



## Interview with **Gerda Debyser** author of the debut novel 'Sterrenlicht'

### Where were you born, and where do you live now?

I was born in Laken, Belgium. That is where the royal palace is! But I don't live next to the king; I live some 13 kilometers outside the city centre, in a green district.

### What is your date of birth?

9th June 1957.

### What's your education?

I have bachelor in Tourism, because I love languages, travelling and meeting people.

### What did you want to be when you grew up?

I was going to be a mum of 4, and a school teacher. And possibly maybe an artist and a writer. In the end, I only deleted 'school teacher' of my list.

### What is your favorite book?

The diary of Anne Frank, that touched me very deeply. But when I read the debut of the Belgian author Bart Moeyaert, it was the first time I felt the urge to write such a beautiful story myself one day.

### What is your favorite music?

I like many kinds of music, but the hits from the sixties and seventies stuck with me the most. You probably still know them.

### What's your favourite movie and why?

Disney is always cool! Doesn't even matter how old you are to love those movies.

### Are you a gamer, or do you like board games? What's your favorite game?

I'm not a gamer at all. I love company and cosiness, not really games per se. We sometimes play UNO, but actually I prefer Hangman and Scrabble.

### Do you have pets?

No, although our neighbour cats like to come and visit.

### When did you know you were a good writer?

When you love to do something, you learn to do it by yourself. In school I always made my essays way too long. And when your penpals bundle up your letters and read them like a book, then you know.



### What do you do besides writing?

I love drawing; it's wonderful to get away from the world and live in the fantasy you designed yourself.

### Are you proud of your debut Stargazer?

More than you can ever know! And right now, I am steadily working on my next novel!

### Where did you find the inspiration for his story?

The inspiration came when I read an article about a boy with a strange allergy. This boy led a very intriguing life. It's the same allergy my main character Lester has in Stargazer. I did not want to be too specific in the book about it though; I wanted to romanticize the idea for a teenage readership. After that, several fantastical ideas all just fell into place.

### How did you create the main character?

The story is told from the point of view of Minke. I think a lot of young people can relate to her. She is an ordinary girl, doing what every teenager does, thinking like they think, feeling what they feel. She guides the reader through the story, in the unusual world of Lester and the confused world of her grandmother.

### Who is the most annoying character in your book?

Each of my characters has reasons to act out, but in the end no one is a real pain.

### How long did it take you to write this book?

It took me a full year. But not nine to five: I wrote when I felt like it and when I had the time.

### How did you end up with Abimo publishers?

They had interest in another one of my books, but that one just didn't make the cut. It gave me the push to write Stargazer.

### What would you like to accomplish in the future?

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