

**Editor Monica Costa and Shopaholic super-fan contributor Monica Mazzari were dying to interview the ultimate born and bred London Mum Sophie Kinsella for ages. With her wit Sophie did not disappoint them.**

Sophie doesn't need much introduction. She became a success overnight with her first novel in the best-selling Shopaholic series, *Confessions of a Shopaholic*. The book's heroine, Becky Bloomwood – a fun and feisty financial journalist who loves shopping but is hopeless with money – captured the hearts of readers worldwide.

Becky has featured in six further bestselling books, before the latest *Shopaholic to the Rescue*, published this month.

Last Spring Sophie turned to teen fiction with a novel titled *Finding Audrey* inspired by her experience as a mother of five children.

Sophie is – without a doubt – a London mum ad honorem with five children (boys aged 18, 17, 10, five, and a three-year-old daughter), a husband-manager she seems still very much in love with, a job she loves doing (she writes 1000 words every day) and a great sense of humour. She certainly knows a lot about mums' life.

We wanted to find out her secrets to a happy life and also know a bit better the author of the novels, which will keep us good company during the grey winter nights to come.

She is so convincing and so close to us all and knows how to get us close to Becky's adventures, make us laugh and sometimes make us feel melancholic, providing moments of real evasion and freedom from the daily mummies' worries.

The compulsive obsessive shopping – which is so typical for most women particularly new mums – has hugely contributed to the success of her novels. There will be queues to get her latest comeback Shopaholic book, *Shopaholic to the Rescue*.

We cannot wait!

**Q:** Some have defined you as a chick-lit writer? Do you agree? Will you ever explore other narrative genres in future?

**SK:** If the 'chick-lit' label makes it easier for readers to find my books then I'm OK with that. I like 'wit lit' and 'romantic comedy' too. Writing YA was really enjoyable, and when I wrote under my real name Madeleine Wickham, those books were more ensemble pieces, so I wouldn't rule out exploring other styles too. I've always secretly wanted to write a thriller!

**Q:** Are you a bit like Becky Bloomwood who loves shopping and has 100+ hidden places where to keep money for extra shopping for emergency situations? Or have you been inspired by one of your friends/family for this character?

**SK:** I do have, what I like to call 'shopaholic tendencies', but I'm not sure I shop quite as much as Becky...! There are parts of me in her, but my sister and friends also inspired her character.

Sophie's first young adult's novel *Finding Audrey* strikes many cords with London Mums. It begins with a mother who has been driven crazy by her teenagers and throws her son Frank's computer out of his bedroom window in an attempt to eradicate his online gaming. She has lots of personal experience and again she manages to convey all these contemporary themes into witty and feel-good stories for young adults.

Audrey is a teenage girl suffering from Social Anxiety Disorder. She has experienced bullying, and as a result has become virtually a prisoner in her own home. This is the story of her journey to recovery, with the help of a boy named Linus. It's sad in places, but funny and romantic too.

**Q:** There seem to be quite a few teen novels out there at the moment about troubled teenagers (such as Audrey). Does this reflect a suffering generation or is it pure fiction?

**SK:** Audrey is pure fiction, but she and Linus and Frank do reflect the real struggles that teenagers are going through. I've always written what I see around me, and I see lots of teenagers facing difficulties we never had to face up to a few years ago. Everything can feel very frustrating and intense to teenagers, and I wanted to convey that – as well as the magic of teenage first love.

I hope that you will find the story of Audrey and her chaotic family a funny and uplifting one. Audrey is brave, charming and resourceful girl and I hope she will inspire you as much as she has inspired me. I always fall in love with my heroines, but with Audrey I feel a special protective fondness, too.

**Q:** Are you an avid reader of the Daily Mail like Audrey's mum? Do you have much in common with her? Or is your mother like her? Where did you get the inspiration for such a hilarious character?

**SK:** There are, ahem, some similarities between Anne (Audrey's mum) and me! Anne constantly worries about her family, trying to make sure she's keeping everyone alive and healthy. I think I have some of that in me too. I recently started making fruit and veg smoothies in the morning for my family, and that might have turned into a bit of an obsession!



**Q:** Are you planning more Young Adult novels or a sequel to *Finding Audrey*?

**SK:** The truth is I don't know myself yet. I do have some ideas but it always takes me time to decide whether there's a story there I want to tell. Becky normally comes knocking, so you never know, that might happen with Audrey too...

**Q:** What is your parenting style?

**SK:** I'd like to say collaborative, reasonable, loving, encouraging and positive. Would my children agree? Err... ☺

**Q:** You are the ultimate London mum: you are super multitasking and have 5 children in all age groups. You seem so content and efficient. And when we met I sensed that the amazing partnership with your husband is essential to keep you sane. What's the secret of making marriage work so well?

**SK:** I feel very lucky that my husband and I enjoy working together – that's not to say we don't go through tricky times, but we try to keep our sense of humour and not take everything too seriously. Our older children are now grown up enough to help out with the little children, too. But it's a crazy, chaotic existence – like it is for most London mums I imagine!

**Q:** If you were Queen of Britain what would you do first?

**SK:** Abolish homework till you're at senior school. I didn't do any homework till at least age 11 and it left me with so much more time to enjoy childhood.

**Q:** In your online videos you tell us a lot about yourself. We know that you love the jewels at the Tower of London, fashion designer Alexander McQueen, your favourite holiday destinations... Is there an exclusive anecdote you could share with London Mums?

**SK:** My new craze is healthy food gadgets! As well as a Nutribullet, I've bought a spiraliser and I hoped to pass off 'courgetti' as pasta to my children. They were seriously unimpressed!



*Finding Audrey* is available now in hardback and will be published as paperback in the Spring 2016.

**Q:** What is your guilty pleasure?

**SK:** Too many! I'll say reading Agatha Christie in a nice hot bath.

**Q:** You went to Putney High School in Putney. London Mums HQ is also in Putney. Please share with us a Putney memory... We love Putney too!

**SK:** I used to love blackberrying on Putney Heath. Our mother would send us out with Tupperware containers and we were expected to come home with a haul!

**Q:** What are you up to next?

**SK:** I have just been in Brazil to meet readers at a literary festival. Now I will be busy promoting my new Shopaholic book, which comes out in October, and it's been such a joy coming back to Becky.

