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## Elizabeth Noble

**Alphabet Weekends**  
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**Q: How did you conceive of alphabetical activities as the organizing plot structure for your novel, *Alphabet Weekends*?**

A: I got the idea, as I get a lot of great ideas, from talking with my fantastic girlfriends. They are wise and funny and smart. We were talking about how you keep a marriage— busy with work and children—fresh and exciting, and out of its rut. (And please understand, ruts are not always bad places to be—they can be comfortable and contented.) Trying new things together, having new adventures came up, and the alphabet idea followed on from that. I went A-for-abseiling with a bunch of mates and had the time of my life, and the concept grew from there. Structurally, it worked brilliantly for me—my twenty six chapters were already outlined. It gives the book its unique 'hook.'

**Q: At any point in your writing were you unsure of how to accommodate the next letter of the alphabet?**

A: It was important that the story came first, and the letters second. Otherwise it would have seemed contrived. When I got stuck, I would brainstorm, with my husband, with my mum, with my girlfriends, over a few glasses of wine. You'd be amazed how long the lists would get with suggestions, not all of them strictly repeatable! I had a few fixed markers—V for Vegas, for example—although I wasn't sure when I chose that one what state Tom and Natalie's relationship would be in when they got there. I was keen to start with abseiling. It showed the reader that Tom knew what he was doing, even though, for Natalie, it seemed proof that the idea was doomed. *Alphabet Weekends* was great fun to write. It took on its own momentum.

**Q: Natalie and Tom's relationship is just one of many that you explore in *Alphabet Weekends*. Would you describe yourself as a romantic by nature, or are you just drawn to exploring relationships in your fiction?**

A: Relationships are the whole point, aren't they? Otherwise, why are we here? Not just romantic ones, but the relationships we have with our parents, our children, our friends. They all shape us, inform who we are. I'm fascinated, too, by the way one impacts on another, so that, emotionally, nothing exists in isolation. So for *Alphabet Weekends*, I chose three romantic relationships, all in very different places. But they are happening to people close to each other, and what I particularly enjoyed exploring was the way in which what was happening in one affected the way the players reacted to others. That is how real life is, I think. I can't imagine writing a novel that didn't have relationships at its core. And as for romance, who doesn't love that?! As a woman who has been happily married for a decade, it is a wonderful job to get to write about the first flushes of love—all that breathless excitement . . .

**Q: If you were casting *Alphabet Weekends* for a movie, who would you like to see in the roles of Natalie and Tom?**

A: This is hard, because when you are writing you have your own invention of how your characters look inside your head –and, for me, that is never an actual person. But it's beyond a dream to have a novel turned into a movie (so long as they didn't want to change it too much!), and if were in charge of casting, I'd want Kate Winslet for the Natalie role. I'm a huge fan. There is something utterly real and down to earth about her. She has a great laugh and the right curves. And some big, twinkly-eyed hunk for Tom—someone like John Corbett or Vince Vaughn. And I'd want to sit next to him at the premiere, obviously!

**Q: What is your next project?**

A: My next project, my fourth novel, is going to be finished around Thanksgiving 2006. The summer of 2005 was all about relocating myself and my daughters to New York City, where my husband relocated at the beginning of the year. Something of a mammoth task! It's been incredibly stressful and busy, but we are finally all reunited, in the most amazing city. Time to get back to the computer!