



# SECOND HELPING

**Sharon Owens** tells how she had a small part to play in the creation of **Fiona Cassidy's** delightful debut novel

## Sharon Owens 1

**T**his is **Fiona Cassidy's** debut novel and I like to think I had a very small part to play in its creation. For Fiona got in touch with me some time ago to ask for advice in getting published. And I told her that there are no rules to speak of in literary fiction. But that any successful 'popular female fiction' title must have a sympathetic heroine at the centre of it. And it doesn't matter how good the writing is if the heroine is a mad old shrew.

Fiona thanked me and I got on with my own writing, and then one day I opened my mail and I found a freshly printed copy of *Anyone For Seconds*. I was almost afraid to read it in case Fiona had been swayed in the wrong direction by my advice. But thank goodness the book is a lovely, sparkly, energetic tale of two single parents falling in love.

Right from the very beginning Frankie McCormick and Owen Byrne's romance is beset by meddling relatives, a disapproving boss and complex childcare issues.

In fact, they've hardly had time for a kiss and a cuddle before everybody starts making comments about Frankie neglecting her two children so she can run about the town like a scarlet woman.

Owen's teenage daughter is vehemently opposed to the idea of sharing her father with anybody else, let alone a new love. And in the middle of all the chaos and confusion, Frankie forgets to take her pill on a romantic weekend away and suddenly there's an unplanned pregnancy to consider.

Cue a hyperventilating granny worried about further scandal and a great-granny with a tongue as sharp as a box of razor blades.

Poor Frankie is left being sick over a day-tripper's shoes on Newcastle promenade, wondering how she can possibly hang on to her precious PR job at the local college where Owen teaches.

**Anyone For Seconds?** really is funny, too. I especially enjoyed the stand-up clashes between Frankie and her stubborn clan.

And I hope Marian Keyes doesn't take offence when I say that five years from now we could be

looking at a brand new queen of popular Irish fiction in the form of **Fiona Cassidy**.

This lovely little story had me giggling away and nodding my head in agreement. And I totally understand Frankie's rage at everybody sticking their great big noses into her personal life.

Never mind the Taliban! They would have nothing on rural Ireland, where a feisty young woman in love can be seen as a serious threat to social cohesion.

**Fiona Cassidy** has a full-time job and a big family of her own to care for, so God help the rest of us authors if she gets a good clean run at her next novel. I thoroughly enjoyed this book and look forward to meeting Fiona some day soon when I will be able to congratulate her in person, and thank her for making me laugh on a wintry November weekend.

I have also nothing but the greatest admiration now for single parents across the land. And I must confess that the insights in this book helped to lift the veil from my eyes.



For single parents do have to be everything to their children: father, mother, breadwinner, nurturer, friend, confidante and disciplinarian. And anyone they go out with must be vetted and approved by possibly a busload of nosy, bickering relatives. Oh, and the children have to like them, too.

**Fiona Cassidy's** own life story is a fascinating one. Perhaps this is where she gains her bravery, wise words and boundless energy from?

Fiona, I salute you on all fronts. I also hope you have a long and happy career.

**MY VERDICT:** A lovely, sparkly, funny debut novel. Perfect for wintry nights in.



**ADVICE:**

Author  
Fiona  
Cassidy