

No limits to Skye's determination

Pahiatua author releases first novel, *Shooting Stars*

Leanne Warr

Skye Bothma recalls writing a book of stories for her mum when she was very young. She was only seven or eight years old and her yarns all ended up the same way, with the characters going to bed.

But the idea of being a writer stuck with her, and the Pahiatua author has just released her first novel, *Shooting Stars*.

It's the story of a woman who has felt invisible most of her life and meets a man while on a tropical holiday who turns out to be a Hollywood actor.

"She's modelled on me; pretty unsuccessful, underachiever, a bit clumsy.

"I've always had this fantasy of my favourite movie star suddenly seeing me."

Skye says the novel started off as a little kernel of an idea, and she began adding to it.

On the surface, it seems to be a normal romance, but there's far more to it than that.

"They meet, and then they start to realise they've got more in common than they think."

Skye says she wanted to avoid it being a cliché type of story and added layers to it where everything seems

to be going great, then it falls apart.

"I didn't want the girl to get everything she ever dreamed of and it's all easy-peasy."

Some of what happens in the story is drawn from real life, such as the actor's difficulties with being harassed by members of the public.

"Very often you see these movies where the girl meets the Hollywood

star and everything's perfect in his life, and I wanted to show things that were not so perfect."

She found an essay written by an actor that discussed those issues, which helped her explore the theme of "actually seeing people".

"She feels like nobody sees her and he feels like nobody sees him either."

Skye, who came to New Zealand from South Africa about 20 years ago,

has worked in a variety of roles, including as a secretary and a receptionist, as well as working in online media.

It was when she experienced some health issues and ended up on a benefit that she found the time to work on the novel.

"I've always wanted to write. I always knew even when I was in my teens, daydreaming of the day that

I'd write a book."

She says she doubted she would ever be able to really do so unless she could do it fulltime.

It took her about six years "on and off" to write the novel.

"Six years and I've done it. I still can't quite believe it."

Skye made the decision to publish the novel herself, under her own imprint.

"One is very critical of one's own work, and I was sort of thinking, 'I don't think I'd get a contract anywhere else'."

She saw an advertisement on social media by another New Zealand author, asked him about his publisher and was told he'd done it himself.

Thanks to a course at Whitireia, she had already learned how to and has software on her computer that helps with the layout and typesetting.

She says the course is "the best thing I ever did".

"Because it teaches not just about the writing and editing, but [also] about production and marketing and all the rest of that."

While doing the course, however, she felt there wasn't much chance of being published because she wanted to write stories that "I want to write, whereas they were teaching 'this is what sells'."

She says for a long time she didn't think about writing again, but when independent publishing and authors publishing themselves became more accepted, she felt there was a chance.

"And there's actually a lot of people out there who are wanting to read non-mainstream books' because it's something different."

i Skye's book is available as a paperback and e-book through her website: <http://www.roadlesstravelled.nz/>



Skye Bothma in her home office, where she worked on publishing her first novel.