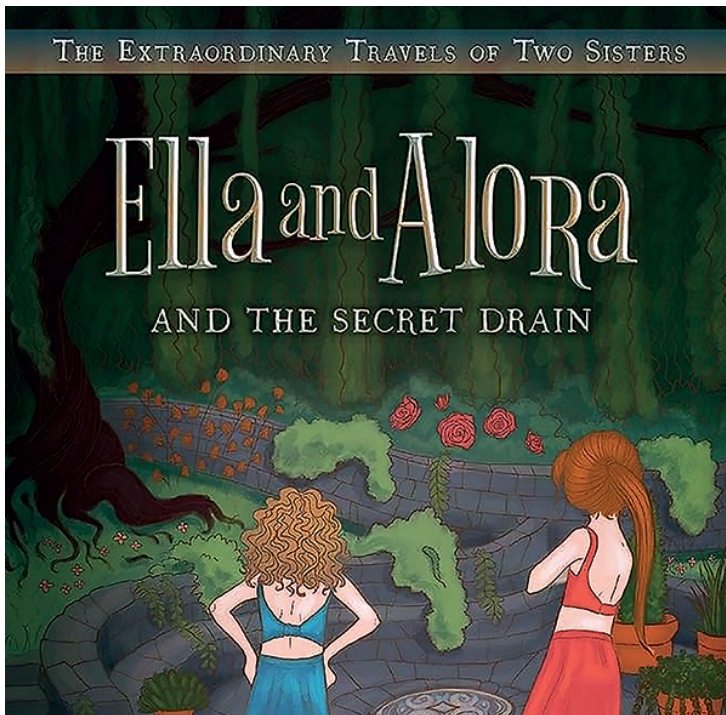


Ella and Alora and the Secret Drain is new children's book by local author O'Dwyer



Do you ever wonder where water goes when it passes through a drain?

A sewer, perhaps? A stormwater management pond? Maybe. But take a second to use your imagination.

That's just what local author Kathryn O'Dwyer did, with an assist from family friends Ella and Alora, in developing her debut children's book, 'Ella and Alora and The Secret Drain.'

Published earlier this year by Friesen Press and available locally through Bookworms & Co, Ella and Alora tells the story of the title characters, and their elder sister Lily, who take a deeper look at what lies just beneath and beyond!

'Ella and Alora were swimming in our backyard, playing basketball on the court, and while we were sitting at the patio table, the girls came up and said, 'What's the secret drain for in the secret patio.' I had a moment of thinking, 'What are they talking about?' then I realized they were talking about the lower patio, which is a bit hidden, with a drain cover carved out of stone to match the stone of the patio,' Kathryn tells The Auroran.

'We all sat down and talked about where it led to, we made some notes, wrote down some ideas, and some of the places the girls wanted to go. Then I promised them I would sit down and write the book. It took me a couple of months to work it out in my head and do the research. There really is a secret drain, but I'm not sure it leads to where it does in the book!'

The timing of the book's development was, in many ways, fortuitous for Lily, Ella, and Alora.

Soon after brainstorming what lay beyond the drain, their mother, Alexa, was diagnosed with Stage 4 breast cancer, a battle that has been hard-fought over the last two years.

'Surgery after surgery, chemo, the radiation, they were all aware what that journey was like and it was good for the girls to have

something to focus on," says Kathryn, a former high school English teacher.

Given her background in academia, writing wasn't far from her wheelhouse. In both that career, and in her business career, she has had plenty of experience writing academic papers, along with freelance pieces on travel and lifestyle. But publishing a children's book was a different matter altogether.

"The book is quite educational but, I think, in a way that children don't realize they're being educated," she says. "All of that comes from the animals in the book; in each place the girls go, they learn a little bit of history, geography, what the animals are like, and the issues they have. For me, it would be really good if the children actually learn something but also enjoy the whole idea of, 'If it is me, where would I like to go and what animals would I like to see?' The way we talk about it in the book, you don't actually see the faces of the characters other than Lily, a teenage Parisienne. But even then you don't see her in detail because everybody can imagine it's them standing there on a glacier, standing in Kenya, or standing by the Pyramids.

"I just want [young readers] to be excited about the book because the girls and I are very excited and very pleased, I think, with how our project turned out. We're all very happy with the look of the book, the feel of the book, the illustrations and the layout. We're just excited and we'll see how it goes. This is our first foray into this world and we want to see what response we get!"

And, if the response is all positive, the creative quartet has drafted enough for a second book: Ella and Alora and The Secret Well.

In the meantime, Ella and Alora and The Secret Drain by Kathryn O'Dwyer, produced by FriesenPress, is available locally through Bookworms & Co. and for order from most major online book retailers including the FriesenPress Bookstore, Indigo, Barnes & Noble, and Amazon. The eBook is available for Kindle, Apple Books, Kobo, Nook, and Google Play.

By Brock Weir
EditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter