

Jenny's romances help her... and prisoners "escape"

Scottish bestselling novelist Jenny Colgan has told how writing romantic comedies helps her to escape to another place – and how the books even help prisoners serving time in tough American prisons to "escape" for a while.

Jenny Colgan, 51, launched her new feel-good novel "Midnight at the Christmas Bookshop" in Edinburgh at midnight on Sunday night.

To mark the launch, John Kay's bookshop in Victoria Street was transformed into "The Christmas Bookshop" from Colgan's novel set in the capital's most picturesque cobbled street.

The event also opened this year's annual Book Week Scotland festivities, which get underway on Monday.

Colgan, whose cosy romantic comedies are enjoyed by millions of fans around the world, said: "We all need to feel good, otherwise we're all going to go mad. There are so many awful things going on in the world and I don't think we're designed to take it all in. It can be unbearable.

"Since childhood, books have always been somewhere that I have gone and immersed myself in. Writing is fundamentally the same. You go somewhere else.

“I write about nice places I want to go to and the kind of people that I like – funny people and nice guys. There will be trials and tribulations but everything will end up well.

“I do it for myself first and foremost and hopefully that comes across to people who are reading it as well.”

The author, who lives between Edinburgh and Aberdour in Fife, has written more than 30 uplifting romantic comedies, selling over nine million copies in 26 languages in countries around the globe.

She revealed she has avid readers in some unexpected places. While many of her biggest fans are women, some are men locked up behind bars in tough US jails.

She said: “I don’t think my books are just for women – in fact I have many loyal male readers, some of whom are in American prisons.

“I’ve a big pouch (of letters) at home to read over the weekend. They don’t normally tell me what they are in for but they are often from correctional facilities. I do try to reply.

“Most people just say ‘thanks, I was having a bad day and your books are quite helpful’ and at the end of the day that’s amazing. It’s just really nice when people get in touch just to say thank you.”

The award-winning author often sets her stories in imaginary locations, but she said *Midnight at the Christmas Bookshop* was “a love letter” to Edinburgh.

She said: “I first came to Edinburgh when I was about 15, to see the Festival and it’s never left me. People come here for the first time and just get blown away by it. I love seeing their faces.

“You feel so proud – it’s a beautiful city not just for

Scotland but by world standards.

“The new book is a Christmas story about a bookshop in Edinburgh trying to cling on by the skin of its teeth but it’s about Edinburgh too. It’s a love letter to the city.”

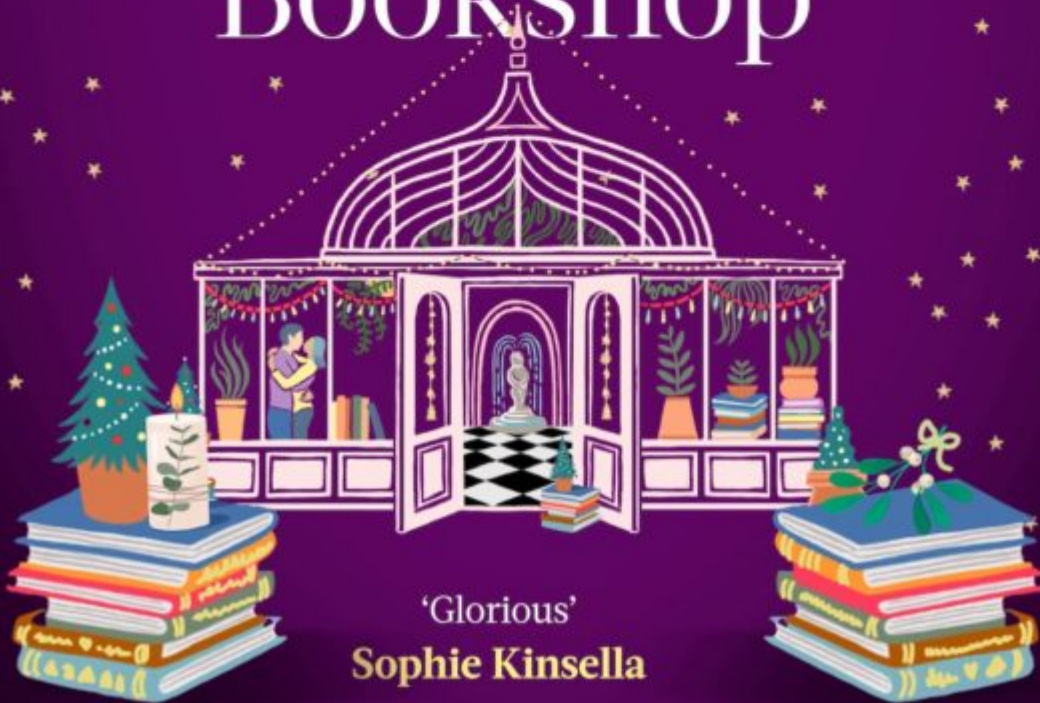


John Kay's bookshop was transformed into the fictional Christmas bookshop in Jenny Colgan's new book. Photo Kajsa Goeransson

The *Sunday Times* bestseller

JENNY COLGAN

Midnight at the Christmas Bookshop



'Glorious'
Sophie Kinsella