

Inspiration, *Never Let Her Go*

When I started writing my sixth book I had a completely different premise. The initial concept was born from a nightmare I had about a home invasion. I decided to write the story from multiple perspectives, but I began to have doubts. I wasn't feeling an emotional connection to any of the characters. I thought I was just second-guessing myself and pressed onward. After nine months, I sent the draft to my editor, who confirmed my fears—the story was not coming together. We had a few conversations about ways to fix it, but I felt in my stomach that it was the wrong premise. First person perspectives seem to be the best way for me to connect with my characters, otherwise it's as though I am seeing the story and not experiencing it. That doesn't mean I won't try other things in the future, but I knew that with this book I needed to find a story that I felt more in touch with so I could write from a more authentic place.

My editor and I had a couple of discussions, brainstorming various approaches, and Lindsey was born. The premise started with the concept of a woman, a house cleaner, finding something when she was working. That led to questions: What did she find? Who would have left it? Why did they want to scare her? I hadn't written a book about domestic violence yet, though it had touched my own life, and this felt like the right time for me to dig into those memories. My father was abusive, and though Lindsey had a different story, I knew I could channel my personal feelings and experiences. I also researched domestic violence and spoke at length with a friend who is a therapist. Sadly, many people are still struggling to break free from abusive relationships and it's a horrific fact that they often turn deadly.

I decided to tell the story from two perspectives. Lindsey, and her teenaged daughter, Sophie. There were a couple of reasons for this. One, it adds to the suspense when we can see that they don't know everything about each other. Two, I wanted to show Sophie's side of the story. How she was missing her father, how she wanted to reach out to him, not realizing that this would put her mother in danger again. I liked writing about the relationship between Lindsey and her daughter, the little moments that makes up their lives together, their bond and deep love. While I was writing about them, I was writing for my own daughter, hoping that one day she would read my book and know that I was thinking of her, hoping that she knows whatever mistakes I made, I tried my best and she was always in my heart.

None of my books have come easy, but some have been harder than others—and this one was definitely challenging. First, having to throw out nine months of work, and then trying to finish the new concept while my daughter started preschool and had just about every illness possible. Of course I caught them all too. I finished the final rewrites while staying at a hotel room, so that I could work from the minute I woke up to when I finally collapsed into bed late at night. At the time, I was battling a terrible head cold, looked like a diseased kitten, and was living on cold medications and comfort food (Chinese food, ice cream, chocolate bars, and room service) Meanwhile, my husband and daughter were also sick at home. I felt terrible that I wasn't there for them, but I had to finish the book—and it needed to be perfect.

I worked until the very last minute of my deadline, emailed it to my editor, and fled the hotel room, blinking at the bright light of day like a mole (or Golem). The book was done.

