

Fairlight Books secures ‘timely’ debut novel from Butler

RIGHTS FEB 16, 2022 BY KATIE FRASER



Sarah Jane Butler

Fairlight Books has secured *Starling*, the debut novel from Sarah Jane Butler about nomadic lives and the search for belonging.

Editor Laura Shanahan acquired world rights directly from the author via the publisher’s open submissions programme. *Starling* will be published in September 2022.

Starling tells the story of a young girl who has grown up “off grid”, travelling in a camper van with her unconventional mother. Combining fiction with elements of nature writing, the novel explores themes of belonging, alternative lifestyles, climate change and respect for the natural world.

The synopsis reads: “Starling can trap a rabbit, cook a meal from a hedge and hear a bailiff coming from a mile off. All she has ever known is a nomadic existence, travelling in a camper van with Mar, her strong-willed mother. But Mar has cut them off from their community, and this winter they’re stuck in deep mud in a wood, with no fuel, no money and no friends. One morning, without explanation, Mar leaves and doesn’t come back. Utterly alone, Starling must learn to survive without her mother and build a life on her own terms. An offer to stay with an old friend draws her into a more conventional way of living – but can rootless Starling ever find a place where she truly belongs?”

Shanahan said: “*Starling* is such a timely novel, exploring ways of living closer to nature while underscoring the importance of human connection and community. I fell in love immediately with Sarah’s exquisitely crafted writing, and her wonderfully earthy descriptions of the natural world in particular. Starling herself is an unforgettable character, with a winning combination of spikiness and underlying vulnerability – I can’t wait for readers to meet her.”