



# A Q&A INTERVIEW WITH NADINE WILD-PALMER

Article Author:

[Nadine Wild-Palmer](#) [1]

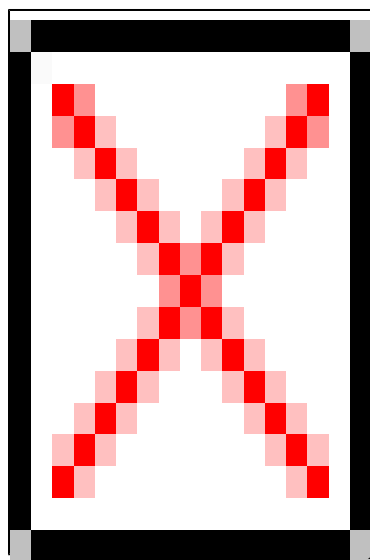
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The author **Nadine Wild-Palmer** answers our questions on her debut children's novel, **The Tunnels Below**.



*After a chance encounter at a party, **Pushkin Editor-at-Large Sarah Odedina***

*decided to commission **Nadine Wild-Palmer's***

*debut children's novel, an epic quest adventure set in a complex, richly imagined underground world. It is now published as **The Tunnels Below**.*

***Nadine** answered our questions about her book.*

Could you sum up [The Tunnels Below](#) [3] for us?

**The Tunnels Below** is a rites of passage fantasy novel that follows the protagonist Cecilia Hudson Gray as she descends into an extraordinary world after an average family day trip on her 12th birthday goes awry. Her little sister Hester has gifted her a 'marble' and after it tumbles out of Cecilia's hand and onto an empty train carriage she is delivered to a world of mysterious composite animal faced people called The Dwellers. Their light is powered by a majestic Mr Sparks and the community is ruled by the infamous Jacques d'Or. But who can Cecilia trust in a world of sighs, where one's taste in music really does have a flavour and furthermore, how is she ever going to get home?

**There are so many extraordinary scenes and adventures in your book. Where did the ideas come from originally?**

It came from my own personal experience of being lost and helpless in the dark on the underground. I remember I had just received some bad news about my sister and got on the tube to go home, I sat for a long time on the carriage at Kennington completely absorbed in my troubles, and I forgot to get off. I heard the bleep on the doors and it prompted me to leave the train. But I was too late. The doors slammed shut and I was whisked away into utter

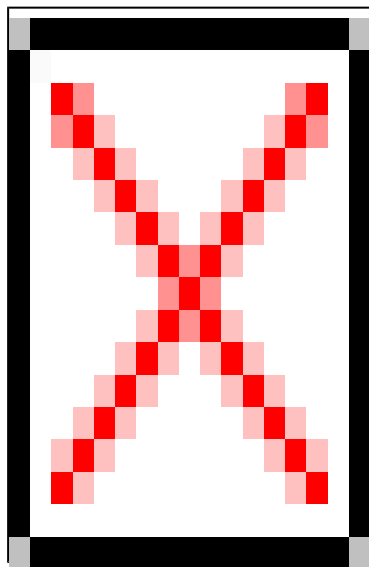
darkness? Eventually I found the courage to find the driver, who was a lovely man called Ben. He told me they were turning the tube around in what they called 'the loop'. When he delivered me back to the platform I sat there writing in my notebook and the roots of a story I had already been working on really began to take hold. My sister is well now, for the record!

### **This is your debut novel. What would you say was the aspect of writing the novel you found hardest**

Letting it go. Books like birds need to be set free to flutter in murmurs from mouth to mouth, to be passed from hand to hand. But I have always been anxious about whispers so I guess in essence what I am saying is, now it is free part of me fears what people will say about what is inside my head.

### **What's your favourite scene in the book and why?**

I loved writing all the bits with Cecilia and Hester. I also got a kick out of writing secret messages to people who know



me through mannerisms or the language I used. However, I think if I had to choose a scene it is when Cecilia and Jacques d'Or meet face-to-face for the first time. I relish writing a villain!

### **Which books from your childhood have inspired you?**

This is a tough one, there are so many. I found it hard to read as a child. I am a very slow reader. I found out when I went to Sussex University that I am dyslexic and dyspraxic which might have something to do with it. **The Hobbit** which my teacher Mrs Antony gave me in year 7 was the book that really got me reading. **Matilda** helped me to see magic in the mundane. **Dr Seuss, Oh the Places You'll Go** has seen me through the highs and lows it's the book I always give as a gift regardless of the person's age.

### **Will there be a sequel to *The Tunnels Below* or are you working on something brand new?**

I am working on something new at the moment but a sequel is not completely out of the question!

[The Tunnels Below](#) [3] is published by Pushkin Press, £7.99pbk.

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