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**GIBRALTAR LITERARY FESTIVAL PRESENTS SAMANTHA HERRON -  
ON LIVING WITH A FAMILY OF FORMER NOMADS IN MOROCCO AND  
HER NEW BOOK**

***THE DJINN IN THE SKULL: STORIES FROM HIDDEN MOROCCO***

London UK – October 9th 2015 - Soul Bay Press is delighted to announce that author Samantha Herron will be appearing at this year's Gibraltar International Literary Festival. She will be presenting her debut short story collection *The Djinn in the Skull: Stories from hidden Morocco* and talking about her experiences living with a Berber family of former nomads in Morocco's Draa Valley on the edge of the Sahara Desert.

Samantha will be appearing at City Hall, John Mackintosh Square, Gibraltar at 2pm on November 14th 2015. Tickets for the event are £12 and can be purchased via the festival website:

<http://gibraltarliteraryfestival.com/literature-events/2015/november-14/the-djinn-in-the-skull-stories-from-hidden-morocco>

When Samantha visited Morocco for the first time it changed the course of her life. On her return to London she abandoned her successful art career and, knowing that language is the key which opens the door into another culture, she devoted herself to studying Arabic. She went on to spend time living with a Berber family of former nomads, living in a small village in Morocco's Draa Valley on the edge of the Sahara Desert. Here she immersed herself in the language, traditions and culture of the family and the community in which she was living.

Samantha comments: 'I studied classical Arabic and the Quran with the women of the village, travelled in the desert, learned how to take care of camels and sheep, how to ablute and pray, and helped the other women in the family with the day-to-day running of the home. I fell in love with storytelling and stories, which are at the heart of everyday life in Morocco: sharing old stories handed down from generation to generation, embellishing jokes, spreading gossip or simply recounting a personal experience. I began to document the stories I was hearing and then found myself imagining and composing my own.'

This debut collection of her stories, all set in contemporary Morocco, takes the reader on a journey into the hearts and minds of ordinary Moroccans and offers a glimpse into life in this magical and ancient land.

Tahir Shah, author of *The Caliph's House* and *In Arabian Nights*, comments: 'Samantha Herron has succeeded triumphantly in doing what many Occidental

writers have failed in for centuries - showing Morocco from the inside out. The stories she has so eloquently told are part of the 'real' Morocco, a kingdom that is so often invisible to visitors. This magical realm has traditionally been received orally, and not through written text. It exists, not in the grand touristic sites, but in the ancient fabric of places like the Draa Valley, from where her stories come. A wonderful collection, highly recommended.'

Tim Mackintosh-Smith, Arabist and author of *Travels with a Tangerine: A Journey in the Footnotes of Ibn Battutah*, comments: 'Samantha Herron found some of her Moroccan stories ready-made. Others she imagined or dreamed. In size they are miniatures; but they all express big things on a small scale. Reading them is like peering through a series of keyholes – and, each time, glimpsing something momentary but momentous, instants with life-long consequences. They will make you smile, and shiver. And they will tell you as much truth about their Moroccan setting as a shelf-full of ethnologies.'

Samantha Herron's previous work includes the English and Arabic publication *Dardasha: Testimonies of Migration by Moroccan Women* (Soul Bay Press 2011) which was produced in association with the Al Hasaniya Moroccan Women's Centre in London and featured at London's Nour Festival of Arts 2013. She presented some of the stories from *The Djinn in the Skull: Stories from hidden Morocco* as part of *The Storytelling Circle* at Nour Festival of Arts 2014. This is her first work of fiction.

*The Djinn in the Skull: Stories from hidden Morocco* will be published on 23rd October 2015. A review copy of the publication is available on request from the publisher Soul Bay Press. Author and book cover photos can be downloaded from the publisher's website. Samantha is available for interviews, readings and signings and can be contacted via the publisher. In addition to her appearance in Gibraltar, Samantha will be giving readings of her stories in London and Morocco in 2016.

Author website: <https://samanthaherron.wordpress.com/>

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