

The Crime Cafe with Lucy Clarke

Presented By:



Debbi (01:46): Hi everyone. Our guest today is the author of seven psychological thrillers. One of them THE BLUE is currently being made into a seven-part TV series on Paramount+. Her latest novel is ONE OF THE GIRLS. I'm so pleased to have with me today. Lucy Clarke. Hi Lucy. Thanks for being here.

Lucy (02:09): Thank you for having me. It's wonderful. And this is my publication day itself for ONE OF THE GIRLS. So it's extra special to be talking to you today.

Debbi (02:19): It's extra special to have you on. Thank you. I was just looking over your books and based on their descriptions, I had to think it's a sub genre called things that can go way wrong on your vacation. <Laugh>

Lucy (02:33): <Laugh> I think that is about right. <Laugh>

Debbi (02:39): Yes. You focus a lot on travel. Do you travel a lot?

Lucy (02:44): I do. I love to travel. Before I had children, I spent the 10 winters abroad traveling all over the world in Australia and Canada and around Europe. Yeah, and I just find it really something that I loved on a personal level and I find it really brilliant for writing as well. And I set all of my books in typically sort of exotic locations or just somewhere, yeah. Somewhere where I take my characters outta their ordinary lives at home. And I am interested to, by displacing them somewhere else, how that new place affects them and whether they flourish or founder. And that's one of the questions I, I like to explore and ask in, in my writing,

Debbi (03:38): That's a great way of looking at the storytelling taking them out of their ordinary lives. And it's the second time in two weeks that I've heard a person describe their writing as taking people, putting people in extraordinary circumstances.

Lucy (03:55): Great.

Debbi (03:55): So, right. So that's kind of an interesting thread that kind of ran through both interviews that I just did anyway. <laugh>

Lucy (04:07): I feel like, you know, we all think we know our ourselves very well, but if you are tested, if you are put in those extraordinary circumstances, I'm really interested to see how people react and, and would you react in the way you might imagine? And I think that makes really interesting fiction as well as reality. And so I think using place as a tool for being instrumental in those extraordinary circumstances can be sort of a helpful way into exploring that.

Debbi (04:37): That's a great insight. Thanks. Tell us a little about your latest book. What is it about and who is it about <laugh>?

Lucy (04:46): Okay, well, I have it here. ONE OF THE GIRLS.

Debbi (04:49): Beautiful cover.

Lucy (04:51): Thank you. I really love, I really love the cover. They've done a fabulous job at Putnam. So the premise in simple is six British women go to a beautiful Greek island for a long

weekend to celebrate Lexi who is getting married and in England, do we call it hen weekend? And I believe in the US, it's bachelorette party and they arrive in Greece, six, very different women, all from facets of Lexi's life that reflect different parts of who she is now. And some know each other. Some don't. The stage is sort of set for this beautiful weekend away, except we know very early on that there's going to be a death and we don't know who is going to be, and we don't know who is going to be the killer, except that is one of the women. So that is the premise. So it's sun-soaked menace.

Debbi ([05:55](#)): I've started it. And I love it's told from differing perspectives and it's very intriguing and very compelling reading from the start.

Lucy ([06:05](#)): Thank you. I think having the multiple viewpoints of the six women is just a really good way to kind of dive deep, straight into their psychology and their inner worlds. So that you don't know, it's not that you don't know who to trust because I think in a way the women are hopefully likable, but flawed and messy. And parts of them, of course, you don't like, but I think the multiple viewpoints just gives that equal balance to the story. And so we're kind of left questioning the whole time, you know, who, why, what happened? So as one question is answered, another is asked

Debbi ([06:46](#)): You must work a lot on the backstories of each of the characters before you start writing.

Lucy ([06:52](#)): I do typically in most books, I normally have character biographies. With ONE OF THE GIRLS, I had a really crazy writing experience, which I've never had before. Which I'll tell you about, because it was been very unusual for me. I'm, I'm a plotter typically. So a novel would take me typically 18 months to write and I would plot it out and plan it for maybe three months and then start writing and layering in later drafts. With ONE OF THE GIRLS, I actually wrote this novel during our first lockdown in the UK. And I found what was going on globally, really overwhelming, like so many people. So I decided to come off social media and stop listening and watching the news cause I found it too much. And I thought, you know, in terms of like my writing, where do I, where do I want to be?

Cuz this world is really scary. And I decided I wanted to be in Greece with six girlfriends, even though I'm locked down in my house, that's where I'm gonna travel to in my head. So I planned the novel for two days. I decided Greece, six women, a hen weekend, four nights, let's go. And I stepped into the first character's voices knowing very little about the, that it was Lexi. She used to be a dancer and now she's a yoga teacher. Let's see what happens. And I began writing and I wrote a first draft of ONE OF THE GIRLS in 17 days and a normal novel would take me eight months to do a first draft of, and the words just came fast and fluid and without character biographies. And I felt like at the end of that draft, I knew those characters far better than I would know, characters a year in, in other novels I've written. It was just a really crazy experience for me and, and easily the most joyful writing experience I ever had.

Debbi ([08:45](#)): And isn't it interesting that it took place when you were not paying attention to social media or the news?

Lucy ([08:51](#)): Exactly. Yeah. And I wasn't on WhatsApp. I just closed everything out apart from just like I have two young children and a husband and we are in our house together and I only had the mornings to write cuz then I was homeschooling in the afternoons, but just that light

going inward closing out the noise and distractions was was amazing, amazing in terms of like my productivity. So, and I tried to recreate it since. I failed miserably. I thought like, this is it. I have like found the money ticket to writing a book. You know, this is the way tried to sort of recreate the conditions in a non pandemic sense, but by closing off social media and, and emails and stuff, but just couldn't quite access it in the same way. So I don't know if it was the story or if it was the pandemic or whatever it was, but something, something worked <laugh>

Debbi ([09:44](#)): Well, that's extremely interesting. Good to know. Thanks. And congratulations, by the way on having your book made into a series. How did that come about? Was, did someone contact your agent or did your agent contact someone <laugh>?

Lucy ([10:00](#)): So this is just, I'm so happy to talk about this because it's the most exciting thing that's happened in my writing career. My third novel, THE BLUE, was I have a TV and film agent. So all of my books will go out on sort of, not necessarily on submission, but they're out there in the world. And if anyone's interested in them, they'll contact my TV agent. Or she would put it out on a formal submission anyway, a producer read THE BLUE maybe two years after it was published? Someone pressed it into her hands and said, this will make a brilliant, you know, series. And this producer read it, forgot about it. Didn't didn't call me until six months later. And a second person came to her and said, I've got a book that would make a brilliant series. And she thought, okay, I've had two people say this, I must read the book, read it, called my TV agent and said, yeah, we'd like to option it.

That was four years ago. So when a book gets optioned it is a very long process to it getting made. And for people who like me didn't know anything about that process, option is where a production company comes to you and says, we want to make this book into a series or a film. But no one else can, during this time we've got an 18 month license to do that. And in that time, the hope is they would find a broadcaster who would then fund the development of the project. And I was very lucky that it actually went all the way to being the final stage, which is greenlit for shooting, which is where you get the funding. And Paramount+ are producing this as a sort of broadcaster. So I got to do like basically the, the best two weeks of my life.

In April, I flew out with my family to Thailand to go on set of THE BLUE, which is being filmed out there over six months. It's set on a yacht and the, the premise is a group of travelers board, this yacht. It's almost like a hippie commune of people traveling around by sea and everything seems, you know, wonderful until they go on a passage and, and someone disappears overboard. And it's a question of, you know, is it murder? Was it man overboard? What, what happened? So yes, I went over to Thailand to watch it being filmed and it was just incredible to see it and to, you know, to be there, to see the yacht that I had imagined in my head. Yeah, so it's, it's been a real highlight and I think it comes out next year, so I can't wait to see it.

Debbi ([12:45](#)): It's an amazing process. That whole thing, all the stuff that goes before, the actual making of a television show or movie is astonishing.

Lucy ([12:57](#)): It move my mind actually, because when I was out there you know, I started that book, me and a journal and a pencil, and I spent a month, the novel is actually set in the Philippines, but they're filming in Thailand and I spent well, six weeks traveling around, just writing and then to see it four years on as a, as a series. And there was on my first day on set, then 250 people on set to bring it together from, you know, not just the people filming, but the

catering staff, the actors, the transport team producers, I, I was just blown away, just sat behind the director on their headset, like looking around this whole big sort of surface of people thinking I cannot believe this is like my book. I can't believe it. <Laugh> so it was really, it was really magical. And I, as you can tell, I haven't kind of like come quite back down to earth yet. <Laugh>

Debbi ([13:54](#)): Well, it's, it's a wonderful feeling. You should enjoy it. <Laugh> Let's see. What authors do you like to read?

Lucy ([14:04](#)): I read all types of fiction. I love psychological thrillers favorites in that genre. I love Jane Harper and Sarah Pearse, Claire McIntosh and Gillian McAllister some, some brilliant psychological thriller writers, but I also love really well written women's fiction. Like, I mean, as we all know, THE CRAWDADS, you know, books like that are so beautiful and Rosie Walsh's latest book, which has just come out in the states and THE LOVE OF MY LIFE, I thought was wonderful. I love Tim Winter and Maggie O'Farrell, two literary writers. Yeah, I read widely and passionately and lots. So I love talking about other people's books.

Debbi ([14:48](#)): <Laugh> Awesome. What, how do you decide what story ideas to pursue?

Lucy ([14:56](#)): Mm, that is a good question because I typically, when I'm approaching my next book, I normally will submit to my agent and editor at the same time between four and six ideas, just a paragraph on each, or maybe literally like two or three lines on each and say, look, these are the ideas I'm, I'm playing with. I'm interested in, what do you think? And then we normally have a discussion about what could work and, and go from there. So I suppose for me, the only ideas that I submit are things that I know I am passionate enough about to be spending the next year on, because I've made that mistake before with, with one book that I was a bit more, slightly more market led and the book did very well, but I didn't enjoy the writing process of it. And I think it's just so key to enjoy the process. And the only way that I know how to do that is to pick a topic, a location, a characters that I am genuinely like excited each day to get to my desk and write about

Debbi ([16:02](#)): Absolutely. I mean, if you're not enjoying it, it's, it's just gonna be torture <laugh>.

Lucy ([16:07](#)): Exactly. Yeah.

Debbi ([16:09](#)): Yeah. how do you handle marketing apart from doing interviews like this? <laugh>

Lucy ([16:15](#)): Yeah, so today I have 13 interviews on podcasts, live TV, radio. And it's funny because I'm here in my home office. And of course I do live events as well in the UK, which I enjoy. I am quite a sociable person, so I actually find the marketing side of it in the publicity tours, quite pleasurable because I'm quite happy after the isolation of being solo in my room to, to go out and meet people. But it can also be, you know, such a gear change for me yesterday. I worked for like eight hours without speaking to anyone on my own without seeing another individual. And today I'm speaking for eight hours to, you know, everyone all over the world. So I think you have to have two sort of faces and, and that is part of the sort of strangeness I think of being an author is those quiet ties. And then the times when they're like off you go, go and be lively and bubbly. But luckily I do, I do enjoy the lively part as well. And I know some authors don't and I feel that's really hard because it is both parts of the job. Actually. You can't kind of just get away with doing one or the other. It is, it's a, it's both <laugh>.

Debbi ([17:39](#)): Yes, yes. What advice would you give to someone who would like to write for a living?

Lucy ([17:47](#)): It's a, it's a difficult thing to answer because everyone's experience of writing and what they want from it is so different. When I was struggling to get published, it took me five years to get published. I wrote my first book and it was rejected. I had a little agent, but it was rejected by publishers. And I remember being absolutely bereft. It taken two and a half years to write. I thought I, it would get published cause I had a great agent. And when it didn't, I thought, oh, my agent will probably drop me and you know, that's it, the big dream is over. And I said to her, you know, what, what do I do now? Thinking like that was, it I'd have my shot. And she said, well, you just take a deep breath and then you write your next one.

As if it was the simplest thing in the world, but she was so right, because actually once you shift that lens of thinking, if my book doesn't get published, I'm not a writer. And I shifted it to think, I love writing and I'm gonna carry on writing for as long as I enjoy it. And that was what changed it for me. So I made that decision that if I didn't get my second book published or my third or my fourth or my fifth, I would carry on for as long as I enjoyed it. And then it just took the pressure off me. So that's probably my advice.

Debbi ([19:05](#)): Yeah. That's great advice. Absolutely. is there anything else you'd like to add before we finish up?

Lucy ([19:14](#)): No, nothing off the top of my head, but it's been lovely to be here and chat books and chat ONE OF THE GIRLS.

Debbi ([19:21](#)): Well, I gotta tell you it's been great meeting you and talking to you cuz I love what you got to say.

Lucy ([19:27](#)): Oh, thank you so much.

Debbi ([19:29](#)): <Laugh> It's my pleasure. And so do all you listeners please, if you enjoyed the this episode, please leave the review. They help. And if you really love the podcast, consider supporting us on Patreon. We have bonus episodes, excerpts for my work, all sorts of stuff to offer in any case. Thanks so much for listening and until next time happy reading.