covina, both her and Rebecca turn their heartache over Josh into an unusual and somewhat supportive, friendship. The same could be said for Heather and Rebecca's friendship as well.

Initially Heather wanted to spend time with Rebecca in order to study her for her psych class. However, Heather's conscience kicks in and she chooses to focus on having her as a friend instead. The show beautifully portrays female friendships. Hey, they even have a song about the importance of women sticking together! Even if said song, points out certain ridiculousness of this at times.

While Rebecca has a long way to go before she realises that she needs to face up to her issues, but at least she has awesome, supportive friends helping her along the way. And as Rachel Bloom put it whilst talking about the show;

"The thing I love most about the show is that nothing's black-and-white, happiness is not straightforward. To find happiness, you have to explore those grey areas in yourself."





Double Double, write some trouble

Do you harbour dreams of writing? Fancy being the next JK Rowling? Cinders editor, **Méabh McDonnell**, had a chat with children's author Erika McGann about her life as a writer and where she gets the inspiration for her books.

ERIKA MCGANN is a young writer from Drogheda, now living in Dublin. Erika has written four books in her Demon Notebook series and is just about to release the first book in her mystery series for children: *Cass and the Bubble Street Gang*. The Demon Notebook series explores the adventures of a group of school friends who soon discover their powers as witches. I was delighted to get the opportunity to chat to Erika about writing, fantasy, female friendships in books, and how the sound of a coffee shop makes it easier to write!

When did you first know you wanted to be an author?

When I was really young, writing was all I wanted to do and my parents were very encouraging. They bought me a huge hardback notebook and they paid me 10p a day to write in it. I'm not sure about the ethics of that but it really really worked! It got me into the habit of writing every day. But I got out of the habit in my teens and I didn't write again until I was about 28. That's when I jumped into creating *The Demon Notebook*. So there was a huge gap when I should have been doing what most writers are doing which is working hard and perfecting their craft, but I went about it a different way!

Who were your favourite authors growing up, your influences?

I'm a huge Roald Dahl fan and I'll always be a Roald Dahl fan I think. His books were some of the few books that I re-read as a child, and I don't re-read books very often, but his were absolute favourites. His writing influenced me a lot, and still does. I also loved CS Lewis and The Worst Witch books as well.

"THERE WAS A HUGE GAP WHEN I SHOULD HAVE BEEN DOING WHAT MOST WRITERS ARE DOING WHICH IS WORKING HARD AND PERFECTING THEIR CRAFT BUT I WENT ABOUT IT A DIFFERENT WAY!"



Above Photo: Erika McGann by Lee Furlong Absolute studios

Illustrations by Méabh McDonnell

I wasn't hugely into horror as a child but my first introduction to horror stories was the Luvender books by June Considine, which I loved. I remember reading them and being scared, but also liking being scared. So that was my introduction to horror and I really liked it. I've a huge grá for anything that has a bit of edge and is a bit creepy. I credit June Considine with that.

Those influenced you?

I definitely was influenced by that in writing my own books. I was really into the occult and creepy magic. I was never really into horror that was about gore, it was more about a strange atmosphere and her books really had that. I would have really been interested in the occult stuff as a kid. The story of *The Demon Notebook* are really based on me and my friends. And that was what we wanted to be. We wanted to be witches and we were dead serious about it too! We made up spells and we read everything we could about it. So that is how the books came about. I mean our spells were always a disaster! But I remember I loved talking about it, like we used to talk about if we could make it snow, or go anywhere in the world. Even though it wasn't real I remember it as a time in school where I was really happy. So I suppose that's why I decided to write the books, although I decided to add in some real occult stuff to make them a bit more exciting and scary!

Was that the first novel you had written?

It was the first one, yes. In fact it was the first time I had written in a long time. So the book took a while to complete, because it was rattling around my head for a while. At the time I wasn't into writing and I didn't think to write it down, I was just playing around with scenes in my head. So when I finally went to write it things were actually fairly clear. When I sat down to write it was a steep learning curve because I had never written anything long and I hadn't written anything at all in a very long time. It was very slow going and I made a lot of mistakes. I had to go back and correct them so it was a learning curve while I was doing it. It worked out in the end though and I was surprised at how well it worked.

But people will respond to a good story, and there really is nothing out there like it at the moment.

I suppose basing it on real life helped in that sense. I get that response a lot, where people say it feels like their school and their group of friends. When you add something like that it gives it another dimension of reality.

"BUT REALLY IN SCHOOL THE FRIENDSHIPS YOU HAVE DO BECOME YOUR MOST IMPORTANT RELATIONSHIPS."

Also a lot of books aimed at that age group have a big love story or a love triangle embedded into them and I wasn't really into that. I wanted to do something that was just based on a group of friends.

That's something different in and of itself I think, and it's really nice to have a book that focusses on a friendship between girls rather than a love story that is the central relationship.

I think so, and I think that often those relationships are a little underrepresented in books because it's not seen as important as the love story. But really in school the friendships you have do become your most important relationships. I do have a little bit of romance in the first book though but not much.

I think that's more true to life though, I mean if they're anything like me, girls at that age talk about romantic relationships more often than they have romances with anyone.

Exactly, like in the first book on of the characters she has a little flirtation with a guy she has a crush on but that's how it was! Very awkward and embarrassed, there were no great love stories. We talked about them as if they were great love stories, but more often they were just little crushes.

Your latest book is a mystery for younger readers?

Cass and the Bubble Street Gang, yes. It's about three friends who have a secret club and have meetings and plan adventures. If *The Demon Notebook* was based on my school life, then this was based on my home life. We lived in an estate on the edge of town so there were just fields and trees behind it. Running off and having secret clubs and building forts, that was the big thing for us to do and that's what this new series is based on. The first one will be out in the beginning of March. I'm really excited about them because they're my first illustrated books. The illustrations are just fab and it's so nice to see the illustrations come to life. Sometimes they'll come out looking exactly what you thought in your head and sometimes they'd be quite different. I used to be so excited every time I'd see a new illustration of a character to see how they'd turn out.

The Demon Notebook series is a fantasy about young witches and your newest series is a mystery story - do you have one that you prefer to write over the other?

I think I have two separate parts of my head when I think about them, because they're so different to write. It's hard to separate them because you enjoy them for what they are, so the supernatural stuff I loved making up the spells and the thought that anything could happen. And I loved the relationship between the girls. But for the new series I loved re-imagining all of that stuff building club houses and forts and thinking back to that time in school when we were a bit younger. That was really exciting as well. I don't prefer one over the other I think once you get into it then you're just happy to be writing.

Do you have a daily writing approach? Any rituals?

Well what you always try to get into is a good routine, so you can produce a certain amount of words per day. At the moment I write from home, I have my little desk where I have my laptop and I don't work at certain times of the day. Often I find if I get a little stuck though I change up the routine and then stay in that routine, sometimes switching to a coffee shop or going outside helps. One thing I do have to have is background noise. If I was stuck writing a part of a story I used to find that going to a coffee shop really helped. My brother then sent me a link to this site which has coffee shop background noise! At first I thought it was ridiculous but it actually really works! It's just so helpful to have this slight noise in the background. I've found a ridiculous amount of them online now! There are some really bizarre ones too- like a B12 bomber or a space station.

It's just a little bit of noise in the background can really help you to concentrate on what you're working on I find. It's a bit like magic!

What are you working on at the moment?

I'm actually working on a picture book at the moment, which is really exciting but it's quite difficult as well, I've had to learn how to write a picture book, because you have new constraints like word count and vocabulary. But it's been really exciting. I'm also editing the second *Bubble Street Gang* book. But I always have a few projects going on at the same time. I find that really useful for writers as well, that if I'm struggling with one project that it can really help to look at another project and work on that instead.

Do you have any advice for young writers?

I'd advise them to read a lot. I find that any time that I'm not reading, I have a tough time writing. When I stopped writing as a teen, it was because I stopped reading - it sounds super shameful to say now - but I just got out of the habit. And I think it's because I stopped writing, you can't write if you're not reading. People take a lot of inspiration from books, but also because of the ease of the language. The sentence structure and the grammar, whether you notice it or not that's all going in when you read. If you're not reading then it's a lot harder when you go to write. And I suppose practice writing every day, get into a habit of writing.

These books are based on your own life, do you ever get in trouble for that?

When I talk to groups about writing I always say that building characters up from real people is one of the easiest things that you can do, because most of the work is already done. It's much easier to build on someone that you already know. So I say, base it on your friends, base it on your family, which is what I did. I never told my friends who was based on who, but recently one of my friends came up to me and said, 'This girl Adie, who is afraid of everything, is that me?' She was kind of put out about it - even though I think that Adie is a lovely character, she's really sympathetic, but my friend didn't totally see that side of it! So yeah, you do have to be careful, I suppose in my mind when I was writing it I thought, 'Oh no one's ever going to read this! Although I was just writing about my experience in school and my friends. but you have to be careful that you don't insult someone or reveal something that was supposed to be a secret! It's something that you have to keep in mind, that it's good to take inspiration from your life but you have to make sure that you change things up enough that it's your own story.

The Demon Notebook series and Cass and the Bubble Street Gang are published by O'Brien Press and are available from www.obrien.ie



Windswept

By Méabh McDonnell

I have my grandmother's hair.
Stolen copper strands,
That catch between my lashes
On a July wind that drags
Them into bouquets.

Like rust raw ropes that carry
Through and over and under our lines,
From her head onto mine
and her mother's before,
She wore it pinned,
and hidden away.

I wonder if she ever
Pulled it from its clipped
Up cage and set it free
In the same winds that
Knot and plait and tie long
strands up for me.

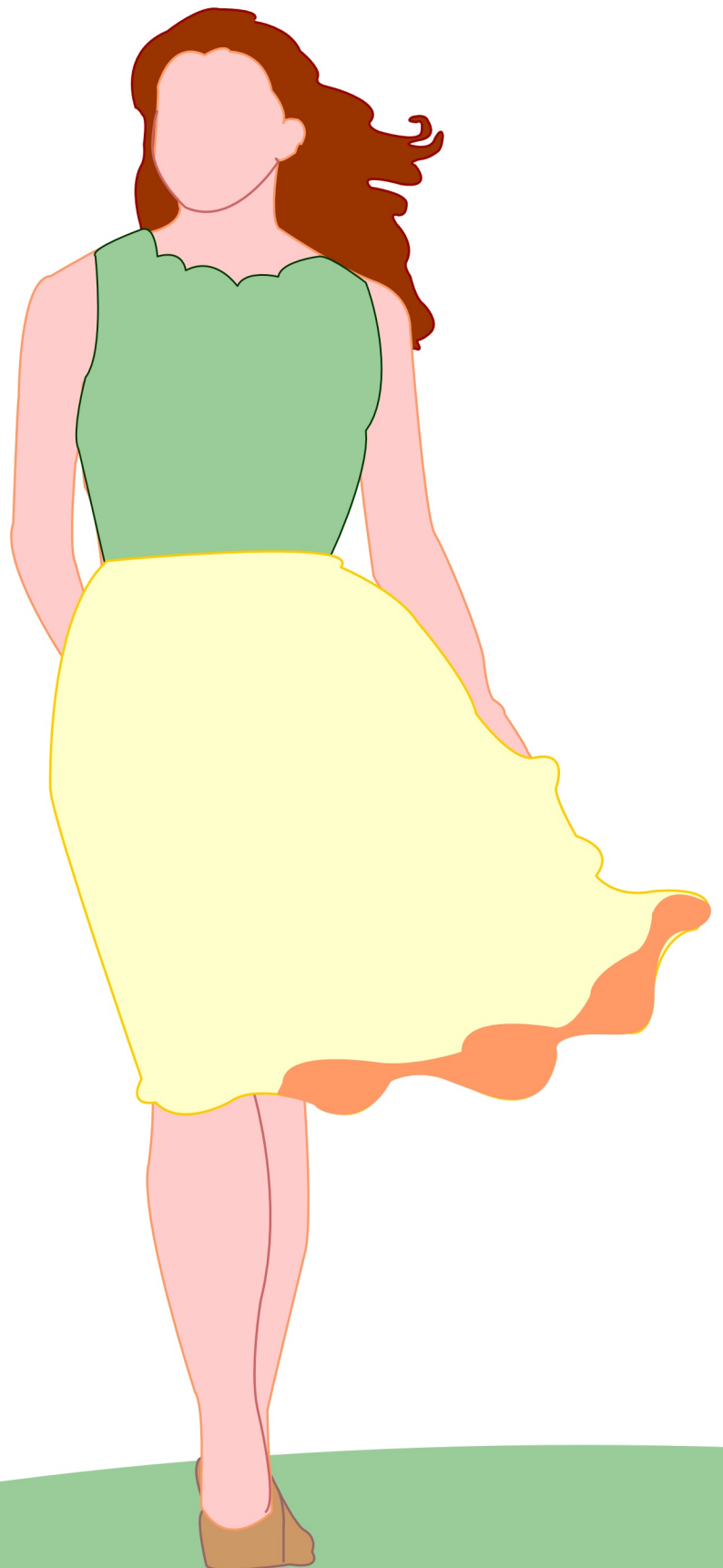
Those same winds that cut
My cheeks, like tiny knives.
Did they batter theirs with rain,
Force tears from their eyes?

The gusts that make
trees bow down their heads.
Medusa strands
Flailing in the wake of long lost winds.

Did they tell their secrets to the leaves
of ash green canopies
Let them whisper in the
quiet and the still
notes of the breeze?

I stand alone upon a hilltop
with their winds for company,
it waltzes at my ankles,
billows my skirt around my knees

It blows memories
I'll never know
And the hair that doesn't
Belong to me.



This one is about A Valentines Card that was put in the Shredder

By Sheil say Words

Nom nom nom goes the Shredder
Hungriely eating receipts and old letters.

Look look look
The front's got crayon flowers
Peek peek peek
The inside's got two pages
Run run run
Upstairs and feed it to the Shredder

Nom nom nom goes the Shredder
Hungriely eating receipts and bank letters

Hi hi hi goes the chosen boy
The vanguard into the girls.
Hi hi hi goes the girl
Knowing what this is about.
Hide hide hide is the shy boy,
Lurking in the background.
Well well well goes the boy
Anything in the post?
Deny deny deny goes the girl
I didn't get anything at all.

Nom nom nom goes the Shredder
Hungriely eating sheets of your letters

Surprised surprised surprised seemed the boys
I got the address wrong maybe.
Bye bye bye goes the boys
Shoulders slumped in defeat.
Sigh sigh sigh goes the girl
What a relief that no one will know.

Nom nom nom goes the Shredder
Hungriely eating the thoughts in love letters.

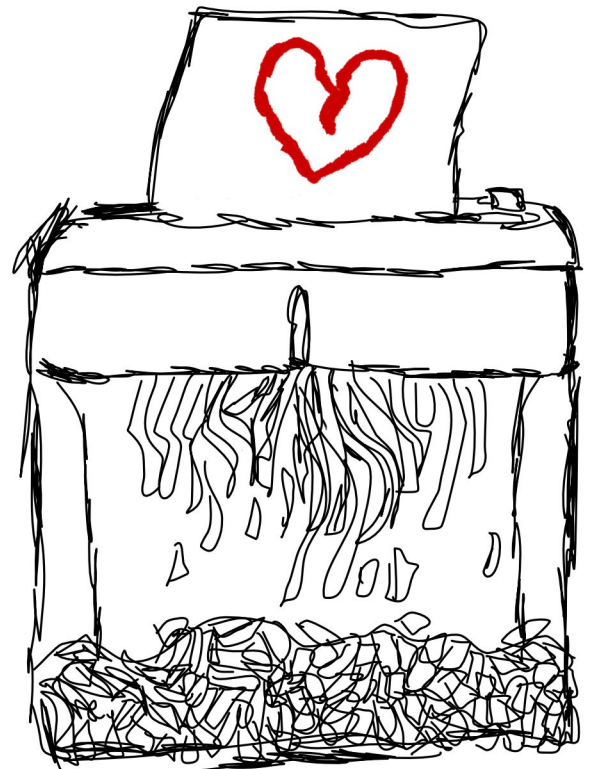


Illustration by Méabh McDonnell

BOOK ~~REVIEW~~ CORNER



FATHERS COME FIRST BY ROSITA SWEETMAN - FOR OLDER READERS

IT'S BEEN a long time since I read a book that felt so much like the memoir of a very old friend. But that's how Rosita Sweetman's voice comes across on the pages of *Fathers Come First*. First printed in 1974, Lilliput Press have re-released the classic Dublin coming of age novel and it's easy to see why. The novel follows Liz, a young woman in 1970s Dublin, who is so brilliantly drawn by Sweetman that she leaps up off of the page. After just reading a few pages of the book, I felt like I knew Liz.

The novel tells the story of a young girl trying to figure out her place in the world, living in an Ireland that is on the cusp of change but apparently hadn't changed enough for women.

Liz is constantly trying to figure out the kind of person she should be and the people she should surround herself with, something I think most girls can identify with.

For that reason I wish I had this book when I was 16, if only to know that I wasn't the only teen who questioned everything I was told about what the right way to behave was, or the about right way to act in order to get a boyfriend but whose first romantic excursions were less than perfect.

Liz is such a wonderful delight to read, giving a detailed window into life of teenagers in the 70s who, even with the absence of the internet, are a great deal like girls today.

SHE IS SUCH A WONDERFUL DELIGHT TO READ, GIVING A DETAILED WINDOW INTO LIFE OF TEENAGERS IN THE 70S WHO, WITH THE ABSENCE OF THE INTERNET, ARE A GREAT DEAL LIKE GIRLS TODAY.

One of the most prevalent themes Sweetman shows in the novel are the double standards in both life, career and relationships for men versus women. These are things that Liz thinks about and fights against. She rages with the expectations that are placed upon her by her Catholic upbringing, the nuns who run her boarding school, the magazines she reads and the things that other girls say. There are entire chapters dedicated to the contradictions about life and men coming from all of these different sources which parallels all of the internet-based contradictions that follow young women around today.

The novel follows Liz's life outside of school on to adventures in France and then back to Dublin. It explores her life with men and how she struggles with the woman that she wants to be and the life she has always thought that she should want. It perfectly captures the intensity of relationships when you are young and how those relationships can feel like your whole life. It also depicts the joy and fear of living on your own and what it is like to face life by yourself as an independent person.

With an ending that is vibrant and liberating, you get the feeling that Liz is standing on the precipice of a cliff where her new life will begin. The novel grasps the essence of what it is to be young, uncertain and absolutely sure that you are right. A window into another girl's world that reads like you've accidentally picked up an old friend's diary. It is at times honest, and familiar while also being uncomfortable and unflinching. It's a novel that deserves a place on girls bookshelves now just as much as it did in the 1970s, perhaps even more.

8 Friendship quotes THAT WILL WARM YOUR HEART

There is nothing I would not do for those who are really my friends. I have no notion of loving people by halves, it is not my nature. - Jane Austen, Northanger Abbey

Abandon the cultural myth that all female friendships must be bitchy, toxic, or competitive. This myth is like heels and purses — pretty but designed to SLOW women down. - Roxanne Gay

"Lots of people want to ride with you in the limo—what you want is someone who will take the bus with you when the limo breaks down." - Oprah Winfrey

I would rather walk with a friend in the dark, than alone in the light. - Helen Keller

Friendship is born at that moment when one person says to another: 'What! You too? I thought I was the only one.'
— C.S. Lewis

"Find a group of people who challenge and inspire you; spend a lot of time with them, and it will change your life."
— Amy Poehler

One friend with whom you have a lot in common is better than three with whom you struggle to find things to talk about. - Mindy Kaling

**There's not a word yet, for old friends who've just met.
— Jim Henson**