

We grew up with her books, and now she's writing for our adult selves. Welcome back, Judy Blume – we've missed you, says Hannah Dunn

Judy Forever

Tell us about your new book, *In The Unlikely Event*.

It's about a series of tragedies and how those tragedies affect three generations of families. It's a blend of real and fictional.

What inspired it?

There were three plane crashes in my hometown of Elizabeth, New Jersey, in 1951 and 1952. I've never forgotten the events, but I'd never written about them. Maybe it was a question of waiting for the right time. And I had to be able to tell it in the language of the news reporters of the 1950s. I don't think anybody today would say, 'The plane broke apart like a swollen cream puff.'

Do you enjoy writing?

Most days, during a first draft, I would tell you no. I hate it. And then something happens that will make me say, 'Oh yeah, I love this.' I enjoy it when I can take it down from the bookshelf and say, 'Oh, look what I did – how did I do that?' It was easier in the beginning when I wasn't afraid of anything. I didn't know enough to be nervous and those early books just spilled out. Now I have an audience waiting.

Which book are you most proud of?

They're all my little babies, I don't like to choose a favourite. I'll always be grateful for *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret*. It brought me many, many, readers. And *In The Unlikely Event*, because it's complicated – I liked figuring it out.

Your books got us through our teenage years.

Who was there for you?

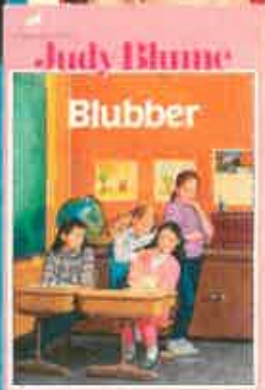
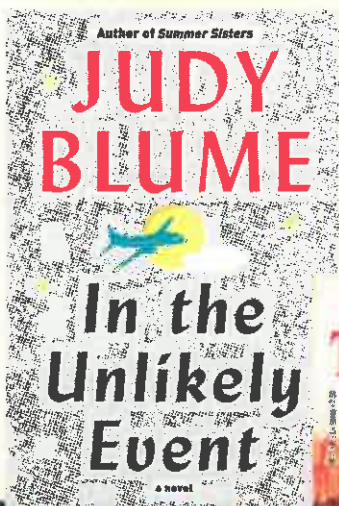
By the time I was 12 I was reading my parents' books, because there weren't teenage books then. My parents gave me a great gift: they told me reading is good and never questioned what I read.

Who's been your biggest role model?

Growing up, it was my father. He was adventurous and it was exciting and fun to be with him. He led me to believe I could do anything. Sadly he died very young at 54, when I was 21, so we never got to know each other when I was an adult.

What's your best thing in life?

My husband, George. I'm never bored with that man. I always vowed that I would never let anybody be such a big part of my life, because I thought my mum was too dependent. He's given me what I thought wasn't possible. I say to him, 'You'll never be able to leave me because I say all these great things about you.' »
In The Unlikely Event by Judy Blume (Picador, £16.99; out June 2nd)



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