



Q&A INTERVIEW WITH GLENDA MILLARD

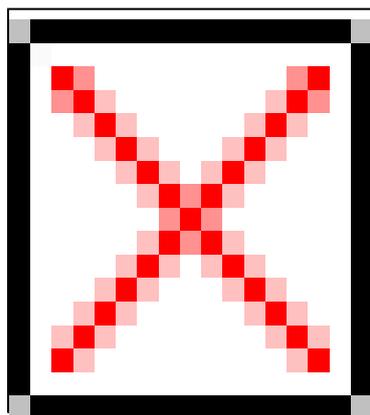
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The author answers questions on **The Stars at Oktober Bend**



Prize-winning Australian author Glenda Millard, best known in the UK for [The Kingdom of Silk](#) [3] series and [A Small Free Kiss in the Dark](#) [4] talks about her new novel [The Stars at Oktober Bend](#) [5].

What was the inspiration for *The Stars at Oktober Bend*? Where did it start?

The seed from which this story grew was an article in a newspaper about a young girl who had successfully completed her schooling and won a scholarship to a prestigious conservatorium of music. What made the story stand out, was that this girl was homeless.

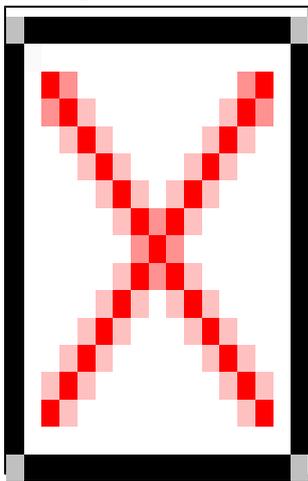
Based on the premise of this article, I began writing **The Stars at Oktober Bend** with the idea of creating a main character with a disadvantaged background who had enough self-belief to beat the odds. Initially I thought that Alice would be gifted with song, but then my daughter began to study for her Masters in Speech Pathology and I became interested in what she told me about speech disorders caused by trauma. The idea of writing a character who was deprived of, or prevented from, self-expression as a result of an acquired brain injury proved irresistible to me.

Alice uses verse to consider the things she can't say. What was it like to write a novel part in prose and part in verse?

In some ways it was as though Alice and I were both telling the story. I allowed Alice her own form of expression, the poetic, while my prose was more the narrative which melded our individual strands together.

Would you ever consider writing a novel completely in blank verse?

Writing a verse novel would require great discipline and meticulous care in selecting words which express the intended



message succinctly. Along with novels, I also write picture books which, I believe, have certain similarities to poetry because of the need to omit superfluous words. For me writing books is not simply about telling a story - I actually enjoy manipulating language and words and paring the narrative back. So I suppose that my answer to your question is, yes, I think I could see myself writing a verse novel.

The Stars at Oktober Bend

is about a family tragedy as well as a personal story. How important in your writing are families?

Family is a common theme in most of my books - family in all its many and various forms including community. A sense of belonging is important to me and, I believe, to most of us, particularly to young people.

Setting and landscape, wildlife, are integral to the story too. Is that something you were conscious of when writing the book?

Yes, I was very conscious of setting throughout. Oktober Bend closely resembles the small town where I was born and lived for many years. So I am familiar with the local flora, fauna and weather patterns and I have an insider's understanding of the way small towns work.

Despite the terrible things that have happened, *The Stars at Oktober Bend* ends on a note of hope. Was that important to you?

Absolutely. Hope is an essential ingredient to wellbeing, to life.

[The Stars at Oktober Bend](#) [5] is published by Old Barn Books, £7.99 pbk.

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