

EMBRACING THE BUDDY MOVIE AIR

Charlotte Collins talks to Rebecca Faller about her first novel, *Renault Five*, an autobiographical girlie adventure which takes her and two childhood friends on a road trip of a lifetime

In the summer of 1990, Rebecca Faller and her two school friends decided to leave Hampshire and embark on a road trip across Europe.

Inspired by her continental adventures, the 48 year-old Hampshire author has written her first book, *Renault Five*, which has just been published.

An autobiographical novel, *Renault Five* is set in the 90s, following the story of three young and single women – Sark, Flee and Becky – as they travel across Europe, meeting colourful characters and experiencing sex, drugs and rock and roll along the way.

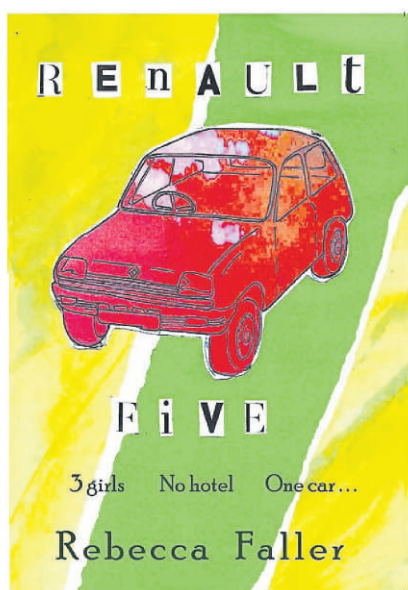
Rebecca and her friends had always planned on going to university. But in 1989, just as they were old enough to go, the Conservative Government began freezing student grants, introducing student loans in their place. Unable to afford the growing cost of going to university, and feeling fed up and frustrated, the young trio came up with a different plan.

Rebecca said: “We decided to leave the country – in a huff really – and decided we’d go on an adventure. We bought this old car and off we went!” Buying an old *Renault Five*, they set off for France two days before Christmas, much to the amusement and annoyance of family and friends. Over the course of the next six months, the car became their home.

“That car is the star, really. It kept on breaking down, but we loved that car. We even had a little library in it, on the back shelf!” says Rebecca.

Together they travelled through France, Andorra, Spain, Portugal, Morocco and Gibraltar, and each night the three friends would write up their adventures in their diaries, along with sketches and cartoons of the places and the people they met.

Rebecca ended up staying in Gibraltar at the end of her travels, and she now works at the National Art Gallery: “I always anticipated coming back. But I decided to stay here, and I ended up making a family here.” But her ties to Hampshire still frequently bring



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Rebecca back to Britain. She is returning for the upcoming book launch, and is currently planning a reunion with her former travelling companions.

“The three of us are actually going to be meeting up in Portsmouth. We’re very close, we’ve known each other since we were five. So whenever we book a hotel together we book one together with three beds – we like to be together!”

Rebecca always knew that she wanted to write the story of her travels, in the hope that it could one day be turned into a film. But life got in the way, and she found herself unable to work fully on the novel until 2013. Determined to turn her adventures into a novel, Rebecca locked herself away for a week in a house in Spain with the three diaries, and set to work.

Using the diaries, Rebecca found that it was fairly easy to recreate the early 90’s atmosphere: “The diaries were invaluable – there’s all these cultural references that I’d never have remembered without them. It was a trip down memory lane, and it was a bit like stepping out of a time machine once I’d finished!”

Rebecca combined the three diaries into a comical and detailed account of living and travelling in a small car, filling her novel with cultural references and Hampshire slang.

“When we three are together we use that language still. I thought, I’m leaving it in there, it’s authentic! And people that have read it love that about it,” Rebecca says.

A keen reader herself, Rebecca has enjoyed recent releases *Girl on the Train* and *Gone Girl*. But the mother of four sees her own novel as an antidote to the recent trend of “girl” books: “There’s been this current spate of these so-called liberating books for women, but the female characters are often angry and aggressive. Where’s the happy-go-lucky, doesn’t need a man adventure? I wanted my story to be more like a buddy movie – we need that now in this day and age.”