

Windstorm Creative

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Blue Works, the Young Adult division of Windstorm Creative, is pleased to announce the first two books in an exciting and innovative YA series: **The World Secret Service Short Division**.

Case One: Bobblings. Thirteen-year-old Lucie Lavinia Lakewood lives with her father, grandfather, uncle and six brothers in a comfortably unkempt, tumble down house. Lucie has a vague idea that the men work for an organization tasked with solving the perplexing mysteries that plague the world. Whatever they do on a daily basis, they don't pay Lucie much attention, but that doesn't really bother her—life is comfortably predictable, full with school and friends.

This comfort and predictability, however, is about to come to an end. One day, Lucie receives a letter containing a scrap of paper covered in numbers. With the help of her best friend, Rodney, she decodes the numbers which leads them to investigate why kids all over the country are crazy about ugly, useless blobs of plastic called Bobblings. By employing their intelligence, wit and cross country running skills, they find themselves traveling far from home, grappling with the horrors of mind control and the seductions of an evil, charismatic man. In the process, they stumble across two startling Lakewood family secrets: Lucie's father is the CEO of the World Secret Service and Lucie's mother, who was supposed to have been killed in a car accident in the mountains of Spain long ago, is, in fact, very much alive.

In **Case Two: Stolen Children**, Lucie and her best friend, Rodney, have been officially made agents for the Short Division of the World Secret Service. The World Secret Service resolves dangerous situations threatening the world. The Short Division is charged with solving the Service's cases that involve young people.

During Case One: Bobblings, they discovered Lucie's mother hadn't died in a car accident years ago, but had been kept in servitude all that time. She is undergoing counseling to help her recover from her imprisonment. Lucie and her family wait anxiously for their mother's return.

Meanwhile, toy company websites are being attacked with a virus that paralyzes them. At each attack, a code is left behind. Lucie and Rodney are assigned the case. They're to discover if the virus author is taunting his victims by leaving behind a calling card—or whether the codes are a call for help. At the same time, homeless aid organizations are reporting street children are disappearing. Is it possible the two events are related?

Using many talents: intelligence, wit, fraternal aid and pluck, Lucie and Rodney discover the origins of the attacks. But international travel, rock climbing and a terrifying underground race must be employed before a wicked man's plans can be thwarted.

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Mind manipulation. Matriarchal enslavement. Saving the world. Just another day for the Short Division of the World Secret Service

TITLE: The Short Division of the World Secret Service, Case One: Bobblings

SERIES TITLE: The Short Division of the World Secret Service

AUTHOR: Robin Kerr

SUMMARY: When a secret code arrives in the mail, Lucie Lakewood and her best friend Rodney Keino realize regular middle-school life is over. And why is everyone so obsessed about the strange and ugly Bobblings? Lucie and Rodney Keino use cyber-tracking, wit, fast running and just plain smarts to discover the lure of the Bobblings and thwart the evil plans of the world's latest mad villain. Thirteen-year-old eighth graders one minute, agents for the World Secret Service the next.

RELEVANCE: Using wit, fast-paced action and some very cool math and code breaking, The Short Division of the World Secret Service books encourage kids to use their brains to solve mysteries. The series also provides a positive role model for science- and math-minded girls in Lucie and features a multicultural cast.

PRINT RUN: 15,000

GENRE: Young Adult Fiction

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EDITOR: Cris DiMarco

DISTRIBUTOR: Ingram; Baker & Taylor

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Kidnappings. Cyber-crime. Rock climbing.

Just another day for the Short Division of the World Secret Service

TITLE: The Short Division of the World Secret Service, Case Two: Stolen Children

SERIES TITLE: The Short Division of the World Secret Service

AUTHOR: Robin Kerr

SUMMARY: Thirteen-year-olds Lucie and Rodney are back on the case! Street children are being kidnapped, and e-toy companies are being infected by a strange virus and destroyed. All their resources will be required: Code-breaking, rock climbing, international travel and the sharpest wit. Time is short and distances far. Who knew the holidays could be so fraught with peril?!

RELEVANCE: Using wit, fast-paced action and some very cool math and code breaking, The Short Division of the World Secret Service books encourage kids to use their brains to solve mysteries. The series also provides a positive role model for science- and math-minded girls in Lucie and features a multicultural cast.

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Kiwi Humor, Code Breaking and Writing for Teens

A interview with Robin Kerr. This interview may be reprinted as a whole or in part.

Lucie and Rodney are recruited to be agents of the World Secret Service. They are given cases and they have to solve them. No magic, no fantasy, no aliens? Don't you pay attention to the market trends?

I do, and I love books that include fantasy adventures, but I wanted to see if I could write a good adventure series about fairly ordinary kids put into challenging situations where they had to rely on nothing but themselves. Their aids would be their intelligence, wit, physical abilities and technology that most kids today have access to. I wanted to strip away the good-old-standbys—the time travel, the magic wands, the gadgets that can destroy villains and feed the starving millions of the world with the flick of a switch. Every situation in the book had to be plausible and physically possible. I want my readers to think that they could be part of this adventure, too.

The humor is interesting in the book. It isn't a comedy but there is a slightly off-beat quirkiness throughout.

Sometimes I wonder if my humor is geographically influenced. I am a New Zealander (now living in Portland, Oregon) and we are known for a certain warped sense of humor. Certainly, my husband and I joke around and tease our son mercilessly. Often, in social situations, we catch people looking at us with slightly strained smiles. We're never sure if they didn't hear what we said because of the accent, or if they simply didn't get the joke. I've been submitting stories to publishing companies for many years, and it has been fairly interesting because sometimes, after submitting books to non-US publishers, I have had feedback such as, "The humor is over-stated," and then from some US publishers, "The humor is too subtle."

What other aspects of your series do you think is influenced by your New Zealandness?

Being a Kiwi and growing up in a small country you tend to look to the rest of the world for all things—entertainment, news, politics. I wanted this series to be global—to touch on topics that effect young people all over the world—to have characters who have multi-ethnic backgrounds and stories which have international settings. Each book in this series will include travel to a different country.

The first book, *Bobblings*, uses cross country running as a focal point and your second book, *Stolen Children*, uses rock climbing. Why did you pick these sports and not, say, basketball?

A significant reason is that I am familiar with both sports because I have taken part in them. I still run a bit and occasionally, as a family, we'll go for a climb. Another reason is getting back to the global aspect—I want to have sports that all sorts of kids from all over the world can relate to, whether they're a classic sports jock or more of a loner. I also wanted to pick sports that would appeal to young women and men. Each book in the series will feature a sport—probably erring on the side of extreme. Whatever the sport, it has to provide Lucie and Rodney with a skill that will help them solve and resolve the latest case.

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Are you trying to send a message with this series?

I simply wanted to write a straight forward, realistic adventure series that young people could actually imagine being part of. Almost accidentally, I think a message is emerging which is, kids are much more capable, intelligent, interesting and opinionated than we give them credit for. Everywhere, bad people try to take advantage of the weak and often their target is children and young people—but children aren't weak. Given the right amount of leeway, they are perfectly able to fend for themselves, thank you very much and while they're at it, probably fix up the colossal mess the adults have created in the world. But I don't think that is a popular notion. Sometimes I think the media's focus on the angst and horrors of the teenage years, in particular, becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy—and also a cop out.

Did you envision this series primarily for boys or girls?

Initially I wrote it with the girl market in mind—but again, a girl market that is tired of teenage angst, of girl meets boy, of how to break into the popular clique and wants a story that's different. I wanted a smart, strong, independent girl as the main character. As I was writing it, I realized that Rodney was becoming a very important character (almost by himself) so I hope that the series can appeal to boys as well. Certainly there are no guns, no slobbering, carnivorous monsters, and they're too young yet for car chases, but not all boys want to read about perpetual blood and guts. We'll see.

At one point I realized I could drive myself nuts trying to target a certain market since it all really comes down to speculation. I remember clearly, a few years ago before J.K. Rowling became a household name, that an editor told me there simply wasn't a market for fantasy. The book reps. couldn't sell fantasy. Well, that turned out to be nonsense. In the end I decided to write a series that I enjoy and would have enjoyed as a kid.

So you think a typical teen will relate to your characters?

What is a "typical" teen? That's my point. There is no such thing. Typical teens are sporty and geeky and lazy and busy and distracted and generous and selfish and Hispanic and Asian and Euro and Black In my series, I'm simply allowing them more freedom and responsibility than adults would normally be comfortable with, but I'm hoping my readers will feel, given that amount of trust, that they could solve the perplexing problems of the world, too.

Robin Kerr was born and raised in New Zealand. She now lives in Portland, Oregon with her husband, Peter, and son, Nick. She quite liked the sciences at school so she sought a masters degree in biochemistry which explains why she is now writing and illustrating fiction books for young readers.

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