



21 October - 4 November 2024

Dear reader,

If you are reading this letter, it means two amazing things have happened. Firstly, you've joined OverDrive's bookclub (yay!) Secondly, you are holding my book, *The Story Collector*, in your hands. If it weren't for libraries, I'm not sure this book would even exist. My writing career began by borrowing copious amounts of Maeve Binchy books from the library, so this feels like a full circle moment.

*The Story Collector* is very dear to my heart, as it is a love letter to Irish folklore and myth. Folklore was a very natural part of my childhood; I knew all about fairy rings, the foreboding wails of the banshee and the sacred power of hawthorn trees. Many of the stories on these pages come from my own family and document the magical superstitions I grew up believing in. As a storyteller, I always knew I wanted to write this story, so I could pass on the old traditions and ancient beliefs to a new audience, with a few embellishments here and there!

Reviewers have described my books as fairytales for adults, which I take as a huge compliment. CS Lewis once wrote, "*Someday you will be old enough to start reading fairytales again,*" and I think this quote really sums up the message of this novel. Belief is a very powerful thing and something we tend to lose as we get older. If you only take one thing from this book, I hope it is a sense of belief in the hidden forces that exist, just beyond our consciousness and faith in your own agency.

A bit like the unseen characters in this book, my writing style is capricious! I like to flit from magical realism to romance to historical fiction, weaving folklore, humour and healing words through the pages. Because that's what life is - one big kaleidoscope of stories and it's up to us to find the invisible string connecting them all. So I hope you enjoy your visit to Ireland and the village of Thornwood. I would highly recommend making yourself a cup of hawthorn tea (an acquired taste!) and losing yourself through the mists of time to a place where the otherworld is just a whisper away.

Evie Woods

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