


LitChat: Cristina Alger, Author

The following is the #LitChat conversation held through Twitter on October 24, 2016 with novelist Cristina Alger, author of *THIS WAS NOT PART OF THE PLAN* and *THE DARLINGS*. #LitChat was founded and is moderated by Carolyn Burns Bass (@LitChat). www.litchat.com.




Welcome to #LitChat. We'll be here for the next hour with author [@cristinaalger](https://twitter.com/cristinaalger). Join us!
pic.twitter.com/bGRKtoIEe7

 LITCHAT @LITCHAT · 17 HOURS AGO



LitChat
@LitChat

While #LitChat is underway with moderated chat between 4-5pmET, please don't use the hashtag unless contributing to topic. Thanks.

 17 HOURS AGO



Cristina

Alger

@cristinaalger

Thanks! So happy to be here. [#litchat](#)



17 HOURS

AGO



LitChat

@LitChat

[#LitChat](#) was founded in 2009 and is moderated by [@CarolyBurnsBass](#) ([@LitChat](#)). Visit our website at [litchat.com](#).



17 HOURS

AGO



LitChat

@LitChat

The easiest way to participate in [#LitChat](#) is through [@Nurph](#). Just login at [twubs.com/litchat](#), authorize and you're in the chat.



17 HOURS

AGO



LitChat

@LitChat

While everyone is gathering, please introduce yourself and let the convo begin. [#LitChat](#)



17 HOURS

AGO



LitChat

@LitChat

I am Carolyn Burns Bass, your moderator and founder of [#LitChat](#). Follow my personal feed at [@CarolyBurnsBass](#).



17 HOURS

AGO



LitChat

@LitChat

What a whirlwind of time since you were here last, [@cristinaalger](#). [#litchat](#)



17 HOURS

AGO



Cristina

Alger

@cristinaalger

A whirlwind indeed! Since THE DARLINGS came out, I got married and had two kids! #litchat



17 HOURS

AGO



LitChat

@LitChat

You had two babies, right, @cristinaalger? And birthed a new book! #litchat



17 HOURS

AGO



Cristina

Alger

@cristinaalger

Yes! I have a 3.5 year old and a 10 month old. My second novel, TWNTP, is a comedy about parenthood for obvious reasons! #litchat



17 HOURS

AGO



LitChat

@LitChat

When I saw the description for THIS IS NOT PART OF THE PLAN, I knew you were channeling a nurturing spirit, @cristinaalger. #litchat



17 HOURS

AGO



LitChat

@LitChat

How about giving us a few tweets of summary about THIS WAS NOT PART OF THE PLAN, @cristinaalger? #litchat



17 HOURS

AGO



Cristina

Alger

@cristinaalger

I always say I was channeling my own despair over balancing work and parenthood, but "nurturing spirit" sounds much better! [#litchat](#)



17 HOURS

AGO



Cristina

Alger

@cristinaalger

THIS WAS NOT THE PLAN is the story of Charlie Goldwyn, a 35 yr old lawyer who, since the death of his wife, has become a workaholic [#litchat](#)



17 HOURS

AGO



Cristina

Alger

@cristinaalger

After getting fired in a mortifying way, he is forced to spend the summer at home, forging a relationship w Caleb, his 5 year son [#litchat](#)



17 HOURS

AGO



Ann Garvin

@AnnGarvin_

YOU GUYS-Right Now [#litchat](#) with Cristina Alger [@TallPoppyWriter](#) [@karenkatchur](#) [@AmyImpellizzeri](#) [@KateMoretti1](#) Loved her book & now Paperback twitter.com/LitChat/status...



17 HOURS

AGO



Cristina

Alger

@cristinaalger

As well as his estranged biological father. [#litchat](#)



17 HOURS

AGO



Cristina

Alger

@cristinaalger

Hi @anngarvin :-) #litchat



17 HOURS

AGO



LitChat

@LitChat

That does sound like despair. As if it's a new mother's and new father's worst nightmares. Combined. #litchat



17 HOURS

AGO



Cristina

Alger

@cristinaalger

I wrote the book right after becoming a mom myself. There are so many great novels about motherhood and work/life balance... #litchat



17 HOURS

AGO



Cristina

Alger

@cristinaalger

...but few (or so it seemed to me) about fatherhood and what it means to be a "good dad." #litchat



17 HOURS

AGO



LitChat

@LitChat

Most of those books are from the mother's POV, as I recall. I loved reading TWNPOTP with a male POV. #litchat



17 HOURS

AGO



Cristina

Alger

@cristinaalger

Agreed! That's why Charlie's character was so interesting to me. [#litchat](#)



17 HOURS

AGO



LitChat

@LitChat

When pundits say "write what you know," you did that with great aplomb in TWPOTP, [@cristinaalger](#). [#litchat](#)



17 HOURS

AGO



Cristina

Alger

@cristinaalger

I'm a big "write what you know" person. I love setting my books in New York. There's just endless material here. [#litchat](#)



17 HOURS

AGO



Cristina

Alger

@cristinaalger

And thank you! [#litchat](#)



17 HOURS

AGO



LitChat

@LitChat

Let's chat for a moment on those three HUGE life events that preceded your writing TWPOTP, [@cristinaalger](#). [#litchat](#)



17 HOURS

AGO



LitChat
@LitChat

1) Marriage. Writing can cut into relationship time. Do you have a writing ritual or special time when you write? [@cristinaalger](#) [#litchat](#)

 17 HOURS
AGO



Cristina
Alger
[@cristinaalger](#)

It can. I wrote THE DARLINGS while I was working full time as a lawyer, so I learned to fit my writing into odd hours around my job [#litchat](#)

 17 HOURS
AGO



Cristina
Alger
[@cristinaalger](#)

My husband is very much an early to bed, early to rise person, so I write a lot at night when everyone else in my house is sleeping [#litchat](#)

 17 HOURS
AGO



Cristina
Alger
[@cristinaalger](#)

Now that we have two kids, I have to work hard to carve out my writing time. So I can't be too precious about where/when I write [#litchat](#)

 17 HOURS
AGO



LitChat
@LitChat

What do you do to get into "writer head," that place where you left off previously and must pick up without losing the voice? [#litchat](#)

 17 HOURS
AGO



Cristina

Alger

@cristinaalger

The time when I'm most fresh is first thing in the morning, before everyone else is awake. I drink an enormous coffee first! [#litchat](#)



17 HOURS

AGO



Cristina

Alger

@cristinaalger

I also use Freedom - a program that controls my internet usage - so I don't get distracted. [#litchat](#)



17 HOURS

AGO



Cristina

Alger

@cristinaalger

My favorite place to write is at the [@nysoclib](#). It's so peaceful there. [#litchat](#)



16 HOURS

AGO



LitChat

@LitChat

I love that first thing in the morning vibe. It's hard to get into, but the productivity is worth the effort. [#litchat](#)



16 HOURS

AGO



NY Society Library

@nysoclib

oops! Looks like we're late to the [#litchat](#) party w/[#nysoclib](#) member [@cristinaalger](#). [twitter.com/cristinaalger/...](https://twitter.com/cristinaalger/)



16 HOURS

AGO



Cristina

Alger

@cristinaalger

Agreed. I never regret it. [@WriterKarma](#) always inspires me with her 5am writers club tweets!
[#litchat](#)



16 HOURS

AGO



Doug Brower

@Douglas_Brower

I liked how well you captured Charlie's awkwardness in his caregiver role. Reminded me of Dustin Hoffman in Kramer vs Kramer [#litchat](#)



16 HOURS

AGO



Cristina

Alger

@cristinaalger

Hi! [@nysoclib!](#) Just singing your praises over here. [#litchat](#)



16 HOURS

AGO



LitChat

@LitChat

2) Baby one. The birth of your first baby is such a life changing event. How has motherhood effected you as a woman and a writer? [#litchat](#)



16 HOURS

AGO



Cristina

Alger

@cristinaalger

Hi, [@Douglas_Brower!](#) Thank you. You're the second person to ref Kramer v Kramer to me in the last few days - one of my favorites! [#litchat](#)



16 HOURS

AGO



Cristina

Alger

@cristinaalger

Honestly, I felt like an awkward caregiver at first. It was a big change. So Charlie and I have much in common. [@Douglas_Brower](#) [#litchat](#)



16 HOURS

AGO



Cristina

Alger

@cristinaalger

Baby 1 was a huge change. Huge. I thought I'd be the kind of mom who went back to work without guilt. That was not the case... [#litchat](#)



16 HOURS

AGO



Doug Brower

@Douglas_Brower

A huge change, agree whether mom or dad [#litchat](#)



16 HOURS

AGO



Cristina

Alger

@cristinaalger

The happy side effect is that my friends were thrilled that I wrote a funny book (at least, they tell me its funny)... [#litchat](#)



16 HOURS

AGO



Cristina

Alger

@cristinaalger

I was supposed to be writing another thriller after THE DARLINGS but I was so deep in the weeds with parenthood... [#litchat](#)




16 HOURS

AGO



LitChat
@LitChat


I agree. When I saw the title and summary, I wondered how it could be humorous, but THIS WAS NOT PART OF THE PLAN is not dark. #litchat

 16 HOURS
AGO



Cristina
Alger
@cristinaalger

...I just had to write this book, so I could really absorb this huge change in my life. #litchat

 16 HOURS
AGO



LitChat
@LitChat

Now that you're a mother, do you wonder what your kids will think of your books someday, @cristinaalger? #litchat

 16 HOURS
AGO



Cristina
Alger
@cristinaalger

Oh, of course! It's a little scary to know my kids will read my books - and even worse, the reviews! #litchat

 16 HOURS
AGO



Cristina
Alger
@cristinaalger

But I hope they will be proud of me for doing what I love and be inspired to do the same. #litchat

 16 HOURS
AGO



Cristina

Alger

@cristinaalger

Thanks, @LadyGDuran :-) #litchat



16 HOURS

AGO



Cristina

Alger

@cristinaalger

In my family, humor is everything. It's gotten us through some really tough times... #litchat



16 HOURS

AGO



Doug Brower

@Douglas_Brower

Caleb is a treat. I hope lots of parents and kids read the book. What prompted you to write Caleb as you did? #litchat



16 HOURS

AGO



Cristina

Alger

@cristinaalger

So it was a joy to write about a family that also deals with grief through humor. I think its such a human response to tragedy. #litchat



16 HOURS

AGO



Cristina

Alger

@cristinaalger

Caleb was based on a friend's son. I was really interested in this idea that one doesn't just have to learn how to be a parent... #litchat




16 HOURS

AGO



LitChat
@LitChat

THIS WAS NOT PART OF THE PLAN is about balancing life and work. Tell us some of your methods, because you seem amazing at it. [#litchat](#)

 16 HOURS
AGO



Cristina
Alger
@cristinaalger

...but how to be a parent to a very specific child. [#litchat](#)

 16 HOURS
AGO



Doug Brower
@Douglas_Brower

Yes - exactly [#litchat](#)

 16 HOURS
AGO



Cristina
Alger
@cristinaalger

Caleb is not really what Charlie was expecting. Honestly, my daughter isn't what I was expecting either! In the best possible way. [#litchat](#)

 16 HOURS
AGO



Cristina
Alger
@cristinaalger

I am terrible at balancing life and work. Just awful. I try to be disciplined, but my kids win out every time... [#litchat](#)

 16 HOURS
AGO



Cristina

Alger

@cristinaalger

Some of my methods include: (1) learning to live on very little sleep [#litchat](#)



16 HOURS

AGO



Cristina

Alger

@cristinaalger

(2) not socializing unless necessary (i.e., no lunches with friends, no get togethers with moms from preschool, etc) [#litchat](#)



16 HOURS

AGO



Cristina

Alger

@cristinaalger

(3) reminding myself that writing is in fact my job and trying to treat it as such [#litchat](#)



16 HOURS

AGO



Cristina

Alger

@cristinaalger

and finally (4) creating a concrete schedule every Sunday with my writing hours for the week clearly delineated [#litchat](#)



16 HOURS

AGO



Cristina

Alger

@cristinaalger

That being said, I'm a work in progress and I welcome any/all tips on work/life management. [#litchat](#)




16 HOURS

AGO



LitChat
@LitChat


This is the ethic of a professional writer, and the sign of success. #LitChat
[twitter.com/cristinaalger/...](https://twitter.com/cristinaalger/)

 16 HOURS
AGO



LitChat
@LitChat

3) Success. This is the result of diligence, commitment, creativity and a little luck. Do you feel successful as a novelist? #litchat

 16 HOURS
AGO



Cristina
Alger
@cristinaalger


That's very kind, thank you. #litchat

 16 HOURS
AGO



Cristina
Alger
@cristinaalger

Before my first book came out, my husband asked me how I defined success... #litchat

 16 HOURS
AGO



Cristina
Alger
@cristinaalger

...I said I would feel successful if my book was received well enough that my editor would want a second book. #litchat

 16 HOURS
AGO



Cristina

Alger

@cristinaalger

He reminds me of that whenever I worry about reviews or sales numbers... [#litchat](#)



16 HOURS

AGO



Cristina

Alger

@cristinaalger

Being a "successful" novelist can be defined in many ways, but my personal definition is having to ability to continue working [#litchat](#)



16 HOURS

AGO



Doug Brower

@Douglas_Brower

Do you also work in other forms (short story, memoir, etc)? [#litchat](#)



16 HOURS

AGO



LitChat

@LitChat

Publishing success is a journey. Write a good novel. Then you have to get agent. More success. Then a book deal. Et al. [#litchat](#)



16 HOURS

AGO



Cristina

Alger

@cristinaalger

Its so easy to get caught up in reviews, or sales numbers, etc. But I have to remind myself that I love my job, and that is success [#litchat](#)




16 HOURS

AGO



LitChat
@LitChat

Delving back into TWNPOTP, which character did you enjoy writing the most, [@cristinaalger](#)?
[#litchat](#)

 16 HOURS
AGO



Cristina
Alger
@cristinaalger

I haven't yet experimented with other forms. I did help develop THE DARLINGS into screenplay, and that was fun... [@Douglas_Brower](#) [#litchat](#)

 16 HOURS
AGO



Cristina
Alger
@cristinaalger

I'd love to try to do more screenwriting. I really enjoyed that experience. [@Douglas_Brower](#) [#litchat](#)

 16 HOURS
AGO



LitChat
@LitChat

A novelist's definition of success. Here it is from [@cristinaalger](#) : [#LitChat](#)
[twitter.com/cristinaalger/...](https://twitter.com/cristinaalger/)

 16 HOURS
AGO



Cristina
Alger
@cristinaalger


I loved writing Moose. He was based on a friend, who is such a joy to be around. It brought back great memories of law firm life [#litchat](#)

 16 HOURS
AGO



LitChat
@LitChat

Moose was colorful and endearing, [@cristinaalger](#). He seemed almost Dickensian in loyalty and character. [#litchat](#)

 16 HOURS
AGO



Cristina
Alger
[@cristinaalger](#)

Thank you! That's a great description of Moose. :-)
[#litchat](#)

 16 HOURS
AGO



LitChat
@LitChat

How did writing in a male POV challenge you as a writer, as a woman?
[@cristinaalger](#) [#litchat](#)

 16 HOURS
AGO



Cristina
Alger
[@cristinaalger](#)

I also loved writing Caleb. Kids are amazing. Until I became a mom, I didn't realize how early on personality develops... [#litchat](#)

 16 HOURS
AGO



Cristina
Alger
[@cristinaalger](#)

At first, it worried me that I couldn't do it (write from a male POV). But Charlie's character just came to me overnight... [#litchat](#)

 16 HOURS
AGO



Cristina

Alger

@cristinaalger

...and I couldn't let go of the idea of telling his story. So I told my inner critic to shut up and just went for it. #litchat



16 HOURS

AGO



Doug Brower

@Douglas_Brower

Was 1st person present narration how it came to you, or did that develop? #litchat



16 HOURS

AGO



Cristina

Alger

@cristinaalger

As I wrote, I realized that Charlie's problems are universally relatable. He deals with the same issues that I do ... #litchat



16 HOURS

AGO



Cristina

Alger

@cristinaalger

Work/life balance, sibling relationships, parenthood, guilt, adult child/parent relationships... #litchat



16 HOURS

AGO



LitChat

@LitChat

Did you invite your husband to read your early drafts? Or another man you trusted to vet the gender POV? #litchat



16 HOURS

AGO



Cristina

Alger

@cristinaalger

I love 1st person. It really helps me connect with the protagonist. [#litchat](#)



16 HOURS

AGO



Cristina

Alger

@cristinaalger

Yes! My poor husband. He read SO MANY DRAFTS. [#litchat](#)



16 HOURS

AGO



Doug Brower

@Douglas_Brower

re POV: it worked for me ;) [#litchat](#)



16 HOURS

AGO



Cristina

Alger

@cristinaalger

I had a small band of male friends that I enlisted to help me with Charlie's character (particularly dialogue, inner monologue) [#litchat](#)



16 HOURS

AGO



Cristina

Alger

@cristinaalger

Thanks, [@Douglas_Brower](#)! It's funny, my current project isn't it 1st person and I really miss it. [#litchat](#)




16 HOURS

AGO



LitChat
@LitChat

When I read books with young children I often wonder how they'll grow up. I wondered that about Caleb. Any authorial insights? #litchat

 16 HOURS
AGO



Cristina
Alger
@cristinaalger


One thing I love about Caleb is his self confidence. He doesn't really want to fit in; he's comfortable being himself... #litchat

 16 HOURS
AGO



Cristina
Alger
@cristinaalger


...In that way, he seemed wiser to me than Charlie. #litchat

 16 HOURS
AGO



Cristina
Alger
@cristinaalger

I think as long as you know yourself, you'll do alright in life. #litchat

 16 HOURS
AGO



Cristina
Alger
@cristinaalger

My daughter is a complete firecracker. She reminds me a lot of Caleb. So I wonder often how they'll be as adults... #litchat

 16 HOURS
AGO



Cristina

Alger

@cristinaalger

...but part of the fun of watching small kids figure out who they are in just delighting in the surprise of it all. #litchat



16 HOURS

AGO



LitChat

@LitChat

You mentioned a WIP. Can you give us some hints to it's nature, @cristinaalger? #litchat



16 HOURS

AGO



Cristina

Alger

@cristinaalger

I'm in the very early stages of my WIP.... #litchat



16 HOURS

AGO



Cristina

Alger

@cristinaalger

...but its shaping up to be a New York novel about two very different mothers connected by their love for one child. #litchat



16 HOURS

AGO



LitChat

@LitChat

Final question for @cristinaalger: What did you learn about yourself while writing THIS WAS NOT PART OF THE PLAN? #litchat



16 HOURS

AGO



Cristina

Alger

@cristinaalger

I learned to be less judgmental of other parents. We're really all just muddling through. And also that humor is a terrific salve. [#litchat](#)



16 HOURS

AGO



Cristina

Alger

@cristinaalger

Thanks so much for this fun and lively discussion! It's been a joy. [#litchat](#)



16 HOURS

AGO



Doug Brower

@Douglas_Brower

Thank you! I'm really enjoying your book. [#litchat](#)



16 HOURS

AGO



LitChat

@LitChat

How wonderful that you've learned the healing power of humor so early. It truly is the means to lighten life, [@cristinaalger](#) [#litchat](#)



16 HOURS

AGO



Cristina

Alger

@cristinaalger

Thanks so much, [@Douglas_Brower](#). Really enjoyed chatting. [#litchat](#)



16 HOURS

AGO



Cristina Alger
@cristinaalger

Couldn't agree more, @LitChat! #litchat

16 HOURS
AGO



LitChat
@LitChat

We've been chatting for the last hour with @cristinaalger, author of THIS WAS NOT PART OF THE PLAN. Thank you everyone. #litchat

16 HOURS
AGO

Chat with author
CRISTINA ALGER
in #LitChat,
October 24, 2016
4 pm/ET

LIT Ch@t
All book chat
www.twitter.com/LitChat

Author of *THE DARLINGS*
CRISTINA ALGER
THIS WAS NOT the PLAN
A NOVEL

Let's give @cristinaalger a HUGE round of #litchat THANKS for joining us today! {{{APPLAUSE}}}
pic.twitter.com/V9V0EQA1jm

LITCHAT @LITCHAT · 16 HOURS
AGO



Cristina Alger
@cristinaalger

My pleasure! Always love stopping by @LitChat! Thank you for inviting me. #litchat

16 HOURS
AGO



LitChat
@LitChat

Be sure to return next week to chat with [@tim_scullion](#) about photographing ghosts, haunted houses, and creepy experiences. [#litchat](#)



16 HOURS
AGO