



Giselle Green on a romantic road trip to 'Where the magic is'

by Alice Mascarenhas

Gibraltarian author Giselle Green has just completed and published her latest novel 'Where the magic is'. An award-winning and internationally published author, Giselle's debut novel 'Pandora's Box' won the Romantic Novelists' Association New Writers Award and her 6th novel, 'Dear Dad' was shortlisted for the RNA Romantic Novel of the Year. This is her eighth novel which again deals with family and relationships – it is a book full of emotion about home and belonging with three main voices – Sofia, Cal and Sofia's 13-year-old daughter Ida – piecing the story together from different perspectives.

In this new work the author explores what it is that makes a house a home. What it is that makes us feel we belong in one place, and our connection with some people and not with others. She also explores what happens when the assumptions we make around all of these things are shaken loose and begin to collapse around us.

But the answer, Giselle says, lies in unexpected places and you soon realise this is also a story of that recurring theme in all her books – a story of hope.

She describes 'Where the magic is' as a novel which takes the shape of a road-trip, bringing soon-to-be-married Sofia, and her twelve-year-old daughter Ida, from Rio to the Highlands of Scotland.

Learning that she's tragically losing her eye-sight, young Ida's looking for her courage: she's set her heart on following the trail of Scotland's national hero, William Wallace. The story centres around their mission to undertake a poignant now-or-never 'memory-trip.' However, when their

original tour-guide is obliged to bow out, events take an unexpected turn as handsome Scot Callum McGregor steps in to help out a friend. He's entertaining and fun. He's hot! With her possessive and uptight fiancé in mind, Sofia's hesitant. But, when Cal promises Ida he'll take her to a special location where she can discover a little of 'The true magic of the Highlands,' she's immediately smitten.

Now that this book is in the public domain, Giselle says, she has now dedicated one to each member of her family.

"I'm happy to have gotten here."

Her latest book is dedicated to her mother Yolanda.

"This story is for my mum Yolanda, yes. She's a Gibraltarian who lived in the UK but she returned home to Gibraltar with her children in 1968. Mum lived at her home in the town for many years, but the pandemic saw her moving out. For her, as for so many people – especially elderly folk – things couldn't go back to normal, after that. She couldn't go back. Her home was once also my home. There are echoes of poignancy in all the memories that are still there," she says.

The idea of home and belonging, she continues, came to her in a rather strange way. In a semi-meditative state, she had become aware of an elderly lady who knew she would never again be able to go back home. Giselle explains how she was grieving the loss of her home deeply, and she could feel her sadness though she knew nothing else about her.

"That feeling stuck with me. I began to explore the topic of 'home' as a potential start-point for my next book. Everywhere you search for the topic of home, people will say, it is where they feel

they belong... That feels like a wonderful thing, right? We take this statement for granted but, when you drill down, what actually is belonging? What does it mean and what might it cost? We don't have to look too hard for the answer: over the last two years of covid restrictions we've heard about many instances of friends and family members falling out over their differing stance. We don't always agree with people, even the people we love the most.

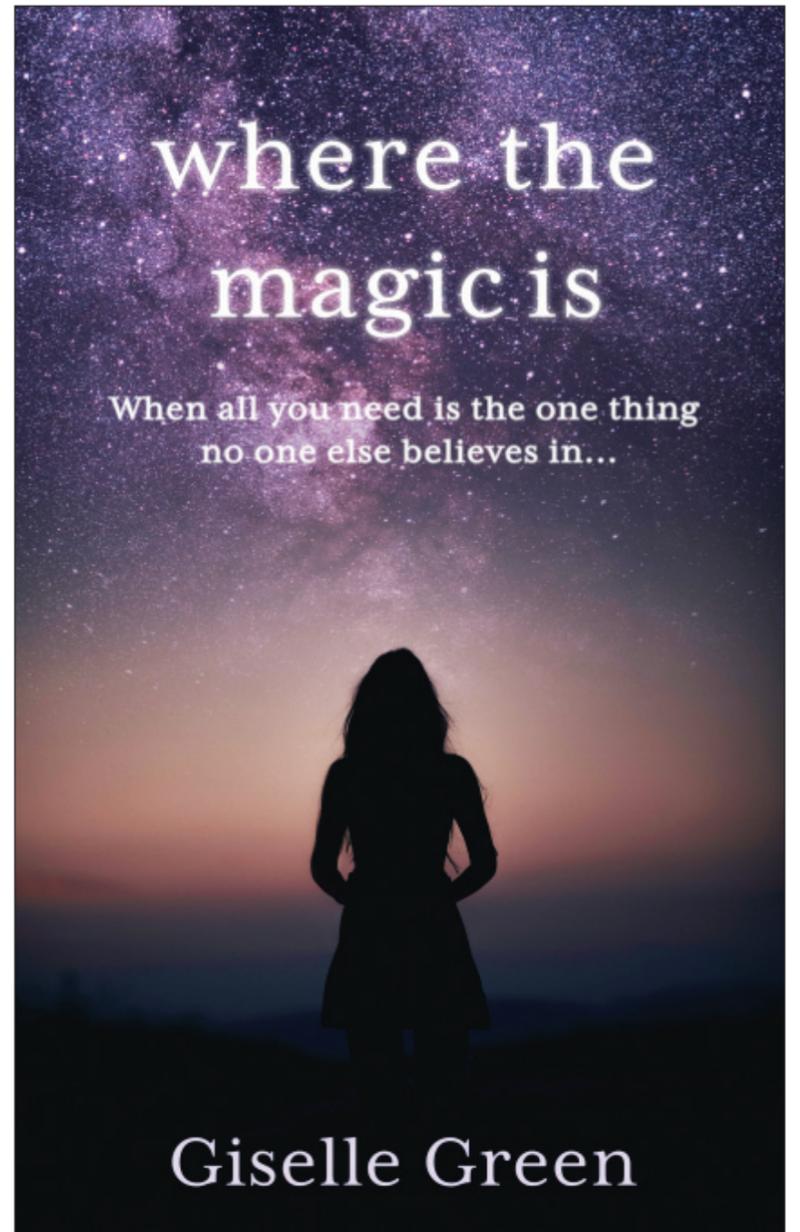
"As a storyteller, my mind always goes to the highest-stakes scenario. I asked the question; what if the group my heroine is at odds with happens to be her own family? What if the disagreement between them has grown to the point where she needs to make a very painful choice? I wanted to explore that. So, I created some characters who represented both ends of that spectrum. Sofia's well-ensconced in her close family group and can't imagine life without them: Cal, on the other hand, has been hurt and he's given up on the notion of family life. They've both got things to learn from each other."

Giselle further adds that we usually take the phrase 'Home is where the Heart is' to mean that if we are with the right person we will feel at home. But, she points out, this may also imply that we need to feel at home within ourselves.

"It's not simply a physical location, even though we mostly put it on that. My characters discover that home can potentially be anywhere, and that is wherever you feel it to be," she concludes.

Her words of nostalgia and poignancy also ring true in this novel.

"Nostalgia is when we look back at a place or set of circumstances and colour it on with the rosy hue of how we



used to feel... even if it doesn't bear any semblance to how things currently are. In the story, Cal feels nostalgic going back to his former home in the Scottish Highlands. Part of his heart still longs for the connection he once had; part of him knows it's nothing but sentimentality. It's a relatable position.

"Many people might be feeling nostalgic when they remember how life used to be prior to the chaos of the last couple of years. Especially when all around us still feels so unstable and uncertain, we long for the familiar and the predictable, and a place where we'll feel safe. In the story, Cal has to go back to see his old world with new eyes. The story is poignant, as in, bittersweet, because there's always a little part of ourselves that we leave behind whenever we say goodbye to something that once meant a lot to us. This echoes Sofia's journey."

So, is the latest book her favourite?

"My favourite book is usually my latest, probably because the characters are like new friends I've just met. As usual, I didn't want to let these three go. There are other stories of mine that I love for different reasons but each book takes me somewhere new. I particularly enjoyed writing the beautiful and evocative Scottish Highlands landscape for 'Where the Magic Is'. In fact, I'm off to visit Scotland soon..."

I want to know if she believes that everyone is looking for a little magic? If her latest book is a reflection of time after covid?

"I think it's true that most of us are looking for a little magic in our lives. Maybe we're looking for a spark that will alleviate the hum-drum, or perhaps we're looking for something that will bring deeper meaning to our everyday lives. I think this need in people to reach out for something beyond the ordinary is something that's always held true. In a time when people have become more secular and religious practice may no longer fulfill that need, the need hasn't gone away, it's just been pushed underground. After the last two years of covid which has seen many people's lives put on hold and has dashed so many hopes and dreams along the way, it is perhaps truer than ever."

Giselle points out this is part of the reason she enjoys writing children into her stories.

"They're at the stage where they haven't forgotten how to wonder; they can still be amazed and amused at the small and the everyday and the ordinary. They can still remember how to dream and how to hope. That was Ida's function in this story. The child that's still inside each of us is what we connect with when we allow ourselves to feel a little magic. It's very powerful."

So, where to next?

"I don't know yet," she replies.

"I'll wait to see what inspires me most."

'Where the Magic Is' by Giselle Green is available on kindle and on paperback from Amazon.