

Lihi Lapid



1. What prompted the decision to weave your personal story with a fictional narrative centered around the princess? How did you balance the personal with the fictional when writing *I Wanted to Be Wonderful*?

When I began writing this book, I didn't set out to tell my own story. I wanted to write about motherhood in general. But writing is always personal, and slowly, my own life started to seep in. I didn't plan it—it was stronger than me.

It was frightening to expose myself and my family so openly, but that's the essence of literature and art: to push past your own boundaries in pursuit of deeper truth. To speak the things we usually leave unspoken. I believe that's why this book has touched so many hearts—because there is an honest, raw truth in it. A truth that women often carry in silence.

2. This book is extremely intimate and vulnerable, particularly in regard to feeling a loss of identity following the new title of “mother.” What made you decide to write about a topic that is often considered taboo?

I wrote this book because I needed to scream. I wanted to tear off the sweet, pink mask that hides the real cost of motherhood—the part no one talks about. We grow up being told that women can do anything. And yes, we can. But we often pay a heavy price—especially when transitioning from being a couple in love to becoming a family. It's usually the woman who's expected to slow down, to step back, to give up her dreams. So many marriages end. So many couples stop loving each other. And we need to talk about it.

3. In addition to being a novelist, you are also a journalist—how do these two crafts differ? Is there a way that you connect your photography with your writing?

I wrote a weekly newspaper column for 15 years and often took my own photographs to accompany it. But writing a novel is a completely different rhythm. A column requires you to stay connected to real life and meet constant deadlines. A novel demands that you step away from everyday life—it needs space, silence, and time. This book came out of me like a scream. I had to get it out of my body. Once it was inside me, I couldn't let it stay there. I needed to put it on paper. I wanted every woman I know to read it and feel seen—to finally hear someone speak the hidden truths of motherhood.

4. The word “wonderful” is repeated throughout this book as a mantra for what the narrator and the princess long for. What does being “wonderful” mean to you now?

Back then, “wonderful” meant achieving the perfect life: the perfect family, the perfect house, the perfect image. Today, I know that being wonderful means listening to myself. It means giving myself permission not to be perfect. It means recognizing that I have the right to follow my dreams and to be happy. I don't have to be everything to everyone all the time. I'm allowed to take a step back and take care of myself to.

5. This novel was first published in Israel under the title *Woman of Valor*. What do you hope your new American readers will take away from it?

I hope to remind readers that family life is a bumpy road. It never goes exactly as planned. We can't control who our children become. Marriage is not always easy. But if we learn to accept our partners and our children—as well as ourselves—with all our flaws, we can build a home full of love. Not perfection, but connection.

6. What advice would you give to mothers who want to pursue their own dreams while still being present for their children?

Looking back, I realize it's okay to slow down for a while. Children grow which allows us to gradually get our freedom back. But it's also important to not completely let go of your dreams. You can pause—but don't disconnect for too long. And above all, make sure the people around you understand: just as you're there for them, they need to be there for you. That's part of love too.

7. Are you working on any new projects? Can you share what you're writing or photographing next?

I'm currently wrapping up filming for the six-episode TV series based on my book *On Her Own*. It's such a privilege—pure magic—to see the characters I created come to life. I've absolutely fallen in love with television. The most beautiful part is that it's a collaborative process. After so many years of writing alone, just me and my thoughts, it's amazing to create something as a team.