

Team Dream Launch

NSW Writer's Centre, July 2005

On the 11th of April 2000, I sent the manuscript of Team Dream to 5 large trade publishers in Australia, along with the manuscript for what was to become So Gross! as well as a few chapters of a young adult novel. On July 20th I received a letter from Pan Macmillan asking to see the completed manuscript of my YA novel. The next day, on July 21 I received a phone-call from Lisa Berryman at HarperCollins expressing interest in both So Gross! and Team Dream.

Many of you will have read the article in Newswrite that sung the praises of Stephen Measday, an inspirational mentor and friend. When I languished in moods of melancholy Stephen would slap a Post-It note saying, 'What about the rugby!' After working away with Stephen on the 20th of September 2000, what should have been Reject No's 126 and 127 were accepted for publication with HarperCollins.

J.A. Mawter was launched. Five years later, I am standing here before you, book in hand, after a saga that read like a Maeve Binchy novel.

Early on in my career, it had become a standing joke in my writer's group that every time I had a manuscript accepted for publication the publishing house would close its doors. First it was Axiom Publishers, then Crawford House Publishing. It is with deep sadness, that Otford Press is yet another one to add to the pile. I owe a lot to Otford Press and to the people who worked there and I'm sorry they can't be here today: 1) James Herd, a visionary who was doing a wonderful job of building the Banana Books imprint, 2) Sue Whiting, freelance editor; 3) Wendy Blaxland, freelance editor and 4) Jude Jones, Marketing and Publicity. Without them Team Dream would not have been published. I thank them from the bottom of my heart.

Team Dream is a testimony to the persistence, perseverance and pig-headedness that is required of a writer. After acceptance by HarperCollins Team Dream languished there for over two years before it was pitched to the Acquisitions team. Many of you will have experienced the gladiatorial thumbs up/thumbs down decision of an acquisitions team and Team Dream was no exception. Despite the fact that no-one in marketing, sales, rights etc had read the manuscript it was decided, based on the Australian Bureau of Statistics, that the book would sell better as an AFL novel, and how would I feel about re-writing it?! After one month of research I decided the two codes

of football were completely different and it could not be done. 'Leave it with me,' said Lisa and it gathered dust for many more months.

At the insistence of my youngest daughter Tulli, who happens to be on the cover, I prised my manuscript back and started putting it out to publishers again. More rejects. I didn't realise how much my life as an author, my struggles as an author, affected my family till I realised Tulli was crying with the rejection letters, not I. There was a time when the kids would come home from school and instead of asking, 'How was your day, Mum?' they'd ask, 'How many rejection letters did you get today, Mum?' As an author who is also a parent, it's been invaluable for the kids to see me try, to struggle, to fail over and over again, only to succeed. For all you who are parents who have yet to be published, this is the legacy you leave behind.

I would also like to thank Nick Farr-Jones who term in term out, year in, year out stood on the sidelines of hockey courts and netball courts and tennis courts, watching his daughter Jess and my daughter Tull and listening to the saga of Team Dream. Nick has generously agreed to endorse the book. To the umpteenth question, 'Is Team Dream going to be published?' the answer is, 'Yes, Nick. It finally is.'

And lastly, a writer's life is a rocky one, with some incredible highs but many dips and lows and I could not have survived it without the love and support of my family and friends. To fellow writer's Sue Murray, Pauline O'Carolan, Anne Melano, Alan Mills, four of the original gang-of-nine without whom I would never stuck at being a writer. To the Hughenden mob, Susanne Gervay, Moya Simons, Flick Pullman, Vashti Farrer and many others. To my kids Hugh, Shevaughn and Tulli; my husband David; my parents Nola and Garry and to Bella the Boofhead Beagle, I thank you.