



# THE FOREST

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## KIA ABDULLAH: Newham's novelist and amateur boxer

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**Taking inspiration from one of her characters, the bestselling author gets in the ring and wants to encourage more women to try boxing**

Author

[Alex Li](#)

“Never in a million years did I think I’d take up boxing,” says best-selling crime novelist **Kia Abdullah**. At 5’2” and barely over 100lbs, she is the first to admit that a combat sport doesn’t seem like a natural fit: “I have scrawny arms and tiny bird-like wrists so the idea of boxing was laughable to me.”

After a taster class, however, Kia was hooked.

It was writing her next novel that encouraged her to get in the ring, says Kia: “My main



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character, Safa, takes boxing lessons and I thought if I'm going to write these scenes realistically, I need to take a few lessons myself."



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Kia booked a lesson with local and professional boxing coach **Mickey Cunningham** and was won over by his focus on safety, fitness and fun as well as power and speed.

"Boxing gyms have this spit-and-sawdust image," says Kia, "which isn't necessarily welcoming to women, but I felt completely comfortable with Mickey."

**"He has worked with lots of different would-be boxers – from children to over 55s – and knows how to put his students at ease."**

Kia now has weekly one-hour sessions with Mickey, who also runs regular group sessions at Upton Park's **UK Fitness Club**. Together, they work on Kia's boxing technique (pads, footwork and drills) and overall boxing fitness.

"I want to encourage other women to get in the ring and try their hand at boxing," says Kia. "Many will be put off because they think they're too small, weak or unfit for the sport, but it's not always about competition. Boxing is brilliant for physical fitness and mental wellbeing too. I hate the thought of women being kept out of the sport because they're too daunted to try it."



*Kia after a boxing session with Mickey at UK Fitness Club*

Mickey, who has a military background and has won a number of titles, says, “Boxing gives you goals, keeps you fit, channels your aggression and is a great social outlet. I like the fitness, the adrenaline rush, and the science. There’s always a move to counter another move. It’s like a game of chess.”

Kia adds that it aids productivity too:

**“I spend so much time at my desk. Boxing has helped sharpen my focus and find a balance between work and play.”**

It's just as well since Kia is also battling a big book deadline. The Newham-based author has published four novels with HarperCollins including *Take It Back*, a *Guardian* and *Telegraph* thriller of the year; *Truth Be Told*, which was shortlisted for a Diverse Book Award;

and *Next of Kin*, which was longlisted for the CWA Gold Dagger Award and won the Adult Fiction Diverse Book Award 2022 beating competition from the likes of Elif Shafak and Caleb Azumah Nelson.

Kia's new novel, *Those People Next Door*, was the Times Thriller of the Month and is out in paperback in August. Signed and personalised copies can be pre-ordered from Newham Bookshop: [info@newhambooks.co.uk](mailto:info@newhambooks.co.uk).

In the meantime, you'll likely find Kia sparring with Mickey in her local boxing ring. Book your own private or group lesson via [mickey@mboxing.co.uk](mailto:mickey@mboxing.co.uk) or 07952 486 062.

For more info on Kia's published portfolio check out her website [here](#) and for further updates follow [@kiaabdullah](#)



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