



# Elizabeth Just 16

By Cecilia Paul

## PRESS RELEASE

*Born without a vagina cervix or uterus, sixteen year old Elizabeth struggles with feelings of shame and self-acceptance, in this touching work of literary fiction from retired expert in this unusual congenital disorder.*

Elizabeth Appleton is a sweet and easy-going adolescent. But as she turns sixteen, she discovers something so devastating about herself that her whole world is turned upside down. Elizabeth has been born without a womb or a vagina and is diagnosed with Mayer-Rokitansky-Küster-Hauser syndrome (MRKH), an unusual congenital disorder that affects the female reproductive tract. Frightened and confused, Elizabeth must struggle to understand how she can still be a girl but no longer a 'normal' one. As she questions everyone and everything around her - her burgeoning sexuality, her gender, her hopes for the future - Elizabeth must fight against the shame and betrayal she feels if she is to ever become the woman she has always hoped to be.

In her first novel, retired expert in the field of MRKH, Cecilia Paul, sensitively explores and illuminates this complex and often emotionally fraught medical condition, in order to raise public awareness of MRKH and to support those effected by it. Through her fictional protagonist, Elizabeth, she highlights the women's common psychological manifestations - confusion, denial, anger, isolation and being "freaks" - and, their gender and sexuality issues; problems with self-worth and how they mourn the loss of their freedom to choose and their sense of normality and most of all, the choice and ability to bear their own children.

MRKH syndrome affects approximately 1 in 4,500 newborn girls, according to the NIH. Cecilia Paul made the decision to write the story as a work of fiction, rather than a medical textbook, because she wanted to bring the subject to the public sphere in an accessible and engaging manner and hopes to promote awareness, acceptance and also improve the treatment available for all women and their families.

**About the author:** Based in London, Cecilia Paul has worked for the NHS, in the field of gynaecology for over twenty years and, where she later worked within a specialist team, specialising in congenital disorders of the genital tract. Together, they have treated hundreds of women with this unusual congenital syndrome, MRKH. Now retired, and with a wealth of knowledge under her belt, Cecilia has been inspired to write her first novel dealing with this little-known syndrome hoping to bring awareness and understanding into the public sphere. Furthermore, as she has retired, she would like to encourage these women to get the appropriate help from specialist centres, that can provide them with a holistic support and treatment. She has also appended several websites and links in her novel. **Elizabeth Just 16** by Cecilia Paul (published by Clink Street Publishing 28th June 2016) is available to purchase from online retailers including amazon.co.uk and to order from all good bookstores.

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