

In Other News

Q&A with Dale Robbins

1. *What inspired you to write In Other News?*

When I initially thought of the concept for the book, I researched sexual assault statistics and books extensively and, to my surprise, couldn't find other novels which featured male victims. This was particularly shocking to me because men make up one out of ten rape victims, yet they are rarely talked about or portrayed in any media, including television, movies, and books. I realized I needed to be the one to write the book and allow male survivors to see themselves accurately portrayed in a story.

2. *Where does the book title come from?*

The title (In Other News) was initially a chapter title for when the indictment against Parker Sullivan is announced. The anchorwoman goes from reporting on a local murder to very matter-of-factly cutting to the indictment by saying, "In other news, we have an update on the PSU rape case." This stuck with me throughout the writing of the book, and I realized it was always meant to be the title of the novel. The characters—including the media and people around Marlon—only see him as a headline or a news item; a mere blip in their minds before they switch over to the next hot topic. This reflects how insensitive people are when it comes to a person's trauma.

3. *When did you realize you wanted to be a writer?*

I first started writing when I was 16, but I didn't get serious about writing until I was 21 when I started writing my debut novel, In Other News. Seeing my mother write and publish two novels between that time showed me I could do it as well.

4. *How did your life experiences shape the writing of this book?*

This story is dear to my heart because of how much I relate to the main character's struggles. During my incredibly brief time in a public high school as a new student, I experienced an unimaginable level of bullying, which resulted in physical violence and my subsequent homeschooling for the remainder of my high school years. I have also been the victim of sexual abuse and endured the shame and uncertainty of criminal proceedings. Both situations were separate from one another and almost unbearable, so imagine going through something which involves both of those, as well as the media spotlight and public ridicule. Mix it all together and you've got In Other News.

5. *What can readers expect to take away from this book?*

There are many lessons to be learned. First and foremost, I hope it will open up the audience's eyes to something they maybe didn't realize existed: male sexual assault victims. Marlon will put a name and face to this rarely discussed topic. I also think it will show them what it means to come to terms with a terrible tragedy while trying to find a sense of justice—whatever that justice may be. While time may not heal all wounds, it does make them less painful. And lastly, identifying toxic behaviors people exhibit without realizing, especially when dealing with someone suffering from mental illness or a tragedy. We've all been guilty of saying, "It could be worse" or "At least...", but these are classic signs of toxic positivity and only downplay somebody's situation or feelings.