

Mining creativity

Engineering a future in fiction

Charlotte Nash's father died when she was just 12 years old, but he made a huge impression on her in their short time together. It's because of him that Charlotte says she developed a fascination for all things mechanical. Her father worked in the mines of Blackwater, central Queensland, and Charlotte too has created a career in the mining industry.

She did degrees in both medicine and engineering, but after university, she took a job as a mechanical engineer, working in mine sites around the country ... until she discovered another calling. Charlotte fell in love with writing fiction. But her love of remote landscapes, country lifestyles and prime movers has remained.

Her second novel *Iron Junction* (Hachette, \$30) is the story of Dr Beth Harding who takes a locum job in a mining town in Western Australia's Pilbara region. She meets farmer-turned-mining engineer Will Walker, but they have to negotiate the difficulties of a fly in-fly out relationship.

"My dad fostered an interest in me in the mechanics of how the world works," Charlotte, 34, says. Raised by her mother after her father died, Charlotte and her younger sister grew up in Capalaba.

Charlotte found a penchant for technical writing while working as an engineer, so she headed back to university.

"I thought I wanted to be a technical writer. In my first class, I met (Brisbane author) Kim Wilkins. She was my lecturer and my tutor ... that class really inspired me."

She enrolled in Queensland Writers Centre courses and found her true calling. "I was always good academically, but this was the first thing I really felt a passion for," she says.

Her first book *Ryders Ridge*, a romance set in Mount Isa, was based on her own experiences of working in the Gulf Country as a medical student. "When I was writing *Ryders Ridge*, I became frustrated with romances where the ending was the woman giving up her career and everything she wanted because she had found the perfect man. I wanted to be more real about how people manage those separated relationships."

Iron Junction draws on her experiences as an engineer working in the Pilbara and on the relationship that she and her engineer husband

Kevin Stewart.

"I am trying to ... explore what working in these areas does to relationships," she says. "The hardest part is the coming back together again. You get used to being able to function without that other person in your life. There's a fair bit of work in re-establishing that connection."

Charlotte is editing her third novel with an anticipated release date of April 2015.

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