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Can you tell us about PETRONELLA AND THE TROGOT?

It's about a lonely woman abused by most people because she is ugly. She retreats to a cottage in the woods but a dark monster in shape of a tree appears in the garden. Then she meets a mysterious hooded horseman in the woods who tells her the medieval Strincas civilisation are coming out of their tombs and she will have to manage them. It's all linked but you have to read it. It's full of ghosts and monsters.

Is there a message in your novel that you want readers to grasp?

Yes, that however much people are nasty to you, you should not be nasty back. It only causes bitterness. But you should get away from them to protect yourself. The message is: kind people or nothing, even if it means loneliness. But, I don't want to give the ending away.

Is anything in your book based on real life experiences or purely all imagination?

Nearly all imagination. But the names of two of the nice people are those of my carers Marian and her husband, Percy. They looked after me when I was a kid but fed me far too many sweets. I also went through loneliness and cruelty like Petronella, especially when I was a child.

Are there certain characters you would like to go back to, or is there a theme or idea you'd love to work with?

I'm toying with the idea of writing a book with Queen Belletrix (she's in this book) as the central character. I like strong women.

What are your current projects?

Promoting my book in whatever way I can. Lots of good people helping me.

Do you see writing as a career?

No, I'm not giving up the day job.

If you had to choose, which writer would you consider a mentor?

For this book it was certainly Dante's Inferno. One of the reviewers on Goodreads said that kids should read this in preparation for reading the Inferno later in life. Can't be bad, can it?

If you had to do it all over again, would you change anything in your latest book?

I might make the Strincas' language a bit easier. It's in pretend medieval language. One reviewer was very cross about how the Strincas spoke. I mean, I couldn't have them coming out of their tombs and saying "Hi ya", could I? But if kids can understand gr8, they will understand this. They are bright nowadays. Anyway, most of it is in modern English.

What was the hardest part of writing your book?

Being focused. Any excuse is good enough to stop, need to make a cup of tea, check my emails, see what's happening on Twitter...

Do you ever suffer from writer's block? If so, what do you do about it?

Nearly all the time. I stop writing till my fingers itch again and I have to go back to the keyboard. Mind you, it could be months before that happens.

How long did it take you to write your book?

So long, I can't tell you how long. I can't even remember when I started writing it.

You have a day job as well. How do you find time to write?

Oh, yes! I work full-time. I write at night.

How did you choose the genre you write in?

I've always had an over-active imagination (it can be a pain). I think you can let yourself go more when writing for young people.

Do you work with an outline, or just write?

I just write. No idea what they're going to do next. I don't know what's going to happen until I've written it.

Is there anything you'd like to say to your readers?

Yes, I hope they enjoy reading my book and do please contact me. I'm @CherylBentley4 on Twitter and my email is cheryl_bentley4[at][ymail.com](mailto:cheryl_bentley4@ymail.com)