



THE WORDSMITH

With her second novel out this month, Polly Samson talks the highs of writing, Pink Floyd lyrics and her beloved dog

Tell us about your new novel *The Kindness*.

It's a novel about a 'kindness' that is done to a young man called Julian. But this kindness that Julian unwittingly accepts has heartbreaking consequences.

Where did the idea come from?

A similar act was done to my great uncle Heino. Sadly, it was something he couldn't recover from and he ended up taking his own life when I was 11. The novel has a happier ending, though, as his story was just the germ of the idea.

This is only your second novel and 15 years after your first...

It was much harder this time around. I wrote my first novel in a frenzied six-week burst, because I wanted to finish it before my first book of short stories came out. But *The Kindness* took four years and many drafts before I was happy.

Do you ever show anyone your work?

I can't write without reading aloud. I read everything I write to David [Gilmour, Samson's husband and Pink Floyd-er] who gets to know the material so well he becomes like its co-parent. The 'showing' bit is hard because it feels like kicking it out of the nest.

You've penned lyrics for Pink Floyd, written short stories and novels – what comes most naturally?

I know whatever I'm currently working on comes *least* easily!

So what's the hardest part?

Clipping on my Crampons to climb those steep stairs to my writing room at the top of the house.

But you must love it?

There's no high like writing going well, when my fingers can't type fast enough and time stops existing.

What inspires you?

Odd snippets and glances. *The Kindness* was inspired by my uncle's suicide, a children's show, a Twitter comment on the weight of a hawk on an arm – many things! And the most recent lyric [for Pink Floyd], *Louder Than Words*, was inspired by the awkward social interactions of a band who actually speak so fluidly with music.

Who's your greatest role model?

My friend, the writer Damian Barr. When my confidence flags, I have to get in touch with my inner Damian or, more often than not, the actual Damian. He's the most positive person I've ever met.

Finally, what's your best thing in life?

Please don't tell my husband or children, but it's the dog.

The Kindness (Bloomsbury, £12.99; out March 12th)