

Allie Reynolds.mp3

[00:00:00] Interviewer

Welcome to the Inner West Library Speaker series. Before we begin today, I would like to acknowledge the Gadigal and Wangal people of the Eora Nation on which this podcast is produced and pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging from across all lands this podcast reaches.

Allie Reynolds is a former professional freestyle snowboarder who spent five winters in the mountains of France, Switzerland, Austria and Canada. Her short fiction has been published in magazines in the U.K., Australia, Sweden and South Africa. Allie swapped her snowboard for a surfboard and now lives by the beach in Queensland. Shiver is her debut novel in this propulsive locked room thriller. A reunion weekend in the French Alps turns deadly when five friends discover someone has deliberately stranded them in a deserted mountaintop resort. Welcome, Allie!

Allie:

Hi

Interviewer:

Allie, congratulations on your debut novel Shiver, a thriller novel at its best. Allie your debut novel sparked a major interest resulting in a 10-publisher auction for your novel. I am intrigued can you talk a little about the entire process and how you were feeling at the time?

[00:01:15] Allie Reynolds

Yeah, thank you. So for around 20 years, ever since I was snowboarding, really, I was trying to write a novel set in the mountains and really struggling with it. And I'd written a few other things. And then a couple of years ago, I abandoned that project and switched to writing another thriller, which would become Shiver I planned I spent a long time planning it, trying to get the storyline straight in my head. I'd never planned a novel before, and I felt that was probably where I'd gone wrong. I always ended up in a bit of a mess with the storylines. So this one was very smooth to write. It probably took me about six months to write and I'd heard how hard it is to get an agent and a publisher.

So I sent it off to agents in London, expecting I might have a long wait. And a few hours later I had an offer of a London agent to represent me, and she helped me with some revisions.

[00:02:22] Allie Reynolds

And then she told me the exciting news that quite a few publishers were interested in the novel and she wanted to take it to auction. So, yeah, that was an incredible time. I could hardly believe it. It's every writers dream. And you never imagined it would happen to you? As the auction took place in the U.K., I had offers from different countries, the US, France, Germany, Italy.

[00:02:52] Allie Reynolds

So rights sold in quite a few different territories. And we already had TV and film companies interested in the story, too. And yes, it's been a total dream. I still feel like I might wake up and it won't really ever happened.

[00:03:12] Interviewer

That's amazing. It really is. I hope when the book does turn into a movie, that you'll be able to take part in that, too. Oh, yeah. You never know. That will be fun. Yes, it would be fun.

[00:03:26] Allie Reynolds

2020 has been a trying year for people all around the world full of Lockdown's quarantines and uncertainty. During this time, more than ever, people have turned to film, television and of course, books for support, comfort and escapism. What has this been like for you as a debut creator?

[00:03:43] Interviewer

So I divorced a year ago, so this year was quite a tough year. I found myself a single mum with my two little boys in my small apartment in the lockdown trying to home-school them. And I was watching my deadline for writing my next book just tick away. I couldn't work at all while my boys were at home. I didn't really have any time to myself. There wasn't really time to even read. I think I feel very fortunate now that we are in a fortunate situation compared to other countries where they've had much longer lockdowns. Yes. So, yeah, it's been a crazy year for sure for everyone.

[00:04:30] Interviewer

Did you enjoy home-schooling?

[00:04:32] Allie Redynolds

No, I used to be a school teacher. I'm a qualified school teacher. I used to work in London as a primary school teacher and I absolutely struggled so much.

[00:04:42] Allie Reynolds

So I just can't imagine how everyone else would have found that because I know I could not do it.

[00:04:49] Intereviewer

Bet you were very excited, like a lot of other parents when they were allowed to go back to school. Yes, yes, yes. Allie, you have a remarkable way of writing. I can visualize everything as I read and I even felt, and this is true listeners, the icy cold wind on my face, so many interesting narratives and multiple plot threads. Can you explain your style?

[00:05:11] Allie Reynolds

Oh, thank you so much. That's really kind. Well, I'm a massive fan of Lee Child.

[00:05:18] Allie Reynolds

He favours sort of very clean lean writing. There are no frilly bits, not much description. It's all about the story, basically. And so, yeah, I really admire how he writes. I try to write in quite simple language. The brain will absorb as easily as possible so the reader can escape into the world. And the story not really have to process anything. I try to keep description to a minimum and just give a few quite vivid, specific details, you know, so they can picture. I try to use the senses and also emotions to make readers really get involved in the story. Shiver has a dual timeline, so we flash from the present day where the characters are in a scary situation to 10 years before when they were young athletes with all their hopes and dreams.

[00:06:21] Allie Reynolds

So the chapters alternate between those two times, and I try to give cliff-hangers at the end of every chapter to keep the reader interested and keen to know what would happen in that in that scene

[00:06:37] Interviewer

Or this reader I was very interested, I can tell you that now. And I really did enjoy how you got the 10-year difference. And it was like, oh, what's going to happen? What happened before? Oh, gee, I forgot only to go back and read a little bit more and then I'm back again. So I really did enjoy the way you wrote it, too. It was just amazing.

Allie Reynolds

Thank you,

Interviewer

Shiver is what is known as a 'locked room thriller' without giving anything away to our listeners what can you tell us about your debut novel Shiver.

[00:07:07] Allie Reynolds

Sure, so Shiver begins as five former friends are invited to an isolated mountaintop reunion in a ski resort in the French Alps 10 years earlier. They were snowboarders training in that resort for a big snowboard competition until tragedy struck. So now it's the off season and the cable car is running just for them to take them to the mountain top reunion venue as they go up the cable car. There's confusion over who invited them when they reached the top. The ski lodge there is dark and deserted. An icebreaker game has been laid out for them. The game reveals their darkest secrets, but the cable cars no longer running. There's no easy way down. If they want to survive, they need to learn the truth of what happened that winter ten years ago.

[00:08:05] Allie Reynolds

So Shiver is a locked room thriller in that we know the baddie knows specific things about them, so we know the baddie must be one of them. So they're trapped in a confined place and they're all suspicious of each other.

[00:08:22] Interviewer

Now, Allie, I was particularly intrigued by the hiding in the snow game in the book now.

Allie Reynolds

Yes.

Interview

Is that without giving anything too much away, is that something that is general practice or is it purely fictional?

[00:08:40] Allie Reynolds

So, yeah, the hiding in the snow game, it was without giving it away completely, it was a sort of avalanche drill.

[00:08:49] Allie Reynolds

Anyone that does winter sports often has an avalanche transceiver, which they wear.

[00:08:57] Allie Reynolds

So, if they get caught in an avalanche, somebody can use equipment to help find them and rescue them. So, I have my characters in Shiver doing a sort of avalanche drill in in quite a dangerous way. I think normally people wouldn't do it in such a dangerous way.

[00:09:21] Allie Reynolds

I have seen people, for example, hide in the snow and have their rescue dogs practice finding them. But I think normal people would just hide the avalanche transceiver in the snow and then practice using their equipment to find it.

[00:09:38] Interviewer

It just it just really caught me by surprise. When I was reading it. I thought I was actually holding my breath. It's hard to explain until you read the book, but I physically was holding my breath when I read that part. Oh, OK.

[00:09:54] Interviewer

Allie, your characters in *Shiver* are portrayed as fiercely competitive, both on and off the ice. Allie, as a former professional snowboarder, how much did your personal experiences contribute to the characters in *Shiver*?

[00:10:06] Allie Reynolds

Yes. So *Shiver* is full of very competitive people. The women in particular in *Shiver*, are extremely competitive. And I can imagine that readers might think, wow, these snowboarders are really cut-throat, aren't they? But actually, I'm happy to say that in real life, the snowboarders that I met and trained with, were the nicest bunch of people imaginable, it was a really supportive crowd.

[00:10:37] Allie Reynolds

I almost wonder if the more dangerous the sport, maybe the more supportive the athletes are in that sport. Also, probably I was competing in the very early years of freestyle snowboarding, so there was no money in the sport. People were doing it just for the passion. And I think in many extreme sports, it's still like that. You're not really doing it for the money. You're just doing it for the passion. And the competitors are all ready to congratulate everybody else who's raising the bar in that sport and just really excited to see what they can do. But as a former athlete, I'm always fascinated in athletes, in other sports, really top athletes. And I've heard so many stories about athletes in other sports playing mind games with their rivals to get a psychological edge. I've even heard it said that in some sports, winning is maybe 90 percent a mental game. So we hear, for example, in sports, like rugby and cricket and basketball and golf and boxing, people might use a lot of intimidation strategies or distraction strategies to try to faze their rival and get ahead.

[00:12:05] Allie Reynolds

So I took those some of those strategies and mind games to an extreme sports environment where we can imagine they might be deadly stakes. Yes, but fortunately, I don't think that happens in real life. But one other thing that I would mention about winter sports athletes in particular, you in quite an unusual situation in that your training and maybe a tiny village with your rivals, you might be living with them, snowed in with them even. I think in other sports, you might come across your rivals, maybe only at big

competitions, whereas winter sports athletes, you're sort of quite living in close quarters with them. So it did make it quite interesting for a thriller situation to have people living or snowed in with their rivals. What might they do to each other?

[00:13:00] Interviewer

Because you're living together and you are all out on the ice that you can see what one your opponents are doing and they can see exactly your new tricks, et cetera, et cetera. Whereas if you're training for another sport, you usually train off sight or something like that, you know, I guess, yes. So you're in each other's faces no matter what.

Allie

Very much.

Interviewer

Allie, will you continue writing fiction? If yes. Would you consider other fiction genres, or would you explore writing non-fiction in the future when the new normal occurs?

[00:13:34] Allie Reynolds

So I got a two book contract, so I'm contracted to write another thriller and I'm currently writing it. I'm way behind my deadline thanks to the lockdown. But it's going to be a thriller set on a remote beach here in Australia. So I'm feeling quite excited about that one. I really like reading romance as well as thrillers. And so my thrillers seem to have they all seem to have romance subplots. And in the future, I would really like to have a go at writing a proper romance novel at some point. But I think, yes, I'll probably always continue writing fiction of some genre. I just really love creating stories and just the pure imagination and creativity that that involves.

[00:14:29] Interviewer

It's funny because a lot of authors, if they start writing a particular genre, they stick with the names. So you would stick with Allie Reynolds. So if you were to write romance, what do you think that you would have a pseudonym or do you think you would still use your name?

[00:14:42] Allie Reynolds

I think publishers like you to have at least a slightly different name, like I've heard authors, for example, like C.L. Taylor, a UK author who writes thrillers, she writes chick lit a sort of romance as Cally Taylor.

[00:15:00] Allie Reynolds

So it just we don't want readers to pick up your book expecting a thriller and then be disappointed to find it a romance. So I think it probably is just something I would do. So I don't catch readers by surprise or disappoint them.

[00:15:15] Interviewer

It's interesting, really. And I've also heard two authors, they combine their names too so if it's two authors writing, it's one author's first name or both authors first names. Yeah. Yeah, that happens quite a lot too. Yeah. Allie, in your acknowledgments at the end of your book, you gave a shout out to Gold Coast City Council, especially the library staff. Can you elaborate on the importance of public libraries as a library user yourself?

[00:15:42] Allie Reynolds

Yes. So in the acknowledgments, of Shiver I mentioned that I was extremely grateful to Gold Coast Library and that without the use of the library system, Shiver would not exist. I read a lot. I read maybe 80 to 100 books a year. And for a long time, I was a mum of two kids on quite a low income and there's no way I could have afforded all those books. I was prepared to buy some books for my kids, but maybe I wouldn't want to spend that money on myself so I could get them from the library. And I love to make adventurous choices in my fiction. I particularly love finding debut novels. The library allows me to go there and browse without the pressure of having to buy so I can just pick up a book because I like the picture on the cover. Or it has an interesting title. I can, you know, read a chapter or even take it home and see if I like it. And I've discovered so many amazing authors that way that I don't think I would have been able to discover without having access to the library also before I wrote Shiver. I was a freelance writer writing for women's magazines, and through my library, I had access to thousands of magazines and newspapers across the world. So it allowed me to have stories published in You Magazine in South Africa, for example, and many in the U.K. and I could not have done that without the library also. I take a lot of non-fiction books from the library and I learn things maybe as research for writing and researching some

psychology. At the moment. I took a French course from the library. I wanted to learn some French and also for my two little boys.

[00:17:37] Allie Reynolds

I've been carting home huge bags of library books ever since they were babies. And through the library, they've experienced the excitement of a new book over and over. So I'm extremely grateful. Oh, another thing that I'm grateful for as well, the Gold Coast Library, pre-Covid were running a lot of workshops. They had a fantastic selection of workshops for readers and for writers where we'd have authors coming in. And I really loved attending them. And I attended some fantastic writing workshops that helped me so much. Yes, very amazing.

[00:18:15] Interviewer

Ours are for free too we do writing courses as well. But unfortunately, because of Covid, we've had to suspend our programming. Yeah. So our patrons are looking forward to us going back to some type of programming. Yeah. I mean we can't have a face to face, but we've been fortunate here too we had our click and collect. We've done online.

[00:18:36] Allie Reynolds

Yes, we have that. I was so happy when the library reopened, and it must have been tough for the staff. And I can imagine having to adapt quite a lot. And yeah, we have to we have a security guard at our library here now and you have to sign in and sign out.

[00:18:53] Allie Reynolds

But yeah, we're just very grateful that we've got that service at home, which is great.

Interviewer

That's wonderful. What this answer means to our listeners is, you know, go and check out your local library, bring in some ideas and we encourage everyone to join up. Yes. Ali, can you tell us what were your favourite lockdown reads and what are you reading at the moment?

[00:19:15] Allie Reynolds

Yes, certainly so. I did really struggle to read in the lockdown. I think a lot of people said the same thing. It was so hard to concentrate. And also, yeah, it didn't really have much time. So I did reread a couple of old favourite books because that was a bit easier.

[00:19:34] Allie Reynolds

So I reread a book called *The River at Night*. It's a thriller by one of my very favourite authors, an American thriller writer called Erica Ferencik

I love books with a strong sense of place, and it's the story of five women on a white-water rafting trip down this remote river. It's really, really good. I read *The Dry* during the lockdown. I've been meaning to read it for ages and I absolutely loved it. I love Jane Harper's books, her strong sense of place as well. I read another book with a really strong sense of place, which was a literary ghost story set on a 1930's Himalayan climbing expedition. It's called *Thin Air* by Michelle Paver. It's a very creepy short ghost story that gave me chills. I also read a few rom coms because that lighter feel of book just seemed to suit the lock down. So I read one called *The Shelf* by a UK debut author called Helly Acton. It's about a woman going on a dating reality show and it's just so funny and entertaining. And currently and currently I'm reading a non-fiction book on psychology called *The Narcissist*, you know, by Dr Joseph Burgo. And that's partly for research for my new novel. I think narcissists make good thriller villains.

[00:21:15] Interviewer

They sound amazing. Allie.

Yes? Allie Reynolds

Interviewer

Your prologue had me at wow exclamation mark. Would you do us the honour of reading out your prologue before we finish up?

[00:21:31] Allie

Yes, I would absolutely love to. Thank you. OK,

It's that time of year again. The time the glacier gives up bodies. The immense mass of ice up there is a frozen river that flows too slowly for the eye to see. Recent victims brush shoulders with older ones in its glassy depths. Some emerge at the top, others at the snout, and there's no way of knowing who will come out next.

It can take years for them to reappear. Decades even. A glacier in neighbouring Italy made the news recently when it produced the mummified corpses of First World War soldiers, complete with helmets and rifles. Still, what goes in must eventually come out, so I've been checking the local news every morning. There's one particular body that I'm waiting for.

[00:22:30] Interviewer

Thank you, Allie, for your time and for a wonderful chat. We wish you all the best with your magnificent debut novel 'Shiver' and with all future publications

Allie's book is available both physical and electronic formats at any of our Inner West Libraries, ready for you to borrow or logon to our catalogue and place a reservation at anytime

If you would like to purchase Allie's book, please visit your favourite independent bookstore online or in person

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