

Our family had been thinking about getting a dog, but we weren't sure if we were ready for one. A friend of mine told me that she'd read on line about a place—I can't recall the exact country—where you could *borrow* a pet to “try it out”. We didn't end up getting a dog (adopted 2 cats instead), but I had my idea for the first Pet Library story!

I wanted to write about a little girl who desperately wanted a pet but whose parents didn't like pets. The tale was only too familiar to me. How often had I heard my daughter's own friends grumbling about how their parents wouldn't let *them* have a pet? Any pet. Their parents told them that pets were “too much work...too much trouble”. And so, my heroin Audrey Plum was born.

Before I even finished a draft of the first book, *Grand Opening*, I knew that I was writing the beginning of what would become a series. After I finished *Grand Opening*, I sent out a few queries to some traditional children's book publishers but wasn't able to place the story with any of them. But I believed in The Pet Library and started work on *A Hare Raising Tale* (Book #2) and *Something Fishy* (Book #3). That's when I think I found my true voice in the stories and those of my characters. The sibling rivalry between the twins (Nick and Naomi) who are two of Audrey's close friends in the books came to life naturally. And Audrey's quirky ways had me laughing out loud as I wrote. For me, that's the magic of storytelling and what I truly love about writing: making characters come to life on the page.

I started to think about self-publishing, but wasn't sure that I was up for the task. Most writers have a day job that actually pays the bills. For us, just finding time to write is always a challenge in itself. With self-publishing, you are writer, editor, publisher, and publicist all in one. It's a lot of work! How would I find the time to do all that? But when COVID hit and we went into lockdown, I started working from home. And suddenly, there was more time. Not a lot of it. But enough.

I chose Amazon's KDP self-publishing program because it was the most user-friendly platform I could find. They made it very easy. Having decided to self-publish, there was still only one question left. Who would illustrate the story? Having been a keen art student in my younger years, I knew that I wanted to do the drawings myself. Learning to illustrate Audrey and all the other characters was so much fun! It helped me to connect with them on a whole new level.

The fourth book *Wild Thing* is due out April 2022 with more harrowing adventures for Audrey Plum and her friends at the Pet Library.