

# Dream a Little Dream

BY ALLISON BAGGIO



## One mom's fulfilling JOURNEY to becoming a published author

As mothers, it can be easy to forget about our own dreams as we attend to the "in the minute" needs of our kids. For example, someone needs a drink, a snack, a diaper change. Then it's lunch time, bath time, a play date. When we finally do get them tucked into bed each night, there is not much left of ourselves to give.

I know this as well as anyone. Six years ago when I had my son, Noah, I made the decision to quit my full-time job in order to stay home and be with him. I chose quiet and comfy in the suburbs over daily Go Train rides, business attire and lunch meetings. I was happy with this choice, but no matter how absorbed in it all I became, I was determined NOT to give up on my own personal dreams. So instead of forgetting about the things I really wanted to accomplish in life, I simply tucked them away and whenever I had time between feedings or during naps, I would bring them out and admire them like treasured trinkets. I'd give myself a minute to be hopeful about what more I could accomplish in life. After all, just because I became a parent did not mean I had to become less of me, did it?

Before I had Noah, I had written the first draft of an adult fiction manuscript, *Girl in Shades*. The experience as I remember it was so lovely and fulfilling—tucked away in my spare room on the weekends typing on my laptop,

taking a nap afterwards (there were a lot of naps pre-baby!). As I worked out the story, I knew that I was embracing a calling I had been having since I was a child. I also knew that I had crossed a huge boundary into actually becoming a writer by simply *allowing myself to try*. Within a year and a half, I had finished the manuscript and had received some great notes from a writing mentor on where to go with it next.

### And then I gave birth to Noah and my whole world changed. ...

Who has time to write a novel when you are tired, stressed, overwhelmed and in total awe of the new life you have just created? I began to wonder if I would ever have the time or energy to write again.

The thing about true callings, though, is that they do not go away. They whisper to you in the night when you are nursing in the dark. They call to you while you are taking your first real

shower in three days or inhaling some Kraft Dinner over the sink. So even though I was also establishing myself as a freelancer during those early days with Noah, I did not give up on my manuscript. I had faith in it, and more importantly, in myself. I wrote while Noah napped and revised when he had gone to sleep for the night or when my husband was "on duty." I thought about my characters all the time and I kept coming back to them. Chapter by chapter I plugged away until eventually, I got through all of the notes.

Three years later I was about to give birth to my second child—my newly completed novel was submitted into the world only weeks before labour hit. My second baby brought more sleepless nights, a confused three-year-old to care for, and eventually sibling squabbles as well as heart-warming displays of affection. But somewhere in the middle of it all, something else grew. When my daughter Lily was seventeen months, I found a literary

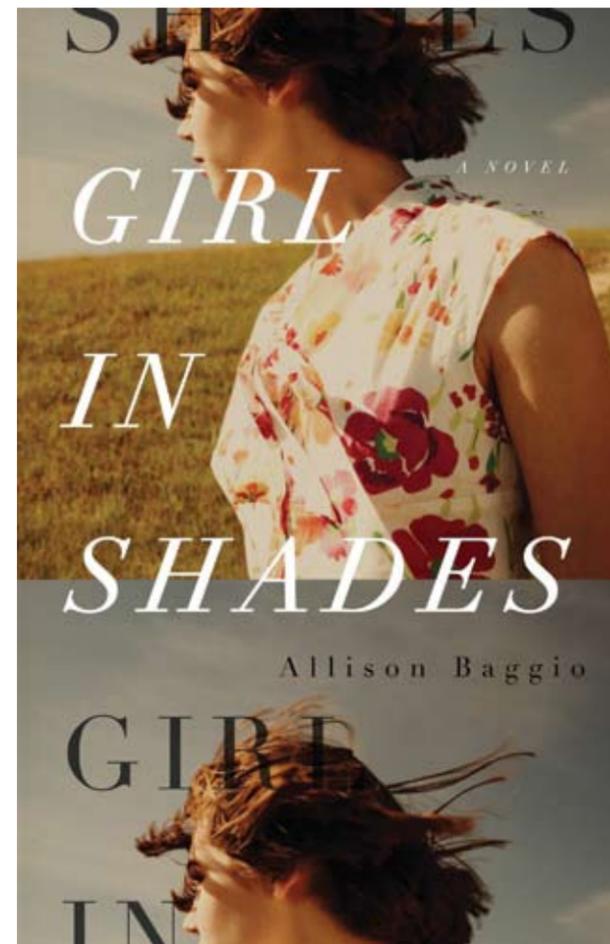
agent, then a publisher and a publishing deal. It was amazing. *Girl in Shades* was no longer going to be my private labour of love—the thing that secretly kept me going as I raised two children full-time—it was actually going to have a place in the world, and so was I.

Today I have a happy five-year-old, an adorable two-year-old and a novel that has just hit bookstores. I am caught up in book launches, readings and signings and I have been given the enormous privilege of being able to do something that totally fulfills me; something besides being a mother. The ironic thing is that holding tight to my own dreams has actually *made me a better mother* as well. All mothers should allow themselves the opportunity to embrace the pursuits that are secretly calling them. Whether our callings are creative,

professional or personal, there is no reason they have to be ignored just because we have kids.

There is always a way when our heart is truly in it. By not giving up, we can accomplish every dream we ever had for ourselves. It just might take a little longer than initially planned, and it may have to be worked around school trips, temper tantrums, long hugs and peanut butter and jam sandwiches.

Allison Baggio's first novel *Girl in Shades* is now available from ECW Press. You can learn more about the book below, or follow her blog at: [www.allisonbaggio.com](http://www.allisonbaggio.com).



## Girl in Shades

Eleven-year-old Maya Devine has grown up with a warped view of reality. For one, she sees colour around people's bodies, and can sometimes even hear what's going on

inside their heads. These insights make everyone a bit more interesting, but the one person she'll never figure out is her mother. Marigold has never been like other moms, but still, Maya sometimes feels like she is all she has.

When Marigold is diagnosed with cancer and vows to spend her final days in the teepee she's set up in the backyard, Maya's life quickly becomes unbearable. Neighbours and strangers, believing Marigold a prophet, camp out in front of the house, and Maya's father grows ever more distant. Thankfully Maya has Corey Hart, from whose pouty lips "Never Surrender" seems to issue for her and her alone. But Marigold's death leaves questions unanswered, and there are some wrongs that even Corey Hart can't right.

Moving from mid-1980s Saskatoon to the Indian country-side almost a decade later, *Girl in Shades* follows Maya's search for her mother, her father, and above all, herself.