

LITTLE MIRACLES A BIG READ

by Alice Mascarenhas

Carry out a search of Giselle Green's new novel – *Little Miracles* – and you will see that Amazon and Borders give it a five star rating, FemaleFirst on line and the Bookbag a four, and there are more. Not surprising this is a book with a lot of heart (see review). It is only her second book and already she is being described as the British Jodi Picoult. With her last book *Pandora's Box* Giselle Green won the coveted Joan Hessayon Award, given by the Romantic Novelists' Association, in the UK, for the best debut novel of the year from a newly published member. This second book is on a similar theme to the first; that of losing a child although through very different circumstances. In a nutshell it is about what happens to a young couple when their young child goes missing and how they cope with the situation. Although Giselle agrees there could be comparisons with the Madeline McCann story, *Little Miracles* begins its life long before that tragedy occurred, and she was well into writing it when this tragedy hit the news. She recalls that she rang her editor at Harper Collins and asked if perhaps she should not write this book because the topic was so alive but the decision was taken to go ahead with it.

The synopsis for the book was put through in February 2007, way ahead of anything ever happening, and she points out "the fact is that children, very sadly, go missing every day of the year in every place in the world and their parents are effected by that too, it could effect anyone of us."

Giselle says the idea for *Little Miracles* came to her early in 2007 during a Reiki healing session.

"I was fully awake, but in a semi-dreamlike state when I became aware I was watching a scene where a child had just gone missing. More than seeing it, I actually 'felt' it – the grief of the couple, and indeed the child, was indescribable. I ended up in floods of tears and believe me there was nothing going on in my life that would have made me feel sad at the time. I knew immediately that I had the essence of my next book."

During this experience she realised there were several elements that came through very strongly which she knew instantly were somehow rele-

'A HEARTBREAKING GRIPPING READ'

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I read this book in three days. I just could not put it down. Giselle Green is an exceptional writer who connects with the reader and draws them into the narrative immediately. By the middle of the book I can honestly say I could identify with the characters emotionally, spiritually... but what was most intriguing (this is not the kind of book I normally read) I had made new friends with the protagonists Julia and Charlie as they compellingly tell their story from their own point of view. The funny thing is it was as if I had known them all my life. It really is a heartbreaking gripping read but one which is filled with love, deep emotion and is morally complex.

Julia and fiance Charlie arrive in Spain with their 18-month old son Haydn. It is the first time Julia is to meet his family planning their forthcoming wedding. But their family is to be pulled apart as their happiness is short-lived. A freak storm on New Year's Eve causes confusion and Haydn disappears. The authorities presume he has drowned but Julia is tormented with the remotest possibility that he has been taken away and that he is still alive.

This is a book about tradition (Charlie holding on to his family despite the fact that he has been away from his familiar roots and Catholic upbringing – does he really know them). Julia unsure if she can fit in to this ready-made family with its strong traditions and values. Then there are the many secrets and the real truths – how strong is this love Julia and Charlie share? In the turmoil and devastating consequences of what has happened in their life can their love survive? How our lives change without us realising. How there comes a time when we are unable to connect with people we thought we knew. How strong can a person be when faced with such shattering news. Above all, this book is about faith and hope. And perhaps what is most appealing to the reader is that this is kept alive right through the book with every turn. This is about a journey that takes one to many different places and spaces within themselves.

vant and would be included. "One of these was St Joseph – so watch out for him!" she says. But once she had the basis of the story she then had to do the hard work of turning this into a novel.

In the book Julia Fearon arrives in Spain with fiance Charlie and 18-month old son Haydn, ready to meet his family. She quickly realises she must grapple with a clan steeped in tradition, ritual and Catholicism. Unable to communicate, she becomes increasingly isolated and soon, lies from her past start to unravel, threatening her present. But this becomes the very least of her concerns when a day at the beach leads to a terrible tragedy - her son Haydn disappears. Whilst the authorities presume him drowned, Julia is tortured by the possibility that her child is alive - and has been snatched.

Giselle describes the book as being unrelentingly fast-paced, emotional and thought-provoking but ultimately, she adds, "I hope, uplifting. It's a book about Faith; to follow my first book which was about Hope and to precede

the third one which is about Charity."

With the book set in the UK and in a fictional village along the Costa del Sol called Arenadeluna there is obviously mention of Gibraltar – "yes, it does get a mention. It's a cameo role!"

She tells me a lot of the book was written out of sequence – "a rather chaotic modus operandi and I had to just believe that all the different scenes would find a home, which most of them did!"

The book, she says, is for anyone who enjoys a good read. "I hope! It's action-packed and drama-packed but I do always pay a lot of attention to the emotional interplay and relationships that are going on between people. Anybody who's ever been a parent will be able to relate to what my main characters go through. On a wider scale, it's aimed at anyone who's ever been faced with the challenge of giving up personal hope and just having Faith – something that'll hit most of us at one time or another."

Asked about being compared to best-selling author Jodi

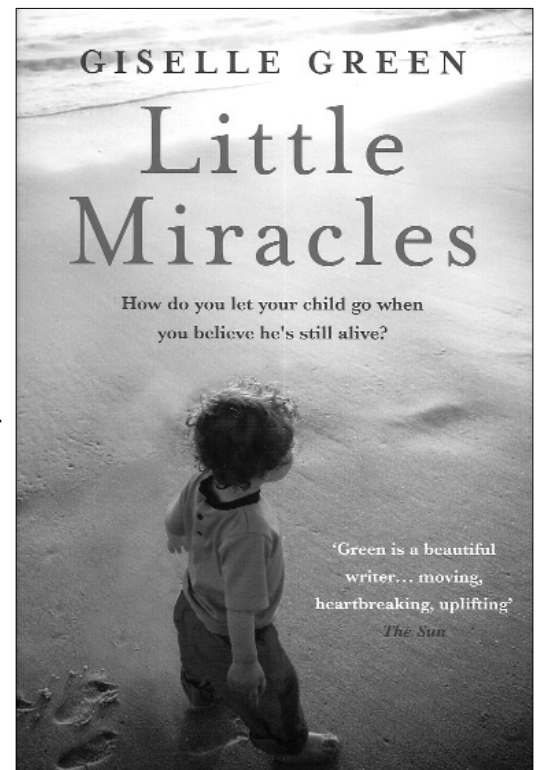


Picoult she smiles, "well I'd certainly like to be as best-selling as she is! Seriously, I feel we have very different writing styles, different voices altogether, but the comparison is referring to the fact that we both tackle the 'moral dilemma' sides of life.

"Once you get into a character's depth and back-story you see that very few things are cleanly black and white, even when they do things that are clearly wrong. A strong motivation revealed in the back-story will never make a 'wrong' action 'right' – it just shows where people's values and choices come from and how that affects their decisions."

She is radiant about the fact that she has had a second book published!

"Now that it's a finished product I love it! There were plenty of moments when I was actually writing it that I didn't love it, because it felt like such a huge undertaking. "Emotionally, it was quite draining and exhausting as you've got to get into your character's heads and hearts – if they're going through hell, you will too! Having said that it is extremely satisfying to write a scene that does exactly what you want it to do – that's a wonderful



feeling!"

Talking in general terms on being a published author she says - "it's only worth writing what's in your heart to write. No point in trying to follow a trend or chase the market – unless the current trend happens to reflect what you love doing.

"Why do I say this? Because it takes such a lot of hard graft and time and effort to write a novel. You have to get some satisfaction out of the actual process. I also believe you have a better chance of getting published if you write what YOU want – because that'll be your own voice shining through, and that's what gets noticed."

•*Little Miracles* is published by HarperCollins Publisher for its Avon division.