

Dear Reader,

I'm so excited this book is in your hands right now!
The Sideways Orbit of Evie Hart is very special to me.

After the publication of my YA novel, *Half My Luck*, I decided to make the switch to writing middle-grade fiction – re-exploring a time when I thoroughly enjoyed reading, but also a time when I felt as though it was just me, and only me, struggling with an overwhelming ‘worry brain’.

‘Anxiety’ wasn’t a word I heard until many years later. And it’s something that’s never gone away. Just when I thought I knew everything there was to know about myself and my own triggers, Sydney’s 2021 lockdown came along to deliver a lightbulb moment. Until then, I’d never acknowledged that I had such a need for rules and parameters, or the anxiety that was derived from rules around me not being followed – discovered at a time when society was discussing (and disregarding) rules and regulations more than ever.

I knew I wanted to write about what anxiety felt like for me at that age, while being endearing and humorous. But this fresh self-realisation was what I needed to fill the gaps of a rough skeleton of a book idea I had, and to be able to talk to this audience about it in a relatable way.

I wanted Evie Hart to be a loveable character. Someone struggling with recognisable changes (from the breakdown of her family unit to the fear of starting high school), yet with empathy and consideration for others and a unique point of view on the world around her.

And why the astronomy? It was one of my favourite things to learn about in primary school. Once I started researching and getting words down I found there were so many correlations I could make – the mysteries of space and the mysterious workings of the mind coming together to take my character on a journey of learning in more ways than one.

Through *The Sideways Orbit of Evie Hart* I hope young readers dealing with their own uncontrollable head chatter and heart flutters and nervy tummies will see that they’re not alone – and that it’s okay to say it all out loud.

Happy reading,

Samera