**WELCOME**

THE NOVEL

It is the turn of the twenty-first century, and therapy is making an entrance on to the United Kingdom’s stage.  Previously a conversational taboo, addiction clinics are becoming the norm and eighteen-year-old Kat is just another patient with just another problem.

Naïve, frightened and in denial, Kat is admitted to the Welcome Recovery Clinic: a large country house in a hamlet on the south coast of England.

As she becomes familiar with the whacky and wise residents of her temporary home, she discovers her desperate need to control life is no different from their drive to lose their grip on it completely.

Most striking of all, accompanying Kat into the clinic is her crucial companion: Anorexia. Funny, sassy and seductive, Anorexia is Kat’s faithful sidekick, pulsating amidst a crowd of recovering peers, named after their drug of choice (including Gin, Heroin and Help (Compulsive)).

As the story progresses and Anorexia’s grip on Kat becomes more urgent, thirty-year-old Jack joins the group, returning to the clinic for his second time and changing the dynamic between Kat and Anorexia irreversibly.

When tragedy strikes in their troubled microcosm, Kat must fight to end the war with her compelling illness in order to protect the next generation.

*Welcome* is a modern, dark comedy with an ancient-Greek twist. It is a story for anyone who has felt lonely, or desperate, or stuck.  It is for anyone who has a loved one struggling with mental illness or who is suffering themselves.   It is for everyone who wants to be reminded of the strength of human will power.

**The Origins of Welcome**

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In a first world which celebrates mental health awareness, this beast of an illness is still an awkward subject. The more eyebrows raise when I mention the *Welcome* project, the more I want to champion a greater understanding of this crippling disease. Much like cancer, the earlier this illness is recognised and treated, the higher chance there is of a full recovery. The difference is cancer is respected as a tough illness to eliminate. Unfortunately, like most misunderstood diseases, Anorexia and her colleagues are a topic which need more light shone upon them, so we can build funds to fight them with the respect and attention they so sadly require.

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I wasn’t sure how to go about tackling this, because I was dusting off a section of my life I had shelved.  I had the characters ready and I knew exactly what I wanted them to achieve, but a structure was needed to demonstrate the beginning, middle and end of the life of Anorexia (which usually spans many years, often decades). I was aware its longevity could pull the story down, but I didn’t want to miss a beat of what can enable a full recovery.

I picked up my guitar and thought I’d see what would happen.  I was surprised by how quickly and easily the songs created the story which became *Welcome*.    I switched regularly between composing the songs, to moving back to my lap top to write the novel.

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By the time I was running away with the novel and had put down the guitar, I realised I had written a musical version. The music and the novel reflect each other.  I am in discussions with a book-to-screen production agent, so *Welcome: The Musical* can be produced for television.