

EPISODE 84: WHEN YOUR FIRST NOVEL GOES GLOBAL - WITH FELICIA YAP

Announcer: Two writers, one just starting out, the other a bestseller. Join James Blatch and Mark Dawson and their amazing guests, as they discuss how you can make a living telling stories. There's never been a better time to be a writer.

James Blatch: Hello, and welcome to the Self Publishing Formula podcast with James Blatch and Mark Dawson. We're speaking to you live this week ... a sort of a pretend live, from a new venue, aren't we Mark? In fact, it's an exciting new venue because we can't actually see each other.

Mark Dawson: No, which is a benefit. And you've made me get on a train this morning, travel halfway across the country to come to an unfinished shed in Huntingdon.

James Blatch: We'll take some pictures of the unfinished shed, if you want to watch this on the YouTube channel.

It is unfinished, the electricians literally plugged in the power source this morning, and the floor's not here, so, I can't properly move in, but we've moved a load of stuff in.

Sounds a little bit echoey, we've moved a lot of soft furnishings into the room, to hopefully help with the echo.

We like to move around, don't we? We've recorded podcasts around the world, in the United States, a London book fair in Salisbury, a town in Wiltshire in the United Kingdom. And here we are, finally, in the home of broadcast Britain, Huntingdonshire.

Mark Dawson: Yes I feel we've finally arrived.

James Blatch: We have.

Mark Dawson: I arrived anyway. There's an insect up there James.

James Blatch: Is there? What, in my new office?

Mark Dawson: Yeah, big insect in your new office. Sorry, yes, carry on, carry on.

James Blatch: The reason we can't see each other is that to dampen the sound I've done what they used to do in the old pirate radio stations in the '60s when they were on boats off the shore of the UK, they used to hang up duvets and curtains and things.

So, I've put a load of soft furnishings on the table piled up. It's still a bit echoey but anyway, the point is that we can talk to each other.

We love doing our podcast and we have a super interview today from a highly successful brand new author.

Now you might remember a little while back we spoke to Chole Esposito just ahead of the launch of her book in the UK. She's actually planning a trilogy Mad, Bad and Dangerous to Know. And her book really stemmed from her participation in the Faber Academy, which is a highly sought after difficult slot to land in the UK. An academy where it's effectively an evening class where you're taught how to write a book, and you encourage each other.

Well, somebody sitting next to her in that class was Felicia Yap. And when it got towards the end of the academy, Felicia really found herself in a very happy position of not just having an agent, a literary agent prepared to tout

her book around, but she actually ended up in a bidding war. That was won by Headline.

You might remember, if you cast your mind back, Mark, do you remember we had Alex Clarke on here?

Mark Dawson: I do remember, yes. Alex is lovely and Felicia was his first acquisition.

James Blatch: His first acquisition, so Alex talked to us in that interview, so it's new in print, it's within ... oh, I was going to say Hodder, it's not Hodder it's ... What are they?

Mark Dawson: I can't remember either.

James Blatch: Anyway, the point is, Headline is a brand in its own right so you don't need to know who grandparents it. And Alex said The Girl on the Train, they were looking for that type of book for the next book the people would all be reading on the train.

They did some other stuff as well, some non-fiction even. I spoke to one of their non-fiction authors on the evening. And we'll try and get him on the podcast in the future, a very funny man.

I say on the evening, because I actually went to the launch party for Felicia's book, which is called Yesterday. Which was just after we recorded this interview, but it was a really beautiful evening. In fact, I'll drop in some pictures, again onto the YouTube version of the podcast so you can see the view we had of London. The Headline building is amazing on the banks of the River Thames.

I didn't get to speak to Felicia. I don't know if you've been to these posh launch parties before, Mark. But it's like the bride or the groom, there's a queue to speak to them.

Mark Dawson: That's my life, James.

James Blatch: People queue to speak to Mark Dawson. I've seen queues to speak to Mark Dawson, they had to exist, don't they?

Mark Dawson: They do, sometimes.

James Blatch: I joined the queue twice in the evening, and both times I got distracted by people coming up who recognized me and we chatted.

I have to say, I did enjoy a few drinks on that evening, with Alex Clarke, and a couple of other guys. It was a very, very enjoyable time.

Felicia is the belle of the ball at Headline at the moment. And she has landed this deal for one simple reason; she has written a brilliant book. I'm not going to give too much away about it.

We do talk about the book, and the themes behind the book, and how she came to write it, in the interview.

She's got a very interesting background, Felicia. The extra treats, I keep mentioning the YouTube, because I think visually, as well as in audio terms, and the extra spice for this is that I brought my camera down, and we sat in Hyde Park on a gloriously hot day in London, or Kensington Gardens in fact, I think, in London.

I put the camera on Felicia and it was almost like a TV interview, sat on the grass, with the odd stray dog did appear in the background. But we have a lovely chat about the book and her journey to this point. So, let's here from Felicia first, and then we'll have a chat off the back.

Felicia Yap: I'm Felicia Yap. I'm the author of the thriller Yesterday. It's a debut novel and it's coming out in August.

The book is about a murder that takes place in a world where people only remember yesterday.

So, how do you solve a murder when you have limited memory?

And how do you love someone if everyone who's in love have limited memory. That's what the book's about.

James Blatch: We should say, just to set the scene, especially if you're watching on YouTube, that we're sitting in Kensington Gardens, beautiful London on a summer's day.

We've got a fairly large animal that's just appeared next to us but I don't think it's going to disturb us. And this is quite literary in way isn't it, cause Kensington Gardens, I think is where J.M. Barrie played with the children, Peter and Wendy, and wrote Peter Pan.

Felicia Yap: There's a statue of him here.

James Blatch: There's a statue of him here? There you go. So, here we are.

I mention it because he was a literary sensation and you are on the edge, potentially this summer, of being a literary sensation. How weird does that sound?

Felicia Yap: Yes, it does sound rather odd. Not so sure about being a sensation, but we all try our best to do what we can. Especially when you're writing your first book, you really want to give it the best you can. And this is what I certainly did.

James Blatch: Okay, well let's talk about the book a bit, and then we'll talk about the journey, the publishing journey. I know you've had some

thoughts on that, and some advice for others, which is great for the podcast.

So, in terms of the book, let me tell you what I think. Obviously we've got to be careful of spoilers, so I really want people to read this book. It's fascinating and very enjoyable.

To me it reminded me of reading at the beginning, Issac Asimov, when I was a kid, cause he came up with these ideas. I remember one of his short stories where the world resets at the end of every day, and everyone's body never changes. And this young boy became obsessed with owning something nobody had owned before, but of course there wasn't such a thing. So it was an interesting set of themes.

Your book starts with that, so, we just again set the scene that there are mono's and duos. So people who can remember yesterday, and the people remember two days back.

But by the end of it, do you know what? It was a whodunit, right?

Felicia Yap: Indeed.

James Blatch: So buried in this fascinating context is a whodunit, which is just enjoyable.

Felicia Yap: Exactly. So, really it's a high concept thriller, I would say, with a whole range of different elements.

We have psychological elements in the story, also some philosophical elements to it.

But I think what gives the story some narrative drive is the murder-mystery underpinning this whole story. And really it's about a dead woman's body being found in the river Cannes.

Suspicion falls on the man she had been sleeping with and his wife. So, it goes back to the same question of how do you solve a murder or catch a killer when all who involved, including the detective who's investigating the case, how do you solve this problem when you only remember yesterday, or two days before?

James Blatch: A lot of the book is from the perspective of the main characters as we go through.

What I also enjoyed about the beginning of it, cause I was sitting there thinking how much are you going to gloss over the difficulties of living in this world, just to make the rather unusual scene you'd set, make it work.

But, actually, you get to understand how people have to adapt to this situation, so, making notes. There's certain residual memories that they have like who they are in their childhood up to a certain age. But the idea that you make everyone made a diary.

In those circumstances, everyone would write a diary every day, cause they'd have to.

Felicia Yap: Exactly. So, people in this world are all dependent on technology, chiefly their electronic diaries, to understand their past.

But that's interesting, because when you're reliant on technology to know who you are, that opens up a whole new possibility for self-delusion. Really what people chose to remember or forget because they have to write this down at the end of each day.

That I think is intermittently linked with some people fears. And one of these is the fear of forgetting. And really this book is intended to hold up a mirror to ourselves to what we ourselves chose to remember or forget.

People in this world, they must make a conscious decision as to what they chose to remember of each day. So what goes into each diary entry is really a reflection of what we are afraid to forget, really, in their world and also in ours.

James Blatch: And I'm going to talk to you about where the idea developed from, how you started with it. Is there something about the way we are living through technology today, social media, the millennials live their lives.

My daughter's 13, is very much in the mix of that. And how their life plays out on social media might be quite different from how they feel, but there's a blurring and a merging.

She must wonder at some point as that generation do, which one's the real one.

Felicia Yap: Oh, absolutely. I actually attended an exhibition last week on diaries and how diaries have mutated basically from, I don't know, papyrus scrolls to smartphones these days.

I'm really conscious that all of us have this slight disconnect between the public selves, which we chose to present on social media, or in a public domain on Facebook or Twitter. So, our personal selves, and often the two are quite different.

I do believe that Yesterday, my book, taps on some of these differences, in terms of what we wish to portray to the outer world, and what we actually perceive ourselves to be.

James Blatch: I think it definitely does. It is a fascinating world, isn't it?

I think a lot of us, subconsciously or not, fall into presenting ourselves in a way that's flattering to us. Everything's blue sky and fun, and you tend to

post things that are happy in your life. Although, actually, not everyone does.

I think we've all got friends who only ever seem to post their moans, "Oh, another bad day for me." And they might be completely lovely people in real life, but their persona online is very different.

This is a really interesting area that I don't think any of us really have got to grips with yet.

Felicia Yap: Oh absolutely. And yet it raises the question of whether or not immediacy, which is really just the nature of the social media piece you post as soon as you feel something, or experience something, is it the same with authenticity? Does it reflect our true selves? So, that's the question. I think Yesterday does go back to that.

James Blatch: Felicia, where did this come from? Where did this idea start?

Felicia Yap: The idea came to me on my way to a ballroom dance studio in Cambridge, cause my fiance and I used to compete on the dance sport team.

We got into the car and began driving to the studio, and suddenly this question popped in my head, "How do you solve a murder if you have one day's worth of memory?" And the possibilities, which were inherent to this speculative world, they so intrigued me.

I got to the dance studio I couldn't stop thinking about it. So, with my partner's help we worked out the early contours of the story on the dance floor before we left the studio, between our tangled twists and turns. So, you could say that twists and turns were built in the fabric of this thriller right from the start.

James Blatch: I love that. I love the fact that we keep getting approached by dogs as well, but they're being dragged off by their owners. Do you know what, it's one of the things I know from living in and around Cambridge, that ballroom dancing ... you can get a blue for ballroom dancing.

Do you have a blue for ballroom dancing, i.e., represented Cambridge?

Felicia Yap: It is not a blue I'm afraid, it's a half blue.

James Blatch: It's a half blue, that's right, yeah, okay. But people understand it's taken quite seriously. There was a brilliant documentary a few years ago about this whole area.

Felicia Yap: Oh well actually since we upgraded to a full blue since my time at Cambridge. So now it's been taken seriously as a sport.

James Blatch: You've had to slum it with a half blue and other people get a full blue, okay.

I love the idea, the twists and turns and the relationship between a narrative structure and dancing. That's a new one on me, but makes sense when you talk about it.

Felicia Yap: Well I firmly believed that inspiration comes on a move. It doesn't matter where you're moving, could be between a city at the second one, or it could be on a dance floor. I think changes in environment are really supportive for ideas.

In my case, I do a lot of writing on trains, on buses, on planes, because that's where I begin to see new things, because it's just exposure to different environments, and different settings, that really triggers something in my head quite often.

James Blatch: So we'll come on to the publishing journey in a second, but writers like to know how you write. And you just mentioned that you can write all over the place.

Do you have a set routine for writing? Obviously this is your first book, are you now in the midst of your second book?

Felicia Yap: I'm indeed writing the prequel to Yesterday. The working title for that is Today. And I do try to write everywhere I can, every single minute I can carve out of a journey. Or simply at my writing desk.

And really, there's no set plan. Different days work differently for me. And also different places work differently for me. So, say if I'm traveling in Germany, I find myself being very, very organized, and very structured.

James Blatch: So you tune into the environment.

Felicia Yap: Exactly. I would have a plan. Hooray. But in places like Italy, I tend to go more with the flow. So it all depends on where I'm writing and when exactly.

James Blatch: That's really interesting, and letting that soak up and hopefully, presumably come through to your novel.

If you wrote the whole novel in Italy, it would be a different tone, and a different feel from the one you wrote in Germany.

Felicia Yap: I suspect so, indeed. I want to find out exactly how to.

James Blatch: And in terms of plotting and planning, have you plotted out the second novel? Or are you writing it on the go?

Felicia Yap: I'm writing it organically. There are plotting days and there are also free flowing days.

But I'm quite far along with the first draft, so, it's hopefully a good position to be in. Because I'm on a precipice of the first one actually coming out, so, and that's taking up quite a lot of time. So, having the first draft done of the next book is what I'm aiming to get to.

James Blatch: Yeah, so we should say we are just a few weeks away from publication, as we record this. The interview will probably go out just after publication and you're going to start in the States.

How do you feel? Do you feel a bit nervous? I'm not going to say a lot riding on it, that'd be an unfair thing to say, but a lot of people love the book.

I know your publishers are very excited about it, but inside we all have doubts, don't we? How do you feel now?

Felicia Yap: Of course, it's a whole mixture of incredibilities. Like is this really happening to me?

But at the same time you know a huge excitement, when you're at the beginning of something, you've hope for and you can see yourself like looming on horizon. That's really exciting.

But it also creates a lot of nervousness, because you never know how people will respond to your book once it's released out into the world. So, that's scary.

James Blatch: I think it's going to go really well, I'll tell you that.

I've just realized why the dogs are coming, it's because of this dead kitten. This thing you're fascinated with is stopping the wind making a noise. If

you're watching on YouTube I know people will be wondering what this is so, I should mention it. Okay, lets talk about the publishing journey.

We had Chloe Esposito on the podcast recently, and you and Chloe actually sat side by side in the same school, if you like, The Faber Academy.

Felicia Yap: Indeed. So we were right with each other from the start, from the first day we walked into the Faber Academy. Both with not that many words of our first respective first drafts, to the point where we are today. It's been quite a ride together.

James Blatch: And just tell me about the Faber Academy, how do you get on?

Is this just an evening school that anybody can wander up to, as an application process, an audition process?

Felicia Yap: There is indeed an application process. In my case I wrote in to explain the nature of my writing. Just a cover letter, a simple cover letter explaining why you want to be on a course. I think that's what I did.

And I think all these applications are read carefully by someone at the Faber Academy, who normally they admit about 15 students for each cohort, because I think 15 is a good number for a writing course. So, that's how I got into the program. It's a very carefully vetted application process, I believe.

James Blatch: And in terms of the high concept of your book, did that change at all during the course? Or was that set at the beginning?

Felicia Yap: That high concept idea actually came to me a couple of months before I went on the course. So, it didn't really change, I stuck to that. It really was the course which helped me build up this concept.

And concepts really are nothing without the small details which make them come alive. And that's what I've thought the course was immensely valuable for, with the help of my friends on the course, my fellow classmates. I was able to fill in all the smaller details, which collectively make up this high concept world.

James Blatch: When you read books, you don't always realize that that is how they work. You can't just have all the detail, that would be boring. And you can't just have a big concept, but telling the story.

Telling the big concept through the small detail, and vice versa, is the trick, and that's why writing's difficult.

Felicia Yap: Absolutely. And I think the most important of them all is character development. Without characters the reader can believe in, a story is nothing.

I owe everything to my course mates for actually helping me flesh out my characters. Great for them for telling me things that are not consistent, especially as far as specific characters concern. So, that matters.

And also in terms of giving characters motivations, in terms of actually giving them a sense of journey throughout the book. You really need consistent feedback from people telling you whether something is working or not.

I would say that the character development is paramount to any high concept book. We need support in this regard, we need our friends, classmates, to tell us whether things are working or not.

James Blatch: We do have a helicopter. It might be the paparazzi for you, I don't know, floating about. Hope people can hear that so I just thought I'd mention it.

You say that we need that and you're right, we do need that, but not everyone can take it, right?

You've got to feel fairly vulnerable in that environment, I'd imagine.

Felicia Yap: Oh absolutely. And I remember my first presentation to the group where we each had to send in 5000 words of our respective manuscripts.

I was on tenterhooks, because I had no idea how people would react to it. It really takes a lot to put your work out there and to be open, and to be criticized, commented upon by others.

But, in hindsight, I realized that this was a very valuable experience because you slowly develop a thick skin, which is what you really need as a writer.

Facing a group of 15 people really helped me to understand that when you scale that up to the wider world, when your book goes out in the wider world and people do react differently to the same book.

It really helps you build a thick skin. And also to understand how to receive feedback. It was a realization which struck me halfway throughout the course that when two people point out that something is not working it usually means it isn't working. And that's something that should be fixed.

I learned how to see points of conversions in feedback. And that's usually the most valuable because when two people say the same thing, it usually means that that thing is something very important. Either it's not working or it is. So, learning to find these points of conversions very important to me throughout the course.

James Blatch: And so when you've worked with your colleges on this course, you've been given guidance, you developed your book.

At what point does that become a deal with an editor?

Felicia Yap: Oh it's a very, very long process to actually getting a deal. Because, of course, after you've finished a course, the step would be to find an agent for your work.

And then the agent has to find publishers for it. So, that's altogether a different ballgame from actually just being on a writing course.

James Blatch: So just being on the Faber Academy does not automatically put you ... although it must put you on a fairly good position to get an agent.

Felicia Yap: Well we did read our works out at the end of the course, about 200 words, of our respective manuscripts.

James Blatch: Well, that's not many is it? 200.

Felicia Yap: Actually, the audience was great, we had publishers in the audience, we had agents in the audience. So I think it really helps to get your work up there.

And the exposure we got through the anthology at the end of the course, which was sent round to all the agencies in London. I think it helped get all of us lots of interest in what we were writing. Each of us on the course.

James Blatch: And so what was your journey like from that point? How quickly did things happen?

Felicia Yap: It happened really, really quickly. And I was really lucky because I tried very hard to put my work out there. And I had a lot of interest from agents. But at that point I didn't really have a full manuscript yet.

So I enrolled on a second course at Faber Academy, it was how to edit your novel. And that lasted three months. I told all the agents who were interested in my book that I really wanted to concentrate on editing it, getting it to the best possible state before sending it out.

And everyone was very supportive of this. And on the last day of the course, I did get an email from agents saying, "Are you done? Where is your manuscript?"

So I was put on the spot and I said that I'll send it out in three weeks from now. And from that point I was committed to sending out in three weeks, because I had said so, I would do it.

The last week before I sent the book out, I actually checked into a hotel near London City airport, just to concentrate on writing, just to make sure that the work I sent out would be the best possible I could do at that time.

I checked out of the hotel at around noon, I was still in the lobby. I was really nervous to send my work out, although I said that I would do it. And around five o'clock I knew I wouldn't be able to go home and face my fiancée, who would probably ask, "Have you sent your work out yet?" I didn't want to say, "No."

So I sent it out around five o'clock on the afternoon that day and I fully thought no one would get back to me for six weeks because everyone would probably need four to six weeks to digest your submission.

But to my great surprise the next day at around noon, my dream agent Jonny Geller, actually got back to me saying he'd read half of it, and would like to meet. And I nearly fell off my chair.

James Blatch: Wow.

Felicia Yap: So we did meet shortly after and he gave me about three weeks. No actually, four weeks to edit the manuscript. And he really wanted me to develop the love side of the story. How do you love someone if you only remember yesterday?

Three weeks in to the editing process he got in touch saying, "Could I have your manuscript the next day?" And then I just sent it to him the next day, and I didn't sleep that night.

Jonny sent the manuscript out to publishers on both sides of the Atlantic, the next working day. And from that point on it was just pretty crazy, cause everyone who received the manuscript who liked it, they got in touch. All the editors.

I spent days just fielding calls on the phone from editors who are interested in the work. And it was a bit odd really, to have something on your computer one day, and then two days later people are reading, and responding to it. So, really exciting.

James Blatch: I'm guessing you were hearing good things, the reason they were contacting you.

Felicia Yap: Exactly.

James Blatch: I mean, that must be a great feeling.

Felicia Yap: Oh absolutely. Because all the editors I talked to, they were very excited by how this manuscript could be improved, how we could work on it together as teams. How we could edit it further.

They gave me a lot of editorial suggestions during these chats, and I found it so useful when I was actually reediting the manuscript later.

James Blatch: Was there no part of you thought, "I've done a lot of work on this, I like it as it is." Or, "I'm close to it."

And feeling a little bit bristled by people saying, "I can envisage changes, and more work."

Felicia Yap: I actually must have done about 14 rounds of edits on this book, if not more. I must confess I got to a point at the very end where you realize you have to let this manuscript go. But it was the final, final edit.

But the stage, the different stages of editing were actually really, really exciting, because everyone's responding to it, really eager to help improve the manuscript.

So, when you take all of that in, you know that you are aiming for a good product at the end. So, that's what keeps you going through multiple editing phases. That's what kept me going.

James Blatch: And then at some point you accepted some offers.

Felicia Yap: Oh yes. So the book went to auction.

James Blatch: I'm guessing that's a good thing, writing auctions, rather than you having one person giving you one offer, and you think, "Shall I take it or negotiate?" Going to auction sounds like a good thing.

Felicia Yap: It was a good thing because it's really a very odd situation, again, 'cause it's not something you would expect when your book goes out on submission.

I remember waiting by my phone for updates from my agent Jonny, and collapsing next to it in disbelief when he told me the result of the auction.

The pitch, which I received from Headline, which is now my UK publisher, it really impressed me the most because they told me how much they liked the manuscript, how they could possibly improve it. So, I couldn't have been more delighted when they eventually won the auction in the UK.

James Blatch: We are delighted as well that Headline won, because we've had Alex from Headline on the podcast in the past. That brings it back full circle to us, he was one of our early guests and he's a great believer in books. He loves books of all sorts of genres and so he likes the book, I mean I like the book as well, so it's a good book. There's no question about that.

How exciting for you then. Headline in the UK and the States?

Felicia Yap: Little Brown. I'm with the Mulholland imprint of Little Brown. They specialize in books which keep people turning the pages, so it's a good place to be, I'm really looked after very well there.

James Blatch: A lot of the people listen to this podcast are self-publishers. Some are trad and some have a bit of both, a foot in both camps, and they will see the different sides, the different types of deals.

But the type of situation you've got in is probably the very best in terms of the trad side of things, i.e., people fighting over the book, in terms of an offer at the beginning.

So, you haven't gone in, I'm guessing, with a very low start and think, "Well, maybe I'll make money down the line," you've had a really good start. It's probably unusual.

You're a bit of an outlier, I think. Not everyone with their first deal is going to be doing down to the car show room but it sounds like you've done really well with the first one.

Felicia Yap: Well, I just feel incredibly lucky to be in this position, to work with publishers who are really excited about this project, it's utterly wonderful.

James Blatch: Well it's not just luck, is it? It's a great book.

And you've been doing a bit of thinking about this journey, and I know you've been asked to do some chats to writers who are looking to get published.

Are there some key takeaways that you would be happy to give out to people, things that they should be focused on if they want to try and get a deal?

Felicia Yap: Oh, absolutely. A few things I can think off the top of my head is, really, you have to be determined. It takes a lot of grit to finish a book. It also takes a lot of grit to find a publisher for it.

And it takes a lot of luck, but with some determination, in fact, lots of determination, it's possible to swing the odds in your favor.

I think the next thing here is to apply an equal amount of creativity to the submission process as you would to the writing of your manuscript. And, off the top of my head, an example, is most of agents, most editors, speak a lot at literary festivals, at events. It really helps to actually go up there and meet people, talk to agents in person.

It's very easy to reject a manuscript without a face attached to it. And it really helps with people to put a face to a piece of work, so I think that's important.

Apart from that, I would say that ... sweat the small stuff, actually, when it comes to submission. I took the process very, very seriously. My cover letter, my synopsis, my first three chapters, I really wanted to make sure that

I got all the words right, to the point where I wouldn't want to change a single word, because this matters.

An agent will only look at the manuscript once, a publisher would only look at it once, so you basically have one chance and you don't want to lose that chance just because of a small detail that isn't quite right.

And apart from that, I would strongly suggest attending events. Going to festivals, literary festivals, writing-related events.

Do writing courses because, again, it goes back to putting yourself out there, your work out there.

In my case, I entered lots of writing competitions in the final six months before my book was ready for submission. And I was lucky to be selected for it, this competition called Friday Night Life, at a Yacht festival of writing.

It was an opportunity for me to leak my work out to a room full of people, about 200 people I would reckon. There were agents present. So, putting yourself out there really, really helps, so people are aware of what you're doing as a writer, and hopefully will respond well to it.

In addition to that, I would say that this whole journey, it's something you can actually work hard and just tip the odds in your favor, and really, I took it like a military operation.

I kept a giant Excel file in which I would just feed in data I had harvested about agents, publishers, scouts, and really sort of try to do it in a very systematic and methodical way. That's my journey, and I think it may be something that can work for other people, too.

James Blatch: That's amazing Felicia, thank you for sharing that as well, I think that will very useful for people, and particularly interested in the advice about putting yourself out there, meeting people, putting a face to

it, because actually, not all writers are comfortable ... in fact, one of the reasons some people are writers is cause they sort of sit in their house and write and they don't have to face people so much.

You're obviously comfortable with that side of things, or was this something you had to overcome and really sort of push yourself into being somebody people would remember?

Felicia Yap: Well, I was nodding away when you were saying it, 'cause there are days where you want to be in your pleasant little writerly cave, and you want this creative process to flow and there's moments where you want to retreat from the outer world.

But, I've also learned that there are moments where you have to embrace the outer world, and it's really finding a balance between the two.

I had previous background as a university lecturer, having to talk to large audiences, giving lectures to lots of students, so that I think helps in terms of interacting with people, but it really is about finding a balance between the two.

It's not easy, so I know how difficult it can be to put yourself out there, but it's definitely worth a shot, I guarantee you, it's very important. The act of writing's merely a smaller picture of the bigger picture of being a writer.

James Blatch: Final question.

Any film interest at the moment? Cause, for me, reading this book, I'm thinking, "This is a film."

Felicia Yap: Oh yes, certainly. My agent has been receiving offers, and I had a really exciting chat with a Hollywood director recently, so we're in the works of something really exciting, so I'm very excited to eventually share this news with everyone.

James Blatch: Okay, so we'll watch this space on that one. Felicia, congratulations, Yesterday's a fabulous book.

I think a lot of people hopefully will be reading it after listening to the podcast. Intriguing idea, brilliantly written and now I've heard you talking about it, no surprise about the enjoyment you get from reading it because I can hear the work that's gone into it. I mean, you have worked incredibly hard on this, and well done, you've got some just rewards.

Felicia Yap: Thank you so much. It was such a pleasure to be on this podcast, thank you so much for having me.

James Blatch: Remarkable, talking to Felicia, to hear how the genesis of this book where she was, as she explained in the interview, on the way to a dance, she's a competitive dancer at Cambridge University with her boyfriend, now her fiance, and she just had this random idea, "What would the world be like if we could only remember yesterday?"

And she then constructed this book around it, and my wife made a good point about the book, and I think I said this Felicia in the interview, is that my wife felt it was a romance book, effectively. A bit like Time Travelers Wife, I suppose there's a context to it, but actually it's a bit of an old-fashioned romance.

I actually felt it was an old fashioned whodunit, cause I'm unromantic, obviously didn't notice the romance aspect of it, but it's an intriguing concept, which is high concept, very much sought after by people today. And, eminently filmable I would say, as well.

Mark Dawson: Absolutely, and just thinking about that launch party, so it was the intention that you'd all drink so much that you couldn't remember.

James Blatch: There was a theme to the party, yes, absolutely.

Mark Dawson: It's a great story, and with her and Chloe, they've both been extremely fortunate. Also, they've written good books, but to get into the position that they're in with a lot of attention on both of those books, from the mainstream media, both been on TV, I think, and film interest in both of them, strong film interest, it's quite unusual.

I'd say beating the odds of two of those authors coming out of the same class is reasonably slim, even though I understand the hit rate for the Faber Academy is pretty good, they often land deals, but these are unusual deals in that they both had lots of zeros after them. So, good for her, she's a really lovely person and a very talented writer.

James Blatch: Yeah. And we do talk to lots of people all the time who are trying to build their careers up and working very hard on list building and every now and again, it's nice to talk to somebody who just sits back and there's a bidding war.

But I can tell you, and you heard me say to Felicia in the interview, she is a workaholic ... I don't really like the expression workaholic, she's incredibly diligent, she thinks a lot about what she does, and she is unrelenting at making it happen, making things happen for herself, so this is not an overnight success or an accident, she deserves it.

I'd recommend the book, I really do, Felicia Yap, Yesterday. So, I want to thank her for coming on.

I actually did her a little favor, we recorded some video for her New York agent to use in promoting the book out there, and we're definitely going to keep a close eye on her, and Chloe's story.

Particularly as both those authors could end up with very high profile Hollywood films in the next few years, I think both of those are filmable,

certainly Yesterday, I think most people, their eyes will light up at the idea of a high concept movie that has an intriguing twist to it.

Mark Dawson: Absolutely.

Before we move on, we should mention Patreon. So, we are very flattered that we've got so many Patreon supporters now. It does make a bit of a dent in, well quite a big dent now, in the expenses of putting the podcast out, so we're very grateful for those who are following us on Patreon, and supporting us. And, the link ...

James Blatch: It's Patreon.com/SPFPodcast

Mark Dawson: There we go, so professional.

James Blatch: Yeah.

Mark Dawson: So, yeah, if you want to support us, that's where you need to go and you can support us in a very small amount, but it all adds up and it's very helpful to us and we really do appreciate it.

James Blatch: Yeah, absolutely, thank you very much indeed to those who have taken part. It's been a couple of weeks since we've allocated any mugs, so I'm going to choose four people this week to receive mugs. If you're a Patreon supporter, and you haven't got a mug already, look out, you may be getting an email from Lucy. What was that?

Mark Dawson: That's me moving the mug-

James Blatch: Oh, I see.

Mark Dawson: ... and your shed's falling down.

James Blatch: What!? I haven't paid for it yet. Yes, we do have mugs here, I've got one here, you've got one there. This is, I think, the one I've got is the North American mug, and the one you've got is the UK and Europe mug.

Mark Dawson: Yes.

James Blatch: It's a bit like Pal and NTSC, isn't it? There's gotta be a different format, anything happens differently between Europe and North America.

Mark Dawson: God, you're a geek.

James Blatch: Such a geek. Does anyone remember NTSC, does that still exist? John Dyer's nodding, that's no ... I'm not sure what that's an indication of.

Thank you very much indeed to our guest this week, Felicia Yap. Thank you to you, our dear listener, we look forward to speaking to you again next week. Until then, have a great week writing, and a great week selling.

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