

## Kirsty Logan on writing *The Gracekeepers*

### **Tell us about *The Gracekeepers***

*The Gracekeepers* is a novel about two women trying to make a real home in a difficult world. It has themes of non-traditional family, love, belonging, autonomy, home, and hunger (both physical and emotional).

### **What led to the writing of this book?**

I wrote the book a few years after my father died very suddenly at the age of 58. After he died, I felt so lost, and I just wanted someone to tell me what to do. I envied religions and societies with a formalised grieving procedure, such as Catholicism or Victorian mourning rituals. I wanted a list of steps to follow; a time when my grieving would be over. I know now that grief doesn't work that way – that it can't fit into a series of steps, that it's different for everyone, and that it's not just a stage you go through and then it's over.

### **Tell us about the role of the sea in your novel**

I've always associated my dad with water and the sea. He was born on the small Scottish island of Bute. When I was a child he had a small sailboat called *First Symphony* on Lake Windermere, and used to take me out sailing. After he died, my mother and brother and I scattered his ashes on the beach at Culzean Castle, which looks out on Bute. Now every time I'm by the sea, I feel that I'm with my dad.

I was out on a boat with my uncle, and on the water I saw floating lights in cages. They looked like birdcages, and I started to wonder why there would be birdcages at sea. The idea of the graces appeared in my head, and the whole novel began from there.

### **Where did you write *The Gracekeepers*?**

The Scottish landscape was a huge influence on the world of *The Gracekeepers*. Much of the book was written on writing retreats around Scotland. The first chapters were written by the sea: first at Belhaven ('biel' means 'shelter' in Gaelic), and then at the fishing village Cellardyke. While there I bought an antique brass compass, which I then developed a writing superstition about: every morning before beginning my writing, I had to make sure the compass pointed north.