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## Marcy Dermansky

### Twins

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**Q: How did the idea for your novel, *Twins*, first come to you?**

A: I had a scene: an overly obsessed twin convincing her sister to get matching tattoos. That was all I had to start with. I liked it and I kept on typing to see what would happen. Much to delight, more and more things kept on happening. Plot came rolling.

I had written short stories for a long time and knew that I wanted to write a novel. After many false starts, the voice of Sue (who comes first in the novel) felt strong the very start. I felt like I could live with her and go. I am glad that I did.

**Q: You are not a twin. Did you have to do any research on twins for your portraits of Chloe and Sue, and—if so—what kind?**

A: It's true I am not a twin. I loved the idea of writing about something that I was not. For one thing, I could not be accused of writing an autobiographical first novel (This happened any way, and of course, in some ways it's true.)

I did my research to write *Twins*. I read a great many books on the subject, including numerous psychology texts and also a historical account of the infamous Nazi doctor Joseph Mengele. Perhaps most helpful of all was an interview I conducted with an identical twin; she could not remember a time when she did not have issues with her twin sister. As I had already written one hundred pages of ever growing conflict between Chloe and Sue, I was immensely relieved to know that I was not completely off-base in my fictional characterization. I've had a great response from twins who have read the novel.

**Q: Basketball is featured in *Twins*. What is your connection to the sport, and is the character Rodney Markman modeled after any real-life professional player?**

A: One thing I love about writing is the way the story can take you places you did not necessarily intend to go. Originally, the fact that Lisa's father was a professional basketball player was a happy accident. When Lisa and Rodney Markman's role in the novel grew, I thought it would be a wonderful bridge between Chloe and Mr. Markman (I rarely think of him as Rodney).

The good thing is I do know about basketball. Growing up, my family had season tickets to Nets games. My older brother taught me how to do lay-ups. I was a great shot, but too short to ever consider going out for a team. I played tennis in high school.

Rodney Markman is based on Michael Jordan. Why not model your character on the very best? I, at least, think he's the best.

**Q: Over the course of *Twins*, Chloe and Sue undergo major personality transformations. Did you envision one or the other twin as being the more sympathetic character?**

A: As I wrote *Twins*, my sympathies constantly changed. To start with, I was in love with Sue. She was the poor outsider, the non conformist, the rebel upstart. She lost patience with Chloe, who wore all that tiresome pink and hang out with the popular girls. The bad girl is always the more interesting character—the one to root for.

I hated Chloe a little bit too. The marvelous part was when I wrote Chloe's sections, I got to go into *her* head. How it felt to be Chloe. Poor, poor Chloe, who never got to do what she wanted, be who she wanted, living her life on permanent hold. My sympathies switched.

As the girls got older, and made their way through high school, I felt as if I was being unduly cruel to Chloe. Sue flourished; she had Smita and Lisa and her brother, her dog, an entire new school to admire her. Chloe was all alone. The injustice. I always knew that I would make it up to Chloe, which hopefully you will agree that I did.

**Q: How did you decide to alternate narration between Chloe and Sue, and what do you think this narrative format adds to the texture of the novel?**

A: I want to lie: say I knew all along that I was going to alternate voices. Of course, I didn't. I think it's clear that I don't like to plan too much while I am writing a first draft. I want my story to surprise me just as much as it will surprise my eventual reader.

Originally, I started out solely with Sue's narration. I reached a certain point and I got painfully, hopefully stuck—and then I started writing Chloe. The entire project became that much more alive. I think *Twins* is such a richer story. I tried to take Sue and Chloe's section into different narrative territory, with enough overlap, that the reader would be able to see a shared childhood through different lens.