



## About JO KNOWLES

Jo Knowles is the author of *Lessons from a Dead Girl*, *Jumping Off Swings*, and *See You at Harry's*. Of writing, she says, "I try to read at least one novel a week. If you want to be a writer, I suggest you try to read a book a week, too. Reading makes us better writers. I'm a firm believer in that." She lives in Vermont with her family.

### Author JO KNOWLES introduces *Living with Jackie Chan*, the follow-up to *Jumping Off Swings*

*This book picks up where Jumping Off Swings left off, but also works as a stand-alone novel. What made you want to revisit Josh as a character?*

I think of all the characters in *Jumping Off Swings*, Josh was the one whose future we're left feeling most unsure of. When I get letters from readers, it's almost always Josh, not Ellie or the others, that they ask about. The more readers asked, the more I thought about Josh myself, and I realized that I needed to find out what happened, too.

*What was it like writing about teen pregnancy from the male's perspective? As a female writer, how do you get inside the heads of your male characters and make them so convincing?*

We very rarely get to read about the male perspective when it comes to teen boys and pregnancy, and I think we all sort of make assumptions about how differently pregnancy might affect boys and girls. While I'm sure there is a big difference, I don't think it's fair to assume the experience is any less life-changing. It depends on the individual, not their sex. This was what I wanted to explore from the very beginning when I started writing *Jumping Off Swings*. The more I thought about Josh, the more I wondered how his experience would continue to affect his life and how he lived it.

*Josh and Stella become very close during their karate practices. What characteristics of Josh and Stella make them such good friends for each other at this point in their lives?*

I think they both dream of escaping from their current situations in order to reinvent themselves, or maybe just to figure out who they really are. Karate is a first step. It's something they both do separate from their usual friends. Something that becomes just for them. I think for both of them, karate is a window that gives them a view of themselves they've never seen before.

*Who is the character you are most drawn to and why?*

I really love Larry. I wish I had a Larry in my own life. You know, someone who bounces into the room and makes you feel like you can do anything? We could all use a Larry in our lives, I think. My inspiration for Larry originally came from one of my husband and son's karate instructors, who is full of positive energy. But Larry took on a life of his own as soon as I put him on the page. He was such a joy to write about.

*What do you like best about writing for teens?*

I think I'm drawn to writing for this age because I found those times so complicated and confusing myself. My writing process usually starts with a deep need to understand why a person behaved a certain way, or made a certain mistake. I want to explore how a person got from point A to point B. I've always been intrigued by what experiences shape us and lead us in certain directions. I think a lot of what happened to me as a teen shaped who I became, so I naturally revisit those times in my books.

*What do you hope readers will take away from Living with Jackie Chan?*

I hope they take away the same thing I believe readers take from all books: a deeper understanding of this crazy world. I think all books have the potential to inspire kindness and compassion due to the very nature of showing a reader another point of view. I'm convinced that the more we read, the more compassionate and open-minded we become. I'd love to think my books contribute to that in some small way.

*What is your favorite line from the book, if you had to pick one?*

It would have to be the very last one, and I hope it doesn't give away any spoilers! But it's this: "I'm glad you came."