

AUTHOR Q&A WITH DEBBIE HOWELLS:

1. When did you start writing?

I began writing in earnest about five years ago, women's fiction which was what I liked to read. But I also wanted to write books that addressed more serious real-life issues as well. I think with *Wildflowers* I achieved that. It's had some wonderful reviews on Amazon, but though 6 agents asked to read the full manuscript, no-one actually took me on.

2. *The Bones of You* is a change of genre. How did you come to write it?

I'd put everything I had into *Wildflowers* and it came so close, but not close enough. I knew then I had to write something different. Everyone says, write about what you know about. I think that's true, but I think also, you have to appeal to the market. That said, I don't think it's possible to write without your heart one hundred per cent in it.

3. Were you surprised with the reaction you got from agents and publishers?

Completely blown away! It was beyond my wildest dreams. There are phone calls and emails from that time that I will never, ever forget. When you've worked so hard for so long, battled rejection but kept going anyway, to reach the point where I'm being published is something I'm so excited about – and enormously grateful for.

4. What advice do you have for other writers?

There are so many brilliant, unpublished writers out there. Finding an agent and a publisher mean you have to write a good book, but it takes luck, too - in spades - to hit the right person with the right idea when the market's right... It's also a massively subjective industry. What one person loves, another wouldn't give the time of day to. And no-one can predict tomorrow's bestsellers.

If you can't find an agent to take you on, consider self-publishing. A number of authors have had huge success this way and in any case, you learn from it. Then keep writing – the next book, the one after. If you don't, you'll never know...

5. Have you written your next book?

I finished it just before Christmas. It's another psychological thriller about not just what we hide from other people, but from ourselves, too. It's about a washed-up lawyer and a woman he used to love, who's suspected of a murder. He's determined to prove her innocence but an overdose has left her in a coma.

As well as a thriller, it's also a love story.