



## Adele Parks - Interview Transcript

(Unedited)

**Parul - LWS:** [00:00:00] Welcome to the London Writer Salon podcast. I'm Perl. I'm your host and the co-founder of the London Writer Salon. And our salon interviews will, they're a chance for us to go behind the scenes of a writer's journey and dig into the stories behind the stories. And just about each week, we invite a writer that we admire, sometimes, a writer that we've admired for many years like Adele, to join us at the salon, to explore the craft of writing, the art, of building a writing career, and the reality of navigating the creative world.

Today we have the honor of speaking with Adele Parks. Adele is the author of 25 bestselling novels, including the recent Sunday Times, number One, hits lies, and Just My Luck. Over 6 million English editions of her work have been sold, and her books have been translated into 31 different languages.

She's an ambassador. Of the natural, the National Literacy Trust and the Reading Agency, and those are both two charities that promote literacy in the uk. And in [00:01:00] 2022, she was awarded an MBE. That's a British order of chivalry by his Majesty King Charles, for services to literature. So I have some questions for Adele and for the next hour or so I shall be putting them to her just to understand how she thinks about writing creativity and persistence.

But in around an hour or so, we will open it up to any questions that you have. So do feel free to chime in on the chat if you have a question, Adele, and we'll try and circle around to it at the end. All right. Without further ado, welcome to the London Writer, sell on Adele.

**Adele Parks:** Hello. Lovely to be here. I really am excited. Yeah, rah. And I was impressed if your goal was to impress me where everybody is. Yeah. It was impressive seeing all the places in the world that people are tuning in from,

**Parul - LWS:** I absolutely love this community is really fabulous. I love them so much. I love how global they are and how dedicated they are to writing. And before we get into, there's so much to talk about your creative career and the latest book you have out, but I'd love to just understand a little bit about your reading [00:02:00] habits, because you write across multiple genres, but what genre are you most drawn to as a reader?

**Adele Parks:** Yeah, it's quite quite tricky to do as much reading I want all the time. So when before I became a writer, I would read one or two books a week at least, and at six form. I remember at six form to read a book a day. I didn't really do much else, if I'm honest. Yeah, all I wanted to do was read. now I actually review for a magazine called Platinum, which is this monthly magazine, and a really cozy approach to reviewing because I only review things I like. And the idea is they have to be books that have something that a book club might enjoy, something in there that you might wanna get your teeth into and start discussing with other people. So I tend to get sent two or three books a day people saying, please, will you read this book for either platinum or to give me a personal quote? And I'm sorry, I cannot, in [00:03:00] the best world of the world, whoever you are in the history of mankind, can't read two or three books a day. So I tend to. This can sound so weird.

I avoid my own genre I know my own genre. I know the stories I want to write in my own genre, but I read quite a lot of literary work. I read a lot of American work. I, I say my own genre currently, and for the last sort of eight or nine years has been psychological thrillers. But before that I wrote historical and romance. And I read those now, but when I was, I've always read historical all the way through, but when I was writing romance, I didn't read as much romance. I read more psychological thrillers. I don't know why. It makes no sense. And it's not because I. Dislike the genre once I'm in it. 'cause obviously, no, I love it. But I think once you're writing, it's very, you've gotta stay away from being confused by other people's voices. That said, there are some exceptions to the rules. There's certain people that they are psychological [00:04:00] thriller writers, and I love them and I would read them every time and I'll drop anything for them. And that's the sort of, Lisa Jewel, Lucy Foley, Julie McAllister, Claire Macintosh. Those people, I, they're quite solid for me. And there's more than that maybe. I do read lots in my own genre. After all.

**Parul - LWS:** I think you read a lot, so therefore you have the opportunity to read across.

**Adele Parks:** lot. It's about one, one a week now. Technically I'm meant to review six per month. And to review six, you have to at least start eight 'cause a couple you might decide to ditch. I do that. Dunno how everybody else feels about that. I do ditch books I don't think are up to scratch. I didn't used to, I used to have that sort of schoolgirl approach thinking you've gotta keep going, and all of that.

You've started it. But now I just think, my time is literally the most precious commodity I have. And if a book I don't think is doing it for me, it doesn't mean it doesn't do it for everybody. Somebody else might enjoy that, but I just want to move on.

**Parul - LWS:** I think. I think you have a lot of [00:05:00] people here who agree with you, the time assure you have to move on. And now moving on from writing to some, from reading, sorry to writing. I was reading about how you actually first worked in management consultancy when you were in your first book and it was playing away, which was an immediate success.

But what I thought was interesting is you said you waited until you had something compelling and different to say, and so I'm curious, does that mean you were, there were loads of pancake novels, like earlier versions that you ditch.

**Adele Parks:** Bit. There was definitely one novella, a sort of 70,000 words that I got to, I didn't do anything with that. They were endless. There's still laugh. They're to my right in this draw these draws endless books with scribbles in of different ideas and different thoughts. I'd wanted to be a writer since I was a little girl, and, I just did, that's what I wanted to do.

That's how I process, that's what I do. I. I was a writer. I just wasn't a published writer. [00:06:00] So to get published, I knew I had to do something different, but I wasn't. Whilst I did work in a management consultancy, I wasn't a management consultant. I worked in their marketing department. So I had quite a creative job.

It was a very busy job. I looked after a Europe, middle East, Africa, and India as a region. So I was always traveling. And the higher up I got in that job, the more time I spent on shared spreadsheets and less time I spent doing anything creative, pushed me more and more to wanting to write and things happened in my own life.

My, I was only in my mid twenties when as a family, we lost a number of family members. I lost colleagues and I lost friends in a very short period of time. It was a lot of grief in my life. And that of

course did gimme something to write about, but oddly, I didn't want to write about sadness or difficulty then I really couldn't because that grief was too heavy for me to get into and to wear.

And [00:07:00] some that's not true of everybody. Some people would have written through that and worked that out. But I actually wanted to escape, which I have found out is something that is part of my personality type where I, I tend to run away, but in the most positive, I tend to run off somewhere. I give myself a project and I go after it. So I decided to write this project in a very, frivolous book in many ways. It was a character called Connie. She had, great friends, perfect wardrobe, great home. She just got married. Everything seemed good for her. She was running around London, didn't seem to have any money, Cho troubles. But she was a bit like me in so much as she didn't really her job wasn't particularly satisfied.

So I could channel a bit of that. But I, yeah, I had got things I wanted to put in there about grief and loss and mistakes, but I wanted to disguise it. yeah, that's how it worked. But yeah, I always did have, I had the pancakes. I dunno, I once, I recently tried to find that novella. Because it's only typed up.

Would you believe? So old? It's [00:08:00] literally only a typed copy somewhere and I couldn't find it. I really hope it's knocking around the house somewhere just so when I die somebody can find it and laugh. A lot's

**Parul - LWS:** know Harlan Cobin actually published a book that he, one of his first maybe pancake novels, and he turned it into a book and in the beginning said. Beware. This is my first ever attempt at writing. It's not very good, but here you go.

**Adele Parks:** I think I think elements of my very first book went into playing away. 'cause there was a lot of written this book at uni really, and in my very early twenties and it was about surprise list, surprise. It was about first love and first heartbreak and all of that.

So some of those emotions, some of that did make it into playing away.

**Parul - LWS:** And what struck me about the story of you getting published is the story that we all love to hear, that kind of almost, I wanna say instant success in the sense of you landed an agent, Johnny Geller, who then was quite young. You had six publishers reaching out to you. That's all wonderful.

But I'm [00:09:00] curious, you as a writer now, and you look back then, what is it that you think you did right? If that makes sense. That meant that you broke through from pancake novels to something that everyone wanted.

**Adele Parks:** I trusted my own voice. It's taken me a long time to really understand that. I think in the pancake novels there was very much a sense of me trying to be a writer. And I'm from the northeast of England, which if you are from other parts of the world, not Britain, that won't, be like, so what? But the northeast of England certainly then 25 years ago, plus, I wasn't necessarily particularly connected to where it all happens, which is in London. And certainly as I was growing up, I didn't feel, I didn't know anybody who was a publisher, anybody who was an author. I hadn't even heard an author talk.

There wasn't like these kind of events. I didn't think I was the person who became a [00:10:00] writer. I thought that happened to other people. But at the same time, simultaneously I felt I and I have always been these sort of two conflicting things simultaneously that is very much part of my personality.

So whilst I didn't think my sociodemographic fitted, I was absolutely sure it was what I should be. just didn't quite know how to go about it. So I did an English degree and I imitated other writers and it wasn't my voice. And I then read Marion Key's book. I think it was Rachel's Holiday.

It might have been watermelon, but I think it was Rachel's Holiday. And Marian was just herself, she was just Irish Murray and telling you her stories. And I thought, tell you what, I'm gonna just be Northeastern Adele and tell you my stories I knew it worked for me. Privately, personally, I had friends, people liked my stories.

So I just did that. And I think once I became myself and became quite honest and really went for it, 'cause that's the other part of it, when I took myself seriously and that [00:11:00] did come outta the deaths 'cause of the deaths. Some of the people were younger than me and I was only, twenties. my system was 21. There was a baby, that we'd lost an extraordinary range of people. So I had come to the realization, which I think very early, earlier than most people do, that isn't guaranteed. And the time you've got isn't guaranteed. And you can't put things off and think, yeah, definitely one day that will happen for me because you just don't know if you're gonna get that one day. So the only day you do know you have is the one you are in. So I think the two things find my, found my voice, got confidence in my voice, and confidence in the idea that now is the right time.

**Parul - LWS:** It's really interesting to hear you talk about that period of time. 'cause it's so easy to look at someone like you and just think, oh, it was so easy. But actually the nuance behind that, the complexity of what you were experiencing was so much

**Adele Parks:** breeze over it and I actually don't think I do myself any favors how I breeze over it. But I, right at the beginning I [00:12:00] breezed over that explanation because it was so hard to talk about. In fact, for about three or four years I did, I let everyone think I was just that sort of lucky girl that it had all fallen into the place.

And then I started to think, no, I've really got to be a bit more honest. 'cause that story doesn't add up. Why did you suddenly in your mid twenties, decide that was the day you're gonna write a book? So I then started talking about, the people I lost, but I don't think I've ever done it properly until, oddly, 25 books in. A lot of people have said to me, how do you feel about this book in comparison to your first book? And I think I can now start being a little bit more honest. And I really sh Sorry, I'm gonna shock, or don't want to shock or hurt or scare people, but I said in an interview recently, I said, oh when I say I lost people, it was really complicated.

'cause two of them were to aids including the child. One of them was murdered, one was a suicide. And I could see, and then I sort thought, no, okay, I'm telling people too much. Because it was such a [00:13:00] lot, it was such a lot for a very young person. And it set me apart from other people around me, which were not my family, who obviously were going through a lot of it, although not all of it.

'cause a lot of the things were colleagues and that didn't happen to them. But also the family definitely happened to them. But it set me apart from the sort of chick litty having a laugh, women that were running around having a great time. And yet I was often put into events. With those women. And I'm sure they thought, God, she's really standoffish or difficult, which I'm not a standoffish person, but I was massively grieving and a very, private person because there was stories there that weren't mine to tell. but it is only with a lot more time under my belt and a lot more forgiveness of myself and a lot more understanding that people are actually open if you allow them in, they want to be in and they want to support you. That I

started having those conversations about how tricky that first time was [00:14:00] and it went into a very difficult time.

'cause yes, I got this amazing book deal and it was amazing. I got paid a shed load of money for a two book deal within six months. They offered me book three and four because they could see how it was six months of the first one being published 'cause they could see how well it was doing. I got sales in America.

I got sales in Germany, good accounts and good contracts for birthdays. I got pregnant, I had a baby. And before my baby was a year, my husband and I split up. only recently somebody said to me of course with what you've all, you'd all been through, with that much grief and difficulty. But even for years it hadn't that the two things hadn't connected. But yes, I breeze over it and this is the longest I've ever spoken about it. So you've had a little exclusive because I'm trusting you all, 'cause you're all writers and you will understand

**Parul - LWS:** It's, there's something, I think it's a reminder to us that it, this is a human experience. No matter what success you experience, there's the reality of life that, that, that is there that [00:15:00] is pre ever present. So I really appreciate you telling us that.

**Adele Parks:** the thing is with maybe one exception, but again, not to me, but somebody close to my family, largely since then, I feel I've been extremely lucky person and I, it has gone very well. But also I think anything that hasn't gone well, I just thought it's not as bad as where I started

I could

**Parul - LWS:** Yeah.

**Adele Parks:** it off.

Even the divorce, I could go, it's not as bad as. Four years ago when all the deaths were happening. It wasn't, and I remember thinking, he is not dead, he's just divorcing me move on. So I think very early on in life I got bar that everybody el than not everybody, there many people have of what's painful and what's difficult and what you can manage and what you can't manage.

And I think that has set me in good stu as a writer because gosh, don't we need to be a resilient lot.

**Parul - LWS:** Really do. And actually it was interesting 'cause when we came into the green room together, I was gushing a little bit because I am genuinely so excited to have you in the room. And I think I told you, and my sister was [00:16:00] so excited, we've been following you for many years. Lovely to see your cat's tail.

**Adele Parks:** Yeah. I was just pushing bottom.

**Parul - LWS:** yeah, it's all good. I just recently adopted a cat I, I understand. But what struck me was that you said something like, and I dunno how and to what level of sincerity meant that you said, I really needed to hear that today. And I thought.

**Adele Parks:** know I really needed it. It's been a rotten day today. It's been extraordinarily bad today, so I definitely needed to hear it. Thank you.

**Parul - LWS:** And it, but, and it's interesting because there is this assumption that I even make, even though I've spoken to so many writers, and I think even the writers in the room sometimes make that when you get certain accolades or a certain level of success, it's done happiness forever, and it's not that it's.

**Adele Parks:** Do you know it's, I think it's I think it's a real trick that we all have to. If this, if this is some wisdom I can pass on it's a really odd career in so much as any other career that I had done if I had done a career for 25 years and 25 years being very successful at it. And the all my books have been in bestseller charts and, it's all gone well. So if that had [00:17:00] happened, buy now, I would be on, a crazy salary. I'd be on lots of, boards and, I'd have big pension policies and all those kind of things. That's not the world we opted into. That isn't how it works for writers. I did recently, I did my this is hilarious.

I'm really oversharing, but I recently did my kind of finances and scaled them up, scaled up my very first ad funds and with interest rates to where I am now and thought, oh God, I was better paid when I was 30-year-old. Yes, I know people go, that cannot be true, but it's 'cause we're in a tougher market.

We just are. And so people I think people in our world, writers don't do it for the financial accolades. They don't really even do it for the other type of accolades. We do it, or I certainly do it to connect with readers, to connect with other people. And and I think readers quite often we are, we're sensitive [00:18:00] souls and certainly writers definitely are, we're sensitive souls in many ways and the world's complex.

And writing is a way work all that out and maybe process some of it. I think there's nothing better than reading a sentence in someone else's book and looking at it and going, oh my gosh, that's what I think, that's how I see the world. Or even better. I, that's something I've never been able to articulate, but that's how I would describe it.

I wish I'd thought of that. I think that's what we're all really striving for. And that's the biggest accolade. So the biggest accolade for me is literally someone gorgeous young human like you. 'cause you that's, sitting down and going, yeah, I've been entertained by you, my sister's been entertained by you and thanks for that.

And I'm like, wow, that's it. I've made it. That is having made it, people have been entertained. I think recently, yesterday we all heard very sad loss of Gill Cooper, who is somebody I've met a number of times. And GI had a saying she described her writing as just wanting to add to the sum of happiness that's out there. That's what she did it [00:19:00] for. And I remember hearing that and thinking, yeah, I get that. That's what I didn't say it as elegantly myself, but I always say, I write to entertain. I want people to be engaged. I want people to feel things. I want people to think about things, and I want people to feel connected and less alone.

**Parul - LWS:** It's beautiful and certainly, I can speak for myself. I certainly felt like worlds were opening up to me just by reading your latest book, our Beautiful Mess.

**Adele Parks:** thank you.

**Parul - LWS:** yeah, characters I have never met or people that I might have met, but never understood how they think. And so I'd love to talk about, actually, before we get to our beautiful mess, I just wanna go back to that point in time when you, so you had the book deals coming through.

What did your, so at that point, I guess you'd chosen, you're like, okay, I'm gonna make, I'm gonna take this seriously. Did you make a conscious decision? I'm giving up my job, I'm gonna work.

**Adele Parks:** I wrote I wrote while I was, I wrote the first book while I was working. Then the boat first. But it came close to publication and it became obvious close to [00:20:00] publication 'cause of the cell in and noise and how much work was happening in America and Germany and things that I'd need to go on tours and I'd need to do things was mind blowing. Oh that I might need to do that. Interesting. I never did 'cause I got pregnant so I didn't do any of those things, but I thought that's where I was going. So then I think I stayed in my job for about another eight, nine months after getting the book deal. 'cause I loved my colleagues and I loved being at work.

And I actually genuinely think if you can manage the two things, if there's a flexy way you can do it, then it's a really great thing to do. But after a while it became obvious that I couldn't, plus I wanted a child. And in those days you didn't get maternity. You got six weeks maternity leave. And I just thought, yeah, I know.

Insane. I know the maternity laws didn't change till Blair came into power. I said wife was pregnant and but they were, it was six weeks maternity leave and I just knew I couldn't go back to the full on job I had and be a writer [00:21:00] and have a baby. It was just, too much. So I left the job, had the baby, and, yeah.

**Parul - LWS:** And you took it quite seriously. My understanding is that discipline is something that you've subscribed to.

**Adele Parks:** is my, yeah, I think it's my secret little weapon. People think that being a writer is all about being creative and creatives quite often let themselves off the hook because we. Allow ourselves to be undisciplined and say it's part of the creative process. And maybe it is for lots of people, maybe it is. But for me, I've discovered I work best when I just keep going. It may be different if you are all writing literary books and you want them out every few years, but if you're writing in genre, which I am, different genres, but always in genre, and I want to book out every year my process, which is very much, it's changed over the years, depending on how old my son was, but very much since he's been adult-ish.

Teen ish, has been one to 2000 words every day. [00:22:00] Stop dead on 2000 words. Soon as I see 2000 words, which I might not notice straight away, but as soon as I look over to my word count, I see 2000 words. I just stop and I can be mid-sentence. I just stop. And I think I've done my day I used to just keep going.

And then you'd find you had never done your day. And that's the hardest thing about being a writer. You finish your job once a year or less, you finish your job the day you finish the book, and even then you probably think hasn't quite finished my book. So you have to set yourself, I think you have to set yourself deadlines and then say, look, I'm done.

That's me done. Because you would drive yourself insane. Otherwise, I think we could very easily drive ourselves in saying, doing this job. So I, but I don't let myself do less than 1000 words because I find if I do less than 1000 words several days in a row, I suddenly am quite far behind where I thought I should be. I learned how to do project plans in the back in the day when I was in Accenture and the adv the management consultancy. And I've. [00:23:00] Yeah. Did you really? Accenture is the place to learn how discipline especially then when it was like 12 hour days and what have you. I hope that's not the case anymore. But I set out knowing where my books are going to end. Don't know every single beat, but I know my character's inside out. When I start, I have the one to 2000 words. I know where my book's going to end if I have a day where that 1000 words is just a slog. And it's not, it doesn't have to be, it doesn't have to be the next chapter. if it's a day where I turn my computer on, I think, really it's the big emotional scene today and I feel about as exciting as a wet sponge. I then think I will just move ahead and describe. I dunno, a restaurant at a park, I will do my thousand words on something else, but I will make myself right.

And that skipping about is quite useful. And if you can't do anything at all on your novel, literally go take your laptop outside or [00:24:00] take your notebook outside and describe the first thing like the scene in front of you. But keep writing because I think we can scare ourselves. Once we stop writing, we quickly lose confidence.

And the biggest thing, that's the biggest barrier. Most writers, their own lack of confidence in either what they're doing or themselves generally.

**Parul - LWS:** So this is really interesting. I'd love to explore this sort of discipline. So one is write for you, and I recognize it's personal for you, it's writing a minimum of a thousand, no more than 2000. Is there anything else that you do? Either it's like mindset or a practice that helps you keep that pace?

**Adele Parks:** quiet. I don't have music on. Some people love having music on. I would also hasten to add, I'm really not setting anyone a target. I'm not saying to people write one to 2000 words. I

**Parul - LWS:** Totally.

**Adele Parks:** starting out and you say to yourself, I'm gonna write 500 words, that's genius. When I still worked, I did three times a day.

I did 20 minutes. Sorry that, that [00:25:00] would've been amazing three times a week. I started at 20 minutes and then an hour at the weekend, and I worked up to three times a week, an hour and four hours at the weekend. And I did it on timing then because. I just didn't even, it hadn't crossed my mind about word count.

It just like, how long can I devote to this? But it doesn't matter what your target is, you need to find your own personal target. But do set yourself a target 'cause you'll feel good when you can tick it. Where otherwise, if you don't have a target, you never know you've hit it. So you are constantly telling yourself you're not good enough or you haven't done enough.

And that's a terrible thing to tell yourself, especially, in the creative process when you need to give yourself up a little bit. Yeah, so there's definitely that discipline. I'm very lucky that my favorite thing about the entire writing process and I like sharing the love of books. I like being in events, I like mentoring other people. I like all of that. My very favorite thing is the actual writing. I actually get up quite [00:26:00] excited every morning thinking great. Monday to Friday I'm gonna write. And if I have, for instance, this Friday I know I've got the whole day in Henley.

I'm going to other people's events and I've got one of my own. So I know that I will need to write on Saturday or Sunday. I just know I will because I will feel the need to do that the way very fit people need, have the need to go to the gym and exercise that energy off. I need to write off my energy.

It just is how I work. So I think I'm quite blessed that is the case, that it's not a slog for me. so yeah I am in silence. I have my own room, which I know Virginia Wolf told us all is a huge perk. And I know it's not true of everybody. but if you can carve out some space and time, whether, I've said, it sounds ridiculous, but I've said to people in the past, if you're looking for that 20 minutes at the very beginning, three times a week, just go to the loo and tell people you've got IB. Just [00:27:00] literally sit in that bathroom with your laptop and just go, I'm sorry, bad tummy. And I know it sounds ridiculous, but find a way to put yourself first and put your writing first. because if you don't put it first, no one else will. And honestly, from the moment you've decided to be a writer right the way through, you have to take it seriously.

And you ha you have to sell it to other people. 25 years in, I'm doing exactly the same job. I did the very first book. I am selling the story. Hoping you're gonna find that interesting enough. And then, off you go.

**Parul - LWS:** And talking about.

**Adele Parks:** Somebody said the idea genre.

**Parul - LWS:** Yeah,

**Adele Parks:** We could start a movement.

Oh, that sounds really bad. Terrible about movements. Move it on.

**Parul - LWS:** that's from Martin. He's a bestselling historical fiction writer actually. Now you talked about ideas and one of the things that many writers struggle with is having too many ideas or starting to have shiny object syndrome while they're in the middle of a project. How do you [00:28:00] focus on the one project, create a novel that you're working on?

Is it easy for you? Do you have any tricks for what.

**Adele Parks:** actually can feel it in my head sometimes. I know. Very odd, but I can, so when I'm involved in a book, I'll give you my timeline. So I start writing in January and I write sort of January to July writing the book, which sounds fine except to take it back from about, 'cause I hand it in the July.

From about the August to the January I am looking at the three or four ideas I inevitably have and interrogating them to see which one of them will really stand up to being a novel. Because I think in the past, a mistake I have made is where I start writing it and think, oh my gosh, no, there should have been a novella or maybe just a poem because it's very short.

It is an idea, but it isn't a plot. So I spend a lot of time sort of August to, to January. Obviously there's festivals and promotion and other things I'm doing 'cause I've usually got a [00:29:00] book I'm launching. But in that time, while I'm often doing long journeys or on my own and the back of buses or something, trains going elsewhere, going to different places, I start interrogating my ideas and saying what next?

What next? And then when I finally find one, the three or four ideas that works and it's the one that excites me, I think, okay, I then start saying, right this scenario, who is the worst person it could happen to? for instance, if you were writing about infertility and my character was a woman who was in her mid twenties, had never thought about children and really wanted a career, finding out she was infertile may be a problem, but it would be less of a problem than a woman who is in her mid thirties chose to be a teacher just so she could have same hours as her children. At once that, once she was working and once she had children and always imagined she'd have a family of four it's a different, a different book depending on which character. Then once I have that character, [00:30:00] interview them. So in this period of time, this sort of August of January, I have a series of about 200 questions I interview them in my head.

Don't write them down, although, can I say I'm probably gonna start writing them down? 'cause my memory is not quite as good as it used to be, but I don't write them down. I go through questions and some of 'em are really easy ones. Obviously you want name, age, gender, career, choice. Have they got partner, have they got kids? But I want other things like where are you in the family? Did you have a favorite parent? Do your parents have a favorite child? If you have a child, do you have a favorite child? Now that

is not a thing any parent is ever going to say out loud, but. It is a fact. People can have favorite kids. Then I might ask them, right on Yi's birthday, tell me about your memories from Y Yi birthday party. And they might say I can't remember anything. Or they might say to me, was a shit show. My mom and dad were divorcing. It was [00:31:00] devastating. Or they might say it was amazing. I was center of attention.

I love being center of attention. And I start to get a bit more information. I might ask them what their horoscopes are or the Aries will tell me that's ridiculous and it's no such thing. And all the aquariums will fondly own it. And obviously whether this person is an aquarium or had a good birthday party when they were eight is very unlikely to make it into the book. But it will give me the confidence to know wherever I'm gonna take them, in the next six months of my life, 6, 7, 8 months of my life. When I'm writing the book, I will know how they will react to things because I will know if they have the one. Quite often I ask them, do you have a secret? One person in the world, you might have told that secret to who would you to if you lost your wallet?

Who would you turn to if you lost your parent or your husband or, there's different levels and I will need to know all this about my characters, and then I find the actual writing bit, [00:32:00] and by then I'm desperate because I really, I know so much more about these people and I really want to share their stories by then. And so I'm desperate. And by January, that miserable Monday, straight up to Christmas, I'm the only person's literally singing and dancing as I get to my desk thinking, right? I'm going into this world now. All that grayness can stay, out there. I'm going into this world with these people and these are my people for the next 6, 7, 8 months,

**Parul - LWS:** I love that. I love so much about everything you've shared. This is so fun. This is the kind of stuff that,

**Adele Parks:** the chats there and quite, there was somebody saying, I do that too, and that, which is great. I tell people all the time, and I have lots of other writer friends who've said to me afterwards that sounded mad and like a lot of work, but now I've done it. I found out it takes a lot of the work outta the process.

Later on,

**Parul - LWS:** yeah, I love this. I'm gonna.

**Adele Parks:** saying, do I have a list of ca questions? And I don't, do have a list, I don't actually just work through the list. I work it more as a [00:33:00] conversation, like a little conversation because our conversation is flowing in a certain way and I might think, oh, I've got loads of other things to tell you, but I'm answering your questions.

And it's the same with my characters, so I don't always ask all of them the 200 questions.

**Parul - LWS:** One of the questions I particularly loved was, do you have a secret? And this really leads me into our beautiful mess because all the characters have secrets in this book. And I'd love to just move to this, move to your latest book and explore the way you brought some of your planning there.

So maybe before we get into how you actually wrote it, I want you to just tell us a little bit about it. What I loved,

**Adele Parks:** it as well.

**Parul - LWS:** I love the CI love the cover.

**Adele Parks:** lovely new shiny hardware, which is currently this lovely collector's edition.

**Parul - LWS:** Oh boy.

**Adele Parks:** which I'm very proud of. Will tell you this book, I'm gonna give you the picture about the book, and then I will tell you this book is 25 years in the making, which is extraordinary. So the book is about a woman called Connie and she lives in nothing hill. Wouldn't that be nice? [00:34:00] And she has three sort of daughters age, 16 up to sort of 21. she lives the, got a husband in many ways. She lives a very lovely life. We've, we meet her Christmas Eve. She's upper Christmas tree. And the only thing that's really on her mind is her charcuterie board going to be good enough to put on Instagram later on? She's that kind of woman. She's pretty happy. You're possibly wondering if she's a bit shallow, but she isn't. She's about her empty nesting.

She's concerned about her kids. They've come home from uni and maybe they're not looking quite as well as they should, and there's a few things niggling her. But on the whole, life's pretty easy. when she was young, she made a mistake and she thinks she's already paid for that mistake. She thinks she's already rectified it. And then her daughter comes home from university, walks up the path with her very new. Boyfriend, first time she's ever brought a boyfriend home. minute Connie sets eyes on that boy, she absolutely knows he's connected to her [00:35:00] past. She knows he's absolutely connected to the mistakes she made, and she knows this is devastating for her and more importantly for her daughter. then this is still only chapter one folks. I'm not spoiling anything. Then she finds out her daughter's pregnant. And this is huge. Obviously a daughter being 21-year-old being pregnant, it, it's not an illness. It's nothing. It's not dreadful. But in Connie's world where the kid's still at uni, it isn't quite what she wanted for her.

So she's upset on a number of levels. it turns out, and we find out over the Christmas week, 'cause Christmas isn't stressful enough, we find out over the Christmas week that everybody in that family, Fran herself, the daughter, Fran's boyfriend, Zach and other people that we meet, all have secrets.

And one of them is deadly. And whilst dev piled in there with Connie and telling you she's up a Christmas tree even before she's up that Christmas tree, see a [00:36:00] shooting and we see desperately tending to a wound and desperately trying to stem the flow of what appears to be fatal shooting. and that says the end. So right at the beginning we get this, the end, then we turn the page and we've got Connie up the Christmas tree, 11 days earlier. So we know we're on this 11 day countdown and everybody's secrets are going to lead up to the end. And I did that. I, sorry, I pitched that really badly.

I should have told you about the end first. But I, the reason I had the end start starting, which I failed to do with you guys, but that brutal end where somebody is bleeding out. Then Connie up a Christmas tree. You know you're not in a chick litty Richard Curtis movie of somebody being up a Christmas tree.

'cause somebody's bleeding out in 11 days. You're in some kind of horror terror.

**Parul - LWS:** Thank you for the pitch. I would love to understand [00:37:00] how you any detail you care to share. When you first had this idea, and I know you're picking up on characters from your first book, I think that's so thrilling. I went back and then read the first book to see what Connie was like as a younger woman.

And I'd love to know, so from the moment you had that idea, okay, I'm gonna write this book, and I know one of your fans encouraged you to do this, what did that planning look like? How did you decide how the scenes were gonna play out and at what level?

**Adele Parks:** The funny thing was, is the fact the 25 years in the making is because when I was at one of my very early events playing away. A woman who was my age now, but obviously twice my age then said to me, oh my God, I love these characters. I love Connie and playing away and I love all her friends and they're so amazing.

And I'm here with my daughter and I can't wait till Connie goes through menopause. I was like, that's such a weird thing to say to me. First of all, 25 years ago people didn't say menopause out loud. So [00:38:00] that was one, but two wanted to say to her, she's made up. But then I realized it was the biggest compliment possible because this woman was walking away, going, she's living in my head and she's gonna wage, and wouldn't it be amazing to see her age?

And I remember thinking if I'm still writing in 25 years or however many years, I will write Connie, not necessarily through the menopause. I don't really talk about the menopause at all. But I will write a midlife Connie and see how she is. And see how she's grown up and see how her world has changed.

So I've known for a long time that I was going to be writing about Connie. I was somewhat restrained in my plot because over the years I've, I dipped in and out of her. It doesn't matter if you haven't read the first one, you, you said yourself, you read this one first. I already had certain things, like I knew she had three daughters.

So I thought, okay, so it's a plot about daughters and it's a mom. So it was the opposite to what I normally do. 'cause I told you that [00:39:00] normally I find my plot and then I think, who is this plot going to be the worst for? And this time it was the opposite. I had this Connie and I had her family and I'm like, okay, what can I do to these people?

So this time it had to be turned on its head. And I was thinking, okay, this slightly smug living in, Notting Hill, midlife woman who thinks she's got her life sorted, what would be the worst things that would happen for her? And I thought. even though she's slightly smug, she's a devoted mother, she's devoted, these kids mean everything to her.

And they have in other books when we've seen them very little, like it's, so actually something happening to them, one or two or three of them would be the issue for her. So I started planning the plot back to front and there were certain characters I wanted to bring in and I wanted to wrap up, so to speak, and talk to one more time and see if how they had aged.

Interestingly, 'cause you went back and looked at Connie, did you think she was convincing as a person, could she have been that young person and then the person she's now, did you believe in her?[00:40:00]

**Parul - LWS:** I did. But in a way there's, that's so many years between that I'm conscious that, so I was looking at the younger one thinking, I know how you end up. I know life goes. So yes, definitely.

**Adele Parks:** Yeah, you knew the problem she's going to encounter in one 'cause you've already found out. But I wanted to see how she would get wiser. So I think really I was more concentrating on her development as a person than the plot, which is interesting 'cause it is possibly one of my most twisty, turny, heart wrenching plots, I think. But I wasn't aware that I was writing a plot led book. I thought I was

writing a character led book. And I, part of my process is when the book is finished, I read it aloud to my husband because he is the world's most superbly transparent human being. I can always work out if he's a little bit bored or if he's thinking it's amazing or he's I'm a bit confused.

I'm not sure how we got there, or [00:41:00] you haven't explained that. So when I was reading it to him, I kept saying, do you think there's enough twists? And he was like, I'm on the edge of my seat. There are too many twists. And I was like, oh. But this time the twist just came to me, which I know is really annoying and not particularly helpful for anybody trying to plan twists. but I have never done that sort of thing of going, oh, by page X you need to have met cute, or by page y you need to have had your first conflict and by page Z you need the foreshadowing. I don't do that. It does somehow, it's quite instinctual, but I suppose that's, of course it's instinctual. 'cause I've done 25 books now.

It definitely wasn't an instinctual at the beginning and I used to have to restructure and move things around a lot. Whereas now it's a little bit more the time I got to the end of it. 'cause I do edit as I go along. By the time I get to the end of it, it's likely to be done. There's very little structural work

**Parul - LWS:** So if I were to look at your notes for planning notes for this book or in your maybe the last two books, what would I see on [00:42:00] that page?

**Adele Parks:** see them?

**Parul - LWS:** Yes.

**Adele Parks:** I can reach for them.

**Parul - LWS:** Yeah, I'm so curious.

**Adele Parks:** You're going to be very underwhelmed. First of all, I have this lovely book that fan once gave me, and this has three three books planned in it and actually show you. It's exactly so messy. So first of all, there's our beautiful mess and then we have January, how many words I was at and all the way through.

Then I start doing just like little shopping lists and weird counting up probably, I dunno, hours spent doing something else. And then you are underwhelmed, don't you? And then I have

**Parul - LWS:** This is like catnip for writers. I'm not sure.

**Adele Parks:** it's so exposing 'cause it's so messy. So then I have, oh actually that's a bit of a third. First I have, oh no, that isn't a third.

That is the truth of this one. I might have had it twice. No, I don't. Then [00:43:00] I have literally normally I, this was a different book to write. Normally I have in pencil what I think is going to happen in each chapter, and then I turn to pen when it really happens. And then you might find there's a bit of a push because I've had

**Parul - LWS:** Can you read the first couple of lines? I'm just so curious.

**Adele Parks:** Connie with Daughter three dressing tree. That's chapter

**Parul - LWS:** Alright. Which is, yeah, which is true.

**Adele Parks:** two it was Flora, but it ended up being Fran. Fran and Zach arrive at Connie's. three. Connie announces pregnancy.

**Parul - LWS:** Yes.

**Adele Parks:** Fran tells us how she met Zach. So it's pretty close,

**Parul - LWS:** Yeah.

**Adele Parks:** like. You see there, it gets a bit messier. I've had to start shoving in extra, I always leave one line in between because occasionally I have to go back and realize, oh, I've missed something else. Ow. But it's not really wild. It's not really, there

A

**Parul - LWS:** it's so cool. No, I love it.

**Adele Parks:** It's

**Parul - LWS:** I think,

**Adele Parks:** have three or four books in there that I've planned over the years and [00:44:00] they, oh, there's quite often a spidergram. There's, yeah

**Parul - LWS:** so I'm interested, so I'm, so you are writing, so I love seeing that, just how simple each chapter outline is. And then I'm curious, how are you tracking, because I know you said it's plot led, but you do still think about the emotional arc of the character. How are you following that? Or is it just instinct?

**Adele Parks:** Sometimes, and again, this one wasn't the best example of it, but sometimes I will, oh, there's a better version. I knew I must have had two versions. I knew that was too neat. This is better. There we're. Oh no, that's my next book. You can't see that. That's next year's book. That's hilarious. So yeah, it is. It does seem that it is just really straightforward with our beautiful mess. That's all there is. That's shocking. But with our beautiful mess I tend to underline, oh, that was a Fran chapter or four chapters later.

Oh, we haven't heard from Fran for a while. We should hear a bit more from Fran. and then at the end I'll just go, okay, there was 50% of it's from Connie's [00:45:00] point of view, 25% Frans, 20 of it, Zach's, and then there ment 5% other people. And I'll check there's a balance, but genuinely this book, and honestly it's a bit annoying, but since it is a writer's group, I promise you it's not always this way. this book did write itself a bit more because I know these characters so well. It is that thing about, it's like I isn't just that I interviewed them for 200. Questions. I've interviewed them for 25 years, some of them.

**Parul - LWS:** Yeah. And if there's someone in this room who's writing a novel and is maybe struggling a little bit with their plot and sort of the character arc, what might you ask them or suggest them?

**Adele Parks:** I always ask, so you start off with your character and you want to know that character is and you start what the character wants. you might say the character just wants its live to carry on. Or you might say, oh, the character wants to improve, it will change. Or, there's usually something, they [00:46:00] usually, they want money, they want love, they want freedom, they want something. And then you have to

find, you put in, I think you put in an obstacle. And at first it's quite a small obstacle, but you see how they react to that obstacle. And then it might be a bigger obstacle, and then it might be the biggest obstacle. for me it is, it tends to be waves like that, but obviously there's no set way of writing a book for somebody could write it.

And the big obstacle is just the first thing, but you haven't got chance. You, I like to have chance to know the character and know how they're going to react. And they may run away, they may not cope with it very well. They may cheat, they may lie, and therefore, they're going to cheat and lie as things get worse. so I think that's quite useful on, on plot. I think going for walks is a really helpful thing when you're stuck. I think I'm currently behind my desk. I literally, here's my desk and the wall's right behind me. So if I feel stuck, I really do feel pen in, although there's quite a lot of space in front of me, but I do feel pen in, [00:47:00] so I will go for a walk and that does somehow just release things, change things you can try writing in different places. I think I'm quite I'm quite wedded to reality. I don't like plots where something impossible just comes out. So if you find the only answer to your dilemma is an impossible an answer, fine. If that's what you want to write that. Then go back and show how it would've been made possible. So don't be afraid of getting to the end and then going back over and rewriting some of the front bit. It might just be worthwhile plotting on and getting to the end. I think there's a lot of virtue in plotting on and getting to the end in any project you're doing. I'm quite keen on getting to the end and then, sorting it out.

**Parul - LWS:** Thank you. I'd love to talk a little bit about genre because you've switched genre multiple times, [00:48:00] and I was just wondering, because I know you say you also avoid the genre when you are writing it, but what do you think allowed you to move across genres? Did you have to

**Adele Parks:** I

**Parul - LWS:** prepare for that?

**Adele Parks:** change publishing at one point Publishing House. So first I wrote satirical comedies, romantic comedies or what people rudely called Chicklet. I remember the first time somebody said, oh, how do you feel about the label Chicklet? And I said, oh, help me out. What does Chicklet mean? And they said, oh, it's stories about single women running around drinking too much looking for love.

And I went, oh, I've never written that book. 'cause I haven't, I've never written a book about a woman looking for love who's single. She, they're either not single or they're bothered about the careers, or they're looking for a child, or they're worried about the parents with Alzheimer's or something, or, there's lots of other themes.

It seemed a very sweeping statement. and I had written by then about nine, not when that question was asked. When the question was asked, it was maybe two or three books in. [00:49:00] But by my ninth book, I realized it was becoming harder and harder to. Shake off the chit, label because even if you went somewhere and they said to you at, even at a festival or something and they'd say, you are not chit, but you quite often get labeled that you think, oh God, you still brought it up. And the part of that labeling is, you're not going to get sheet reviews. You're probably only going to be read by a very certain and limited demographic. Though the, certainly back then that was very much the experience. I thought, I'm gonna write historical because you can't not take historically serious, seriously.

And especially if I I decided to write in World War I, 'cause it's a period of history that I find fascinating. I think it was the beginning of feminism because we had to keep going and then. A million men didn't come

home from the war. And there was a million women who'd been brought up to be middle class women who thought their career was going to be marrying and have children.

And [00:50:00] that wasn't the case for them. So they had to find other ways to manage and to live. And you only get one life, or I believe you only get one life. And so those women had that one opportunity and that particularly disastrous of the world. I wanted to write their stories. And then I wrote a story about a conscientious objector. and then I did start to get invited to Chel literary Festival, Henley. I started getting broad sheets reviews. Now my readers would say your writing didn't change. You are the level that you are writing out was exactly the same, the kind of vocab the descriptions dah. But it was interesting how it was looked at and how it was marketed. But anyway, I really did enjoy writing historical books and I wouldn't rule out doing it again. But I did actually at the time only have those two stories and they, there are a lot of work to writing historical. Did you mention that with Martin?

'cause it your guest, you guest here today. He'll vouch for me. There's a lot of work because you can't just think, and then, even if you [00:51:00] think, oh, they're going to send a telegram that day, I would then think could they get a telegram on a Sunday spend like a day ringing up people, going to our various archives, talking to the post office to see where telegrams were delivered or not in 1921.

So it's not if you put it in contemporary times where you know what's going on. So a lot of extra work. But I loved it. But I, after when I finished it, I did think, I can't go back to writing a relationship novel, whether that's just a mom and parent or a, or a. Partner relationship. Relationship. One relationship doesn't seem enough after talking about wars and talking about conscientious objectors and talking about feminism. So I wanted to take all the elements I liked, which is the sort of entertainment, the plots, the characters, all of those things that I enjoyed. But I wanted, I didn't want to stay in, I wanted to be contemporary again, want to go back to [00:52:00] romances or anything they could call Chiclet. So I thought I'm right. Something really scary with a murder because it's a scary and a murder. There's any death. is not a chit book. They, I don't know why, but that is the cutoff point. So I started writing books about, a more psychological element, the sort of we play. At first, I didn't even have a body count. It was just the sort of near death experiences, the cruelty, the things that could happen. as time has gone on, the body count has gone up. I don't know, I've become more extreme, it's kept me entertained.

It's kept me fresh, it's kept me challenged. I wouldn't have wanted to write 25 books in 25 years if they had to be the same book over and over again. I just wouldn't have wanted to. I don't know. I could have started in psychological thrillers and now be writing romances. I'm not saying one is better than the other, it really isn't.

I think both of them, all of these genres have their challenges. If you're doing it well, you are challenged. It is very difficult to be [00:53:00] funny actually. I'm not saying, oh, I moved on in a sense of, I moved up. I just changed and I may still keep changing. Who knows?

**Parul - LWS:** If someone here wants to change genre, do you have a, and they're like, I'm just unsure about the set pieces that I might need in that type of book, is the recommendation simply to read widely in that genre, or is there anything else you would.

**Adele Parks:** I think Reid, why widely would've been a good idea. Yes. I hadn't read enough crime. I still haven't read enough crime. I've read a lot of psychological thrillers and I've read loads and loads of relationship dramas. But I haven't read as much crime as I perhaps should. And now I go to a lot of crimes festivals because they put psychological thrillers there. I'm quite squeamish so I'm not good on, autopsies that are being really well described or that sort of thing. But yeah I was on an event and somebody said,

what are the tropes in your genre? And I thought, I dunno, I haven't really enough to know what the tropes are, but I think I know some of them.

So things [00:54:00] like one of my books A Beautiful man sorry. One last secret is about an escort and I deliberately wanted to write an escort 'cause I had read enough psychological thrillers or crime books to know that escorts or prostitutes or sex workers or whatever name you wanna give them, not to get a real name.

They tend to be dead by about page three, and they stay nameless. And I remember thinking, no, that's the book I want to write. I want to write her story and I'm gonna give her a name. I'm gonna give her a story and she's gonna be my voice. So I think I knew enough to turn upside up, but yeah, I'd say, I did have to, I, it depends if you're published or not, because if you're published, your publisher will have something to say about whether you change genre or not. I did leave my first publisher to stretch my wings a bit more and try things differently. I. I think reading around reading a lot is the answer to everything honestly.

It is the answer to pace. It's the [00:55:00] answer to understanding character. It seems, it's the answer to understanding what's good. It's really brilliant when you read a book as well and you think That's rubbish. I could've written better than that. That's great inspiration. Don't get cross and think, I can't believe that's being published.

Mine is better than that. Just think, if that's being published, mine definitely can be. There's a lot of reasons for reading in the genre and out the genre, but I wouldn't concentrate too much on, oh, what always goes in one of these books. I would just write the story you want to write. I think that's what I've done. I think the job of the writer is to write the story you want to write and the job of the publisher is to find your genre. And if they really want to change something 'cause they think it's nearly in a genre, but not quite they'll give you that hint.

**Parul - LWS:** Thank you. I'm curious, was there ever any pressure to change your names across the different genres?

**Adele Parks:** No. In fact, I wanted to, and they didn't want me to, wanted my historical to change it to ad or something. So you knew it was ad parks, Adele Parks. But [00:56:00] the publisher was very keen for me to zoom, bring my, follow my following with me, bring my readers with me. And starting again is a risk, a debut writer. Is a really interesting matter of timing because at some points in publishing cycles, it is the thing everybody wants debuts and all attention goes on it and then other times it's not what anybody wants. And breaking through and making a noise as a debut is really tricky. And when I was changing genre, it happened to be one of those times when people didn't want debuts.

They wanted to feel secure with saying, oh, I've got a safe pair of hands and I know what should be, I know I'll get a good quality story outta this. So they wanted me to keep my name. I actually look back and wish I'd changed my name all together when I started writing. Yeah. Because it's really embarrassing having my actual name when school mom or. You are at hairdressers and they dyed your hair, they're on color, and you wanna have a real go at them and you can't 'cause of the desk, somebody says, oh, I read [00:57:00] your books and I love them. You go that's great. Didn't want it green. There's, or you're in a restaurant and you really napped off with the service, so you want, all those things. I never review anything. For example, I, except to give positive, glowing, amazing reviews, I would never review anything badly. 'cause I would hate them to see my name and then go and a counter review on one of my books just to off me off. So yeah, I would say if you're just starting out, consider not having your name.

I know it seems really fun having having your name on in print, but consider having a pseudonym.

**Parul - LWS:** A household. To, we're just drawing towards the end of my portion of questions here. So if you have any questions for Adele, do put them in the chat. But I do have a few more still for you. And maybe actually we talk about reviews and criticism. Your a household name, which means you are adored, but there's always block aside of that.

Any sort of, I always find that it's true that no matter the higher you rise in [00:58:00] any sort of public sphere, the chances are you may also get more pushback. And I'm wondering how you deal with criticism, negative reviews or any sort of opinion pieces are.

**Adele Parks:** I think there's so we're all reviewed all the time, aren't we? Now? It's just, I dunno if you've seen that Black Mirror episode where people literally get reviewed in life. So I think that is, I think we're over reviewed. I just do. But I think it's fair that books are reviewed.

It's just they're out there. Bang. I've asked you, I've asked your time, I've asked your money. You're allowed to have an opinion on it. Of course you are. my view is you never read the one star reviews on Amazon or the two star, or three, maybe not even the four. So if I'm having a bad day, I will literally go onto Amazon, search by five star reviews and read those and stay in la land I am never gonna please all the people all the time.

I remember my dad telling me that when I was a really young girl, and he did just say, you can't please all the people all the time, [00:59:00] please yourself. And do it nicely. Do it kindly. Do be able to look yourself in the mirror at the end of the day. I can look for myself in the me at the end of the day that I know I have written the best book I can now. I know there are bigger, better books out there than the ones I've written. I read books and go, oh my gosh, this is amazing. This is beautiful. I read books and I think it's not a lot. I know the book I write when I hand it in it is as good as I can possibly give them at that time. And I will have put myself through quite a lot to get it to that standard. Then if somebody doesn't like it and it's my editor, I would listen to that because she is my editor and she's my partner in this, but if somebody doesn't like it once it's published, I can bring myself to say that it's not for you. That's fine. I've literally had people say things like, come to my events and say, I didn't like your last one. Loved all your books for years and years. Didn't like your last one. You just have to laugh 'cause you think there wouldn't be here to hurt me. They just [01:00:00] how that could sound. and I have had to develop quite shrug it off attitude 'cause I one of a very different thing, but I had one of my books adapted into film and then you realize it becomes somebody else's story and lots of different things happened to it then.

And loads of people had views on the films. And I just was I didn't make the film, I didn't make the film and there right elements of the film that I love and adore. And I think the actors did a fantastic job and there are elements of the film that I'd have done differently, but I didn't make the film. So you do get to that point of being able to say, this isn't my job is not to please people. My job. My job. I don't, sorry, readers. 'cause I love you. I really do love readers and I love having readers, but I don't think of you when I'm writing. And I think if I did think of my writers when I was writing, I probably wouldn't write as well as I have to. So I don't try and please, I don't try and please my editor. I don't try and please anyone other than [01:01:00] myself. I really, I am self-critical and I want it to be as good as I can possibly do.

**Parul - LWS:** I love that. And so if anyone listening, if you want to cheer D up on the days when she's not feeling so good, go in, give her a five star review and so she can turn to those when she needs a bit of a boost.

**Adele Parks:** Exactly. And also social media. I am the only person who answers my social media. I don't have assistance. It is me. You can tell 'cause I've littered with typos and exclamation marks. 'cause that is the girl I am. I would love people to get in touch and I answer questions and all that sort of thing. But but I think also I tell you what they do. I tell you what hurts me more than getting a bad review, I think hurts, irritates not being reviewed at all. So I think there is a whole sector of people that don't get irrit don't get reviewed at all. And I mentioned that, the early genre it's now on impossible for a romantic comedy to get reviewed beyond a weekly magazine, a Woman's Weekly magazine, of [01:02:00] which I love the Women's Weekly magazines.

And I think they, they do fantastic reviews and they've been very supportive of me. But there were many years where there was a level, there still is, there's a level of snobbery in certain publications and they would just wouldn't dream of reviewing me. They wouldn't dream of reviewing me now. But they would review, sorry, I'm gonna say something controversial, but I'm gonna say it anyway. They would review this book if it had been written by a man. I know that. I absolutely know that. I'm so tempted one day to write a. A man's name on it, stick it out, just see what happens. But there is still that. Yeah, so

**Parul - LWS:** You've,

**Adele Parks:** than having a badge review.

**Parul - LWS:** yeah.

**Adele Parks:** what I'm for. Be hilarious. Somebody will hear me and then all the broadsheet will review me and absolutely slate me and go she has to be reviewed. Be hilarious.

**Parul - LWS:** I mean there is definitely that thing in publicity, right? Of, crickets. No noise is worse than noise. Some noise. Maybe two more questions from me and then we'll hand it over to the audience [01:03:00] questions. One of the things that struck me about what you've said publicly on a podcast was. How, although you've been so successful for so many years, I didn't feel like, and I don't think you said that you didn't really accept it, and it wasn't until you turned 48 that you finally relaxed and thought, you know what?

Maybe it's going well. And before that, it seemed like there was this fear that readers would leave you, that the success would continue. I'm curious to know what made you realize it was time to change the narrative and accept your success?

**Adele Parks:** I think again, 'cause of how I started, I mean I personally believe very much that our histories and our past and our childhoods and, they make us who we are. And I think, 'cause I had all those experiences in my twenties, I am as somebody who who is aware things can go wrong. am aware the rug can be pulled. and so when things went very well, [01:04:00] it took a long time for me to trust it. and I was quite this, I was quite superstitious about it, I didn't wanna be seen it. I come from a culture that's very much feet on the ground, do not be showy, offy. So there was that, very much my parents keep feet on the ground, I go home, it's barely discussed that I'm a writer. We're barely discussed, we just on. Keep feet on the ground. Don't get overexcited as one of them, but also don't. I, because you only get, we all know I'm very lucky. I've had, sometimes I've had, I've never had less than two book deal. Sometimes I've had a four book deal.

What I'm comfortable with now is a three book deal and I get three book deals with Harper Collins and I love them and I love having that and I have real respect the way it works and the way it's run. And I'm

really comfortable. So three seems like comfortably enough to go, here's my first one in this and we're just getting into our stride. And there's another one, it doesn't feel as though we're already talking about the next contract. 'cause that is a pressure, but it isn't lazy [01:05:00] and we're locked in because it's four bucks. So I have this very lovely thing that I think actually that's a dream suddenly at about 48, I think, when. Other people I knew or the women my age, or the men my age were losing their jobs or, they'd got to a certain level and there wasn't enough people at the top kind of thing. And people lost their jobs. I realized I knew where I was for at least three years and that's a privilege that's not, that's not usual in most people's lives and jobs and work. So I thought, okay, I've been gifted this very particular thing. Stop squandering it by worrying, just don't keep worrying. 'cause it's a waste. I hate waste. I hate was like the worst thing ever. Any form of was wasted food. Wasted clothes wasted time particularly, but also waste of energy.

Waste of worry. So I stopped doing that and I actually changed significantly at 50. is going to surprise people. I think. And again, I if I've said it publicly, but said it to my friends so you can hear. it took me till I [01:06:00] was 50 stop buying everything I owned off a sale rep. So I never shocked except on a sale rep. Now what I've told you, I've had nice advances. I've had money I could have, but I never did. 'cause I used to think, oh, one day you might run out, or why would you pay more if you can get it? So I would do it for the people. Very happy to do that. But I just had that thing about myself. Don't spoil yourself.

Don't get used to this. Don't think it's too much. And then I hit 50 and I suppose I thought, do you know what? You are already quite old whatcha waiting for? When is the day you're gonna put the best dress on? When is the day you're gonna the tea sets? You've always, the crockery you've always loved or, and so I started buying the clothes and you can see if anyone follows me on my social media, they'll see a sudden change. I stopped home, dyeing my hair and went to a salon and got people to do it for me. But I was literally 50. Bearing in mind by then, I had done 20 years of being a [01:07:00] novelist with a decent world, a decent salary, decent life. But I'd always kept that sort of, just been a bit careful. Just don't take it for granted. And then, I dunno, I'm perhaps just a slow pro processor should have hit me earlier that it was all going well. But I just didn't really believe my.

**Parul - LWS:** I'm curious, so I love, thank you for sharing this. I love hearing this. It's just humbling in a way to hear it, just to, again, going back to what I said earlier, I think it can be this perception we have about what success means day to day, and then there's the reality of our lives and. Like you say, the things that we carry with us from our childhood or beliefs we have, which we all work through our own belief systems,

**Adele Parks:** Yes, exactly.

**Parul - LWS:** and, but on that note, I'm curious, what do you say to yourself when you are feeling fearful or doubtful about what you are doing

**Adele Parks:** I tell you what I feel fearful and doubtful about, and then can lead into a wider [01:08:00] thing. I fear,

**Parul - LWS:** around your creativity or writing or success?

**Adele Parks:** more fearful. So you mentioned in the intro the National Literacy Trust and the Reading Agency. I more fear that we won't have people interested in reading and so I'm now, I'm now 56, so fine. if I was starting out now, one of my biggest challenges that I'd be looking at is how do we keep people interested in reading to, to make sure there's a 25 year career for a brand new I don't want a world where

people only read in two paragraph blocks 'cause they can only read as much as on their phone and can't keep the concentration to read a novel.

And, I know enough about statistics to know fewer and fewer people are reading for pleasure, are staying with novels, et cetera. So I have fears on things like is there other enough readers. [01:09:00] Is the quality of books out there good enough to keep people interested? Are we saturating the market with, stuff that's not all that good.

And so it's very me. I read it, I can't remember its title. I'm sure you've all read books and you go, oh yeah, it's fine, but you can't remember it. Five minutes after it's done. And yet there are those books that 10, 15, 20 years after you've read it, you still remember it. I want more of those books, I'm fearful more and that can depress me. So whilst it's not a fear about something, it's even worse 'cause it's not something I can control because that is a bigger issue than, lies at a desk. terms of my creativity, I do, and you'll all be pleased to know every single book at about 60,000 words, I say to myself, this is, the one isn't.

No, it's rubbish. It's rubbish. Can't, this is rubbish. I've lost it. This doesn't make sense. And usually my husband also, not always, but used to work from home all the time. And I used to go into his office and he has a bed thing you can flop on. And I flopped [01:10:00] on this sofa thing and I'd say, oh Stu, I'll probably finishing.

It's rubbish. This is the one that the Lord stopped reading and he went, Uhhuh, that last year. And I went, no, I didn't. And then he'd go, yeah, you did. And he reached for his diary and flicked through and he went, look, you said it. I noted it down. I was like, okay, thanks. And he, and then I, no, first I was like, no, but this year I mean it.

And he went, yeah, no, actually two years ago you said This year I mean it, I think you're gonna be fine. I think it's actually part of your process to doubt yourself. I was like, oh, okay. So this year was really quick, came on and I had the thing and it was like, I dunno where I'm going with this. It's absolutely stupid.

Nothing happens in this book. I literally, about our beautiful mess, said, nothing happens. I was like, nothing happens. And Jim's literally my head is spinning, everything happens the whole dime. And then I realized, ah, no, this is what I always think. I go back to my desk. Honestly, if anything is bothering me, health, friends, family, creativity, the thing I do to make myself well is right.

That was sometimes yoga, but [01:11:00] mostly right. But the only thing that I think I genuinely get about that I can't quite control is this idea that there's a bigger world out. So I contribute. a bigger world problem about whether people are reading or not. So I contribute to that being part of the national literature and the reading agency and talking about it so that hopefully everybody on this call will buy someone a book tomorrow.

Do that. Someone who you think doesn't read enough go and read them. Buy them a book, slim one, because if you buy them a fat one, you'll put them off. Come buy them a slim book and and just try it. Or if you can't do that, just talk to someone about a book tomorrow. Do that. That doesn't even cost any money. Just talk to someone about a book tomorrow. And they, even if it's somebody who says, I never read and it's not my thing, then why and ask them what stories they like or watch or what they watch on telly. And if they watch something on tele and you can think of a genre that they might like, suggest that. 'cause it's down to all of us. If we want to be a writer, writers, we [01:12:00] need to have readers. And it is down to all of us come, convert the people to, to reading and writing and more.

**Parul - LWS:** Beautiful suggestion. Thank you so much and I love Jim and the role he plays in all of this. And on that note he is doable. What a wonderful thing to keep note of your doubts so that he can refer back to them. I'd love to invite you all to put your video on. This is now when we head over to audience q and a, so please turn your videos on.

I would love Del to see you all.

**Adele Parks:** Look at this. Hello.

**Parul - LWS:** Hey, look at all these wonderful,

**Adele Parks:** Look at

**Parul - LWS:** fabulous

**Adele Parks:** big theme.

**Parul - LWS:** So we have quite a few questions to get through, so I'm gonna, I'm gonna go through them. If your video is on, I may call on you to ask, but in the interest of time, I might also race through these. Alright. We start with Leanne who asks, I'm interested to know how Adele edits and balancing revision time between writing time.

**Adele Parks:** Yeah. Every morning when I go back [01:13:00] I will read back at least three, four paragraphs and edit them through. And sometimes I think, oh, no, it's fine. It's good. Sometimes think no, that really isn't sticking. And then if it isn't sticking, I'll go back to everything that I wrote the day before. I get to three different points, 30,000, 60,000 and the end when I reread and I will edit at that point. But I don't get, it's a tip because I used to get overwhelmed at 30,000 and find that I would then go back and start again and never get past that 30,000 or lose weeks. keep going. So at 30,000 quick brief edit, get to 60,000, a deeper edit check. You haven't got anything structurally wrong at that point. Because if you have, your ending will go astray and then you'll be rewriting your ending and then that's frustrating. 'cause nobody likes throwing anything out. I also have a tip about if you think something needs cutting, does take it out and you'll, you might [01:14:00] not want to take it out 'cause it might be a beautiful turn of phrase or a really lovely description. Have a feeling it's not quite right, just take it out. And I put it in my aptly named bits file. And the idea is if I ever need it back again, it's there, it hasn't disappeared. I can pick it up, I can pop it back in. And I promise you, I've never retrieved anything from that bits file. Not once.

Never. if you think it needs cutting.

**Parul - LWS:** I think many of us needed to hear that. Thank you for that. Thank you for the answer, Del. Thank you Leanne, for a beautiful question and hopefully Sue, that also answers your question on editing. Lex has a question around how do you balance the interrogation of the details of that eighth birthday party that you mentioned versus the information you need to present on the page.

**Adele Parks:** Ah, yes. Okay. So the information you do need to go on the page is definitely any of the biographical things. You need to get that down and you might need a few quirks of I dunno, physical ticks or something that's come out. And then if you describe the [01:15:00] physical tick, you might think, why have I got a physical tick in there? I have, I just put it 'cause it's a bit arty. And it sounds interesting if she twitch as her shoulder or is it because on her eighth birthday nobody turned up and she was left there and it

really wounded her confidence and she's actually a much more nervous person than she's presenting as the adult.

And do I need to put some of that backstory in And, don't feel it. 'cause you have asked these two questions. You have to shoehorn the lot in. That is not idea. It's almost like having. A larger of food, but taking out the food you want to cook your meal with, but knowing you have other ingredients in there just in case the meal needs spicing up. So you've made this meal but you tasted it and you go, no, definitely needs a bit of basil in there. And you can go back into your larder and it's there. That's how I see it.

**Parul - LWS:** Great analogy. Thank you. And thank you Lex for that question. Natalie asks, did you reread your original book about [01:16:00] Connie while rewriting this old, this older version of Connie?

**Adele Parks:** I did. So in that part, between the sort of August and the January part of the prep was rereading playing away. And also she turns up, she's only used subplot, but she turns up in young wives tales and she turns as do all the other characters and she turns up in lies. So I'd already actually taken this group of people from their lovely, friendly romantic comedy. Lies lies is very much a psychological thriller. And I'd already. Put them there you, so some of Carris is nodding. So she knows that, that is, Connie goes to the prison, sees Simon, all of that kind of thing. Has her own little world in in lies, lies lives. So I had to read them all because I had to remember the names of the kids, the ages of the kids. Did they have any hobbies that would be useful? Again, because, I have hundreds of people in my head the whole time. It's very tiring. So I just had to re, recall them. But I enjoyed reading [01:17:00] them squirmed a bit. If I'm honest. I find reading, playing away a little bit embarrassing now.

I think it's slightly you wouldn't quite write it that way now, but it was at the time, it was so breakthrough at the time. The idea that a woman could behave badly because of her sexual desires was the most shocking thing anyone had ever heard of, which. Hadn't they read Anna Corina? It happens. It, it did cause a star.

**Parul - LWS:** Thank you for that question, Leslie. Martin asks, do you have an inkling about a new genre you might go for?

**Adele Parks:** I used to say I used to say that I when I met my husband, I was already a writer and he said to me he knew of my books and he asked me what I read and I saw, I read a very Catholic text. I read anything dah, literally don't mind, what about you? And he said I read sci-fi. And I went, oh, except that never read sci-fi. So it was this, meeting of minds. Not, but interestingly, I [01:18:00] do have an idea. Isn't little bit me to say it. It's not really sci-fi, but it's future. That I think I may play with. But I know that the next book is definitely a psychological thriller 'cause it's already written. And I know the one after that is a psychological thriller because I think I'm doing a back to back sequel. I am doing, just announced it now so I've gotta do it. I'm doing a back, it's looking the between now and Christmas. Unless something goes horribly wrong, it's going to be a back-to-back sequels.

The book that's currently called The Book with no name that's coming out in 2026, which we can't find a title for. We found a title and then we found out another book just literally this week or last week being published with that title. so we haven't got a title I think then I will do the sequel to that one.

So I know at least the next two are cycle difference.

**Parul - LWS:** Exciting. I'm really curious about your, yeah. Your new forays.

**Adele Parks:** get everybody to read it, can come up with a name.

**Parul - LWS:** Yeah.

**Adele Parks:** We're

**Parul - LWS:** Send us an email. We'd happily I feel like there'd be a lot of volunteers here.

**Adele Parks:** [01:19:00] Careful. You might find you as suddenly doing that job.

**Parul - LWS:** oh I think you found some firm fans here. So we're here if you need us. There are a couple of questions that were submitted earlier to this interview, so I'm just gonna go to a few of them. Gwen asks, what advice would you have for an 81-year-old disabled elder who has been writing a dynamite story for two years but is now discouraged?

Overwhelmed by politics and has stopped writing.

**Adele Parks:** Oh, start writing. Just go back to it yeah, it amazing that you're 81 and doing it. Just do it, think of the lovely Julie Cooper who, you know. Brought out a new book last year, and she is 80. She was at that time, 87. So there is no right or wrong time to be writing. And my mom used to say this in Latin.

I don't know it in Latin, but there is a phrase, isn't there? That's, don't let the bastards get you down. And I think, sorry, but I think that is what you have to think at the moment. We can't control everything that's happening. You [01:20:00] can control your own space and environment, and you might find that writing your own book right now is exactly what you need. And honestly, if your 81 year olds seen a lot, you've seen good times, you've seen bad times, crack on. Respect yourself enough to know what you have to say is important and you've got this time to say it. Say it.

**Parul - LWS:** Thank you and thank you for that question. Gwen one question from Daniella. Since you've written such emotionally complex and heavy themes for so many years, family betrayal trauma, I'm curious how you carry those emotional weights without being consumed by them. How do you stay connected to the world beyond your work while still protecting that inner quiet?

**Adele Parks:** it's really interesting because, I said at the very beginning that I think I at the very beginning that I said I, I had gone through all these deaths and it was horrible and, there's so much pain and grief everywhere. I couldn't write sad things. I just needed not to examine that because it was so scary for me. I thought if I [01:21:00] went down there, I would probably not be able to scramble back because now I am much more settled, much happier. I've got lovely husband grown up son who's adorable and, parents and I'm lucky, super lucky. So I think I can write darker things because I have this network around me and I have this, I have a lot of good in my world so I can go there and pull myself back. Also, I am aware now it is just a story and that's actually the point of it. It is a story where pretty much everybody gets their just desserts. It's much easier than, for instance, watching the news. One of the things I do go through phases of is not watching the news. And that might be helpful for some people.

And my father is outraged by that. He thinks it's terrible because he thinks we should be informed. And I say to him, I'll watch it like once a week or twice a week because things, you still know enough. we have [01:22:00] got this world now where we could watch it 24 hours. I absent myself from that is. I don't gossip, I don't stay in a room. If there's gossip, I don't have that bad energy. I move on. I don't wanna know. And if somebody wants that, I just I'm not pushover, I will say, or the kind of thing I talk about. Thanks.

And just move on. And I think knowing you can control your environment like that is something that comes as you get older.

I think when you are younger, you probably listen to more or put up with more because you don't wanna be left out. You don't wanna be seen as the stick in the mud or a bit boring. And I actually am a bit of a stick in the mud. I am a bit boring at times, but now I can own that. I do yoga, I do art. have lovely I have lovely people like yourselves. I have, I meet a lot of people and I see a lot of good I see a lot of people with good intentions and goals and creativity and kindness, and I think that makes me [01:23:00] very lucky. At the moment I'm doing this sort of events and I can go to events and it's quite exhausting 'cause turn up and there's nobody there, or very few people there and you think, oh, I thought it would be a bit packed out, and, but then you realize that there's 20 or 30 that are there Absolutely.

Are into this and you suddenly you're on their energy and so you just have to look for the good. You. It's so much easier said than done. And I know, haven't even got into it, but I had a slipped disc that left me very, like it wasn't just a slipped dose, it was trap nerves and there was complications, all sorts of things.

So in my early twenties I had very poor health, whereas now I have really good health. So I know I'm very lucky to be able to say all these things are positive. and I know that's not the case for everybody. I really do know from firsthand hand and secondhand experience that. People are very close to me.

It isn't the case that everybody is fit and healthy. But even if you're not, if you can possibly keep finding and pushing on to look for your good, read a cheerful [01:24:00] book, paint a picture, go outside for a walk, go out, go outside. Just sit in the sunshine When it is sunny, just find your way through it.

'cause it isn't easy. It isn't easy. Being human is really tough. And they don't tell you that 'cause you wouldn't do it. when you're little, you tell, I tell my kid, I remember, I look back and I think, God, I used to tell him all the time, all things get easy when you get older. I'm not sure I told him the truth at But anyway, it's what we've got.

**Parul - LWS:** Stage advice. I love that. I love that attitude. And this brings us to the end of our interview. Thank you so much, Adele. I think you have definitely some fans or new fans in here. We're so grateful for your time and energy. You work so hard at what you do and we're honored that you gave us a little bit of your time.

**Adele Parks:** I am so grateful for your time and energy because, I genuinely, if I was just out here talking to the screen on my own, wouldn't be as much fun would it. So I really do appreciate, and honestly, I am, available if you want to track me down and find me. I am on my socials. I don't really do, I do Insta and [01:25:00] Facebook and that's about it. shocker. I'm not on TikTok, but I am very available and it's been lovely getting to know you all and I wish you all so much luck in your writing journeys and just keep loving it. Just enjoy what you're doing.

**Parul - LWS:** Thank you, so thank you so much. Friends, thank you for being here. Please unmute yourself. Let's give Adele a London writer's salon. Round of applause. I think she more than deserves that.

**Adele Parks:** Oh, I'm gonna sit and read the

**kerry:** Thank you so

**Adele Parks:** now.

**kerry:** much.

**Adele Parks:** Oh,

**Parul - LWS:** We'd all be standing up. If this was a theater, by the way, I think we'd be standing up and demanding more time with you. But Adele, we wish you all the luck, but we are gonna be behind the scenes following you buying your books. Go give Ade a five star review. I wanna be able to have lots of new five star reviews to cheer her up when she's having a bit of a barrier.

**Adele Parks:** my book, now is the time. I know Amazon is not everybody's cup of tea. [01:26:00] First choice is always library or independent book seller, but if means are the issue currently on a ridiculously cheap offer 'cause of the, that week they have.

**Parul - LWS:** yes.

**Adele Parks:** Amazon deal or whatever.

It's about eight pound for the hardback. That fancy hardback with a nice gold foil. But yes, if you can support your indies, if that is a choice available to you, they're the guys.

**Parul - LWS:** Wonderful. I love it. It's a great book. I've read it. I'd recommend this book. I'd recommend going back to the first one as well. It's really interesting to see that difference. Thank you so much everyone for being here as always, appreciate you being part of the space. Love how much energy and love that you gave to Adele as well.

We are bright to hour in just under 25 minutes to do Join us for a silent writing session. But that's it. That's a wrap. Thank you so much. Thanks Adele. Thanks for being a star. Thank you. Bye.