

## Leila Chapter D

Well, it's nearly finished.

I have just one more chapter to write.

I think it is important for us to see how Leila progresses into adulthood, so you will get a flavour of that in the next chapter.

Then we'll be done.

What you're reading is something like the second draft. I've been through the text so many times that it feels like I know every word off by heart! It gets to a point where you are so familiar with your characters that you think of them all the time. They become part of your life, and you catch yourself thinking about them in everyday situations.

*What would Leila buy in the supermarket? How would she react to a long queue at the checkout? How would Duke help me if I got stressed in a traffic jam?*

I hope you're still with me.

I guess if you've got to this stage you're still here, and I thank you for that.

I've been busy in other ways whilst finishing off the manuscript. One of the things you need, if you are serious about getting a book published, is an agent. An agent is someone who works between the author and the publisher, negotiating a deal to get the book produced, distributed and marketed.

My so-called agent is useless!

Larry. Even his name is pretty old-school.

He used to be well-connected.

He keeps asking me for re-writes and edits. He wants it perfect. Each set of requests can take weeks or months to implement, and it feels like I'm re-writing the thing each time. You have to dig deep.

I like that phrase! *Dig Deep*. It could be a metaphor for life really. Some days go well, some just do not. Good days, when everything seems positive and all you want to accomplish gets done, and other days when no matter how hard you try, you seem to get nowhere. I like to end each day feeling like I have achieved something. It could be a tiny thing, like tidying a shelf or drawer, or it could be something major, like finishing a chapter.

I make lists.

Lists of the most trivial things.

Sometimes if I do something that is not on the list, I will add it to the list and immediately cross it off. That way it looks like I am working through the list.

A good day for a writer is when you complete a chapter, or a page, or even just a sentence that you're

proud of. A sentence that you know will sit handsomely in the final edit. In a previous book I used the simple phrase '*he pulled at the far corners of his memory and dreamed of future possibilities.*' I'm still proud of that, and a day which resulted in that one sentence would have been classed as a good day.

A bad day for a writer is when nothing of substance gets written. I often find that a day which starts as a bad day can often turn into a good day, but you have to work at it. You may start a day with very few ideas, but the process of getting something - anything - down on paper evolves into something good. Today has worked out well, and I have got the final chapter of *Leila* more or less written.

A real bad day is when nothing comes out, nothing flows, and no useful words hit the paper. At that point it's probably best to do something completely different. Go for a walk. Do the shopping. Watch a movie.

Tomorrow will be a better day.

I have shown *Leila* to a number of people now, and most are pretty enthusiastic. They like the character of Leila herself, and they tend to sympathise with her issues and sensitivities. One person said that they felt a little sorry for her, because she seems to have no friends, but another commented that they wished that they too had her self-confidence - to go into those woods, to meet a stranger, and to seemingly come to no harm. Two people said that they admired her resilience and her courage. She seems to be her own woman - knowing what she wants. The last person who read it (an artist friend of mine) said that they loved her drawings and thought she could make it big one day!

Everyone seems to like Duke! They hope he is safe and well, and happy, wherever he is.

The only problem is this idiot agent. He thinks he knows it all. He thinks the format is wrong, and the story is slow-moving. But that's the point! Her life is a bit dull. She wants to make it better, which is why she engages with Duke and confides in him. He is her sounding-board. Someone she trusts (amidst all the people she doesn't trust).

Talking of people I don't trust, I must get a new agent.