

PODCAST 3: BUILDING A SELF PUBLISHED EMPIRE INTERVIEW – WITH HYBRID AUTHOR MARIE FORCE

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James: Hello, and welcome to podcast #3 from the Self Publishing Formula. My name is James Blatch. With me, as ever, is ...

Mark: Mark Dawson.

James: I'm always going to make you say your name. You have to be prepared for that.

Mark: Just in case I forget.

James: Yeah, or you could call yourself "Dave Clifton" for fans of Alan Partridge who was in reference constantly, and there will be lots of Americans scratching their heads saying, "Why do they keep mentioning this man Alan Partridge?"

Go onto YouTube now, I would say, if you're not familiar with Alan Partridge because you need to be. Let's talk about our podcast today. We have a fantastic guest today. We have Marie Force who has become stratospheric in the world of indie publishing. She is going to pull back the sheets and tell us exactly how she did that and what she thinks is going to happen in the future. It's a really great interview, so stay tuned. Keep listening it's just

in a few moment's time. We also just have a quick chat at the beginning of where we are ourselves.

Just to remind you, if you've listened to the introduction and the first couple of podcasts and Mark obviously is a very experienced and successful indie author who's getting a really good income and got a really good system going, and that's really the heart of why we're doing this because it's a great time to talk about all the methodologies that are going to work and help each other out.

I'm a first-time author currently writing a fiction book, a thriller set on a royal air force station in the mid 1960s, and so the other half I guess is going to be my journey as a bumbling amateur trying to hang on the coattails of the giants ahead of me.

Mark, I've got some questions for you as a newb in this business. I'm using Scrivener on your recommendation. A lot of people use Scrivener, and I'm starting to work out that there is a lot more to Scrivener than meets the eye. You kind of open it up and start writing. Then you look on the left-hand side and see the binder.

How much do you use it for organization, or do you do that on post-it notes on a bit of paper and then just write in Scrivener? Do you use the full weight of the software?

Mark: I think I probably use about 50% of it. There are bits that I don't use and don't understand, but that's not to say that I couldn't teach myself how to use those if I needed to. The tips with something like this, and I've made the journey across from Word, which I've used in the first four or five of my books and got into Scrivener on the back of basically everyone recommends it. I was like, "There must be something to this." I checked it out and it's as good as advertised.

I think the trick with using it properly is just to use what you need to make your process as efficient as possible. We'll talk maybe a bit later in terms of crafting and other episode about pantsing and plotting, but I am a mixture between a plotter and a pantsier, so I will use the binder in Scrivener, and I'll break it down into parts, and then chapters, and then scenes. I will, as I'm going along writing I kind of think, "I need a scene somewhere in the future where this happens," and I'll add that in just as a kind of a headline. Then I'll think, "In order to get to where I am now this needs to happen," and I'll go backwards and I'll slot that in.

What that enables me to do, usually on a Fridays I'll go through the scenes that I've got laid out and I'll highlight the ones that either need to be edited, I'll put that in one color, or written if they haven't been written yet, put that in red, for example. Then when I start working again on Monday and say I fancy writing some dialogue, I'll find one of those red scenes that hasn't been started yet and one that needs dialogue. It was always a good place to start with is to start with a conversation. Then I'll start writing. I'll do the conversation. I'll go back and add some tags in. I'll go back and describe it. Scrivener makes it so easy to do that. It's just not possible with the same level of ease on a Word document. It just isn't built for those hundred-thousand-word documents. Scrivener lets you kind of chop things down into bite-size segments and then attack them like that. It makes it less daunting and much more flexible.

James: That's really good to hear. I am using it structurally as much as I can, but I think I'm learning. As you rightly point out, even you're not using the full weight of the software; it's a lot to it. The word count, which for me I can only see an individual what I call "chapters." I'm not sure quite what Scrivener calls them. Click on the plus and it's going to tell me ... Oh no, it just immediately just added one, a new folder. They're called "folders" or "new text" on this here folder, which I've called "parts" because I've renamed them, and then text.

You get the word count within the text, but you don't get an overall word count for your book. You do then have to go through each text and add up the words?

Mark: No. You can do that. If you go to project and project targets it will tell you what your word count, and it's for the whole document.

James: You see, that is a brilliant little tip. Let me do that. Oh my goodness, there you are. Okay, I've done 18,000 since I've started rewriting this. That's quite good.

Mark: It's good?

James: Yeah, I've got the best of it. It's those little tips that make the difference to newbs like me. I knew you'd know the answer to that. Where are you at the moment, Mark, so we know in terms of your book-writing? You've had a launch this year which went pretty well, I think.

Mark: Yeah, it was amazing. I launched just outside the top 100 on Amazon.com, which was fantastic. It's a book called "The Ninth Step." It's still at #1 in its categories, starting really strongly both in the U.S. and U.K. and doing really, really strongly on Apple because I've made a big play this year on developing sales in Apple. We can talk in another episode about how best strategies for making those other platforms work hard for you. Apple is my second best market behind Amazon.com, and in front of Amazon.co.uk this month. A good chunk of that is because The Ninth Step is selling like hotcakes over there.

James: Congratulations on the launch. There are future episodes definitely on platforms, but there's also a future episode specifically on launches. We'll get a good guess for that because it's such an important part of it, although we do touch on those subjects with our guest today, Marie Force. I think we've gone on enough, and we've got a big guest waiting in the wings, so lets here it from Marie.

We're delighted to welcome Marie Force to the SPF podcast. Most of you I know are going to be very familiar with Marie who is indeed a force in publishing. A hybrid: She straddles both the traditional publishers, people like HarperCollins or Harlequin, part of HarperCollins now. Is it Barkley or Berkeley, Marie, because we say Bark-

Marie: Berkley.

James: It's Berkley.

Marie: Yeah, Berkley.

James: I thought it would be because that's part of Penguin, of course, isn't it?

Marie: It is, Random House Penguin, Penguin Random House. I always mix that up, yes.

James: And they are traditional sides but I think what's going to catch ... most people will know from our area of influence if you like, is the indie publishing aspect to your work.

Let me get this right, you've sold over two million in the Gansett Island series alone in what, the last five or six years?

Marie: 2.5 million.

James: That's well over two million.

Marie: Sorry, but that .5, you know, got to get that in there, since 2011.

James: That's incredible, and you live in Rhode Island. Obviously you're American but you've previously lived in Europe. You traveled a little bit with your husband who is in the navy, so you're familiar with our part of the world over here as well.

Marie: I am but I have yet to spend any real time in the U.K., which is going to be rectified very soon.

James: You're going to have to tell us when you're coming over to the U.K. because we're going to show you where the best ale houses are.

Marie: That's the whole idea. You've got to have friends there before you go.

James: That's great. Marie, welcome to the SPF podcast. Thank you so much indeed for joining us. I know you are a relatively modest person reading some of the things that you write and you tweet, but you are a huge influence, I think, and an inspiration to a lot of people in indie publishing because you've just got it right.

You've got it right with the writing. You've got it right with the marketing, and over the next sort of 30 or 40 minutes we really want to pick your brains on that if that's okay?

Marie: Of course. I'm happy to.

James: A lot of people have asked about the buildup to the amount of books that you've sold, Marie, and one of the questions onboard was about mailing lists and contact with your readers. I know that's a huge part of how you operate.

Can you perhaps take us back to the beginning of how you began that process of building relationships with your readers and marketing to them?

Marie: Sure. One of the things that I've done right from the very beginning is every single time a reader gets in touch with me in any way I try to capture them. And by capture I mean get them to like me on Facebook or follow me on Twitter, or in the beginning, before social media was as big as it is now, I would ask if I could put their email address on my mailing list, which at that time was an Excel spreadsheet. But I've tried to like, from the beginning, not let anyone get away.

I also feel like just having them feel like I want them in my circle has helped with a little bit of a person touch, where I'm going back to them and say, "Hey, thanks so much for getting in touch with me. Have you joined my mailing list? It's the best way to stay in touch long term." It's really been very beneficial to having that built-in audience available any time I need to tell them something. Really, I recommend to anyone from the very beginning, any time a reader writes to you, obviously with good news versus some of

the things they love to say, then ask them if they're willing to join you for the long haul, if you will.

I find that usually after somebody commits to three or four books, they're pretty much potentially a reader for life if they like what you're doing, and so getting them on that mailing list can be really critical.

Mark: I completely agree with that, and I was quite a little slow to the party in even setting up the mailing, so I probably wasted about six months spinning my wheels when books were being sold but I wasn't collecting that data, which was stupid on my part. I think that's only half the battle, and you said that really nicely.

It's not just getting into the mindset of collecting the email address or getting them onto the Facebook page; it is actually, like it's really critically important that you kind of come across in your communications as friendly and open.

Marie: Welcoming, yes. "Welcome to my party. Come to my party."

Mark: Yeah, and I still get in emails today and comments on Facebook from people who can't believe that an author is actually responding.

Marie: I know. I do too, and I find that to be amazing because really where would we be without them? I always say that to them. It's like customer service 101 to me, and a lot of it goes back, especially on Facebook, it goes back to the hand-selling that the booksellers used to do for us in the stores where they would have an author they loved, and they would recommend their books on the floor. We're kind of doing that for ourselves now. I try to answer every question that's asked to me on Facebook, which is quite a daunting task some days, but I try. I'm right in there, right on the front lines, and I do have some people that help me with that but most of it is me. I just feel there's no substitute for that personal touch, and they really appreciate it. When my new book comes out they feel like their "friend's" book is coming out because we have that little bond or we've joked around about our kids or whatever. Teenagers make for really good Facebook fodder. It's just that personal touch right from the very beginning every time that they reach out to you or contact you in any way to make sure that you're bringing that to them, and I really feel that that has paid off for me tremendously.

Mark: Just before we came online, actually, I had a quick look at the YouTube video for one of your Reader Weekends which just looks amazing.

Marie: It's so much fun.

Mark: It would be great to hear what that's about and where the idea came from and how that has panned out for you.

Marie: We do have a weekend every ... Now it's our third annual. We started out doing it once, and my team had so much fun. They were like, "Oh my God, we have to do this again next year," so suddenly we're doing it every year now.

Basically it's all part of my overall strategy to try not to travel as much as I was. I still have a child ... He's not a child; he's 17 and he's taller than me, but I still have a kid at home. I have one in college too but I want to be where he is until he's out of school because I know now how fast the high school years go by, and I was invited to go to the big romance conference in Hawaii. I would have loved to have gone, but I want to be where he is. He couldn't have gone with me, so the reader weekend is about bringing them to me, and this year we have people coming from Australia. Last year we had people that are from Ireland. It's been a tremendously cool thing, and what I'm finding too is people are coming year after year because they're meeting friends there and they want to see them again next year. It's becoming like a family reunion in some ways. Last year we had 200 readers. This year we expect to have 300. We're going to max out actually at 300.

What we do is we have a party Friday night centered on the Gansett Island series, Tiki Bar party, and then I take them to the real-life Gansett Island, Block Island, Rhode Island on Saturday on a ferry. Then we spend the day out there. Then we come back, and Sunday I do a Q&A, and a breakfast, and a book-signing. They love it. They just can't get enough, and we have so much fun. I actually have a professional meeting planner who's my full-time assistant, and so having her on board made it possible for me to do something like this. She knows how to negotiate with hotels and all that and make sure we're getting the best deal and not paying for rooms we're not using and thinks like that.

If I didn't have her I wouldn't be able to do it. That's Julie, who's my majordomo. She runs my whole business, actually, and this is just one small part of what she does for me, but that, having that skill set on board allowed me to be able to do these kind of things, and we really enjoy it. It's a lot of fun.

Mark: I guess there are two other really useful, amazing benefits out of that. I guess at the end of that you've got a massive spring in your step.

Marie: Step comes after I sleep for eight hours. On for three straight days is really exhausting, believe it or not.

Mark: And the other thing is these aren't just readers; they're kind of friends and ambassadors.

Marie : They are. My husband asked me too. One time he said, "Where is the return on the investment?" Because obviously it cost me more than I make on it. We charge a small amount for them to come. We've just found that if people don't have some skin in the game they tend to cancel. It has cost me money but the return on investment is when people go home and tell everyone they know what they just did for the weekend, and next thing you know everyone and their wives are reading the books. Then they're coming next year, and that's how it keeps getting bigger, so it's been really fun. It's really exciting. I live in Newport, Rhode Island, so it's a resort community, a destination, and bringing them here at that time of year, it couldn't be better.

James: I think the tone you have with your readers is really important. You make it sound like it's a very natural and obvious way to interact with your readers, but I think some people are a bit confused. We see Hollywood stars being quite aloof and playing the big characters, and I think some authors maybe feel that they've got to be like that. They've got to be this important person.

Actually, what I love about your relationship, Marie, it's a very unpretentious relationship with your readers. You're writing books. It sounds to me like you love writing them because the readers like reading them, and there's a sort of equal partnership there, not you as the great one-on-one side, and people worshipping on the other. That seems to really pay off. Although I'm

sure we all have an ego and every writer has an ego, probably spurs you to write a bit.

But actually you come across very much on a level with your readers, and I think that is probably how they feel about it.

Marie: Thank you. I appreciate that. I try. One of the things I like to hear, because obviously my life has changed a lot in the last five years, I like to hear from the people who knew me before that I'm exactly the same person I was before.

I like to think that the books are me; I'm the books. If I become somebody different then so too do the books. The books seem to be working the way they are, so I'm trying not to let it go to my head. I'm surrounded by a lot of people that keep me humble, believe me.

James: That's what children are good for, right?

Marie: Yes. Oh my God, teenagers and young adults, there's nobody better. They'll bring you right down to size, let me tell you.

Mark: That's a good segue.

Marie: I have a great group around me. All the important people who were important to me before are still here, and a lot of them work for me now. I have my niece working for me. I have my ex-sister-in-law, who is really just one of my best friends, my brother's ex-wife. I got custody of her in their divorce. It's all the same people who were with me before are with me now, and my very good friend is my CFO. She keeps all the business ... the accounting straight for us, and just having that team around me, it keeps me very grounded because it's all the people that were in my life before.

Mark: If you could maybe just talk a little bit about what life was like before you found this amazing success over the last five years. What was it like? What would we have found if we were talking to you six years ago?

Marie: You would have found a very frustrated author. I had a lot of books written already. It's funny to me too that my greatest frustration led to success beyond my wildest dreams because I love the quote that, "Luck is the convergence of preparation and opportunity."

When KDP opened its doors to authors, allowing us to self-publish on the Kindles, I was so ready because I had been rejected everywhere. I was published with a small indie publisher early on that didn't really do too

much for me to grow my career. I didn't make any money. I made \$2,500 in 2010. All of 2010 I made \$2,500 on my books.

I had a full-time job working for a company that I loved. I worked remotely for a company in D.C. as a communications director, and I absolutely loved it. I worked for them for 16 years. I loved my day job. It was a great job, so it wasn't like I was jonesing to get out of there, but I also wanted to be writing books. I was writing books at night with kids underfoot, sitting right next to me on the sofa. Some of the stuff I wrote while they were right next to me. It's a good thing Child Services doesn't know, but I was just kind of doing both at the same time.

Then in 2011 when KDP really took off for me and I published the first of the Gansett Island series three months in a row, and my life has literally never been the same since then. I made well into six figures in 2011, and I left my job at the end of 2011, which really I hadn't planned to do for like another 10 years because I had kids going to college. There's no way I would have been able to afford not to keep that job, so to have it happen the way it did, just from zero to 90 literally overnight my head was spinning. My whole family's head was spinning for years after it.

Then literally one year on my own and then I hired Julie, and then one year after that I hired Lisa. Next thing I know I've got four full-time employees working with me, and we're busy all the time. They are the reason I can get audiobooks out on release day and things like that. We have a very well-oiled machine in place now, but it just happened really fast, and one of the things I learned very quickly is just how important it is to manage the business in addition to writing the books.

There's a lot of mistakes you can make that can cost you a lot of money, especially in the U.S. with the way the tax system is here. If you're not minding the store and running the business too, you can end up losing your shirt in taxes. So there was a lot to learn very quickly, but it's been the most fun I've ever had in my life too, so that's certainly not complaining.

Mark: Before you took on the staffing, because I think I'm probably at that level now, and I'm at that kind of level of six figures to maybe seven figures this year, so all pretty amazing, but I'm still working by myself. I don't have

anyone to help me, and I know that I should get into that kind of mindset and start thinking about getting someone on board.

Marie: I waited really until I knew I was going to be able to sustain it. 2012, '13, '14, '15 have all been multiple seven-figure years, so I wanted to make sure that I had enough to take care of myself, my family, and cover what we needed, kids in college, blah, blah, blah, before I took on a staff.

I'm really glad that I waited because I didn't want to ever be worried that I wasn't going to be able to pay them or whatever. They were leaving jobs to come and work for me, and I told them, "You're coming to work for a startup. I hope that I'm going to be able to give you a job for as long as you want one, but I'm not making anybody any guarantees." They all know that.

Mark: Yeah, it's amazing.

James: That's a critical part of any business is knowing when to expand, and obviously expanding too early can be as bad as expanding late.

It's interesting that Mark was asking about that, and I was thinking about the same thing: how did you know that time was right?

Marie: It was mostly about that fact that I was working ... I was writing full-time, and so my output was changing exponentially as well. I couldn't keep up with all the demands of making sure the e-books ... They call it "self-publishing," which is a total misnomer. I have a lot of people that help me, and having especially Julie working with me on that part of it, she takes care of all the audiobook details, for example, and my audiobooks are extremely profitable.

We found that getting them out on release day is exponentially better than even one week later as far as recovering the cost in the first month, so just having that ability to turn things around like that, I give her all the credit for that. Then of course having Lisa on the other side running the accounting and the business side of it and making sure ... She comes to me, "Oh, we've got to pay this. We've got to pay ..." I am so happy to have my forward key when I get some crazy tax form for my foreign agent and I'm like, "Oh my God." Forward it right to Lisa and it's out of my life.

James: I know you get asked a lot about your writing, but I'm going to ask you as well because you're a prolific author and it's something that we're all interested in, all of us. I'm starting out. Mark is a lot more experience.

Tell us a little bit about how you write, how you edit, how quickly you write and your process.

Marie: I have journalism training, and the first thing that we're taught is fast and efficient. I try not to waste any words that I don't need to use. I write fast. I've always written fast. I used to write my best when I was on deadline. I used to drive my editors crazy when I worked for a newspaper. They'd be hanging over me. I'm like, "I got this. Don't worry." I seem to do better when there's that kind of pressure.

I don't like having deadlines. I actually actively hate them, but I somehow seem to be able to write a full-length book, and for me that's 90,000 to 100,000 words in two months. Really, I can't tell you how. I just do it. I literally start at the beginning with a blank page and go straight through, and I'm editing the whole time, going back, re-reading. I just did a re-read today of the first 10,000 of the book I'm working on now, and I clean it up when I re-read. By the time I finish I've got a solid, it's not even a first draft; it's finished. I turn that over to editors and proofreaders on the indie side and audio and all of that. It just takes off and goes from there.

James: And the structure is in your head, Marie, from the beginning?

Marie: No, not always. A lot of it, I literally make up as I go along. Sometimes I write romantic suspense too, and I have a little bit more committed to what I plan to do with it beforehand, but one of the other things to keep in mind when you look at this pace, I'm also writing four series. Two of them I have been writing for seven years, Gansett and Fatal. Green Mountain I've now been writing for three years and Quantum for two, so none of it's new to me. It's like literally switching from one group of people to another, one setting to another.

It's all very familiar to me, so if I was doing standalone title where I had to start from scratch and create the world and the characters and everything from the beginning, I would not be able to do that in two months.

It's the series-writing that makes it possible to produce at this level.

Mark: What are you working on?

Marie: I'm working on Gansett 15, if you can believe it.

Mark: Wow, and in terms of practically, are you in Scrivener or Word?

Marie: Word, yep, straight up Word.

Mark: Wow, that's interesting.

Marie: Yep, I have series bibles in Excel that I refer to frequently, and other than that, no. I see Scrivener came along long after I was already doing this in Word, and I just didn't really see the point just taking the time to stop and learn something new when what I was doing was working, that there's probably a lot of benefit to it that I would really appreciate, but I don't have the time to do a lot of things like that that I really wish I could.

I'd love to take a forensic science class. I've even looked into it, but I don't have time. Just today I was by the medical examiner's office in my state, and I was like, "Oh, I'd love to go knock on their door and ask them if they'd give me a tour." I don't have time.

James: That's because you haven't drawn breath in five years.

Marie: I know. It's my head is spinning. I was just talking to my team today about, "I don't know how much longer I can keep up this pace. It's killing me." I wrote a 97,000 word Fatal book, and 70,000 words of that were written in January because I had the audacity to take some time off for the holidays. That's no fun, to be honest with you.

James: How many hours a day do you write? That may have been an exception in January, in a normal kind of month.

Marie: January was ugly, and I don't expect it the rest of the year. I don't expect to have another month like that, although March is now shaping up because February got screwed up on a number of different levels, but no, it's just probably the actual writing, four or five maybe, everything else, another four or five. I don't know. I just do what needs to be done until my eyes give out and I just can't deal anymore. I find that when I'm clicking around on Facebook a lot the writing is done.

Mark: Do you have kind of a word count target that you hit every day?

Marie: I did in January. I was writing 3,000 a day. I normally do not, no. I've never had word count goals because when I was first doing this I had a full-time job and two little kids, and I just didn't want to set myself up to feel like a failure if I couldn't meet them. I just never wrote like that. I just wrote as much as I could every chance I got, and that's kind of what I'm still doing, although it's more often now because I don't have the other job.

Maid for Love, which is the first one, is the shortest of all the books because we were trying so hard to sell it to a traditional publisher before self-publishing really became a viable option. We actually trimmed it down. I can't even believe this now when I look back at it what a lucky break it was that they all said no, but we trimmed it down for one of the Harlequin lines. Oh my God, thank God they said no because literally Gansett was my life-changing series obviously. Everything is credited to get back to Gansett. The fact that I was able to leave my job, and when my husband was laid off he was able to stay laid off, and my kid's in college in New York City, and that's not cheap. All of that was made possible by Gansett Island. Every single publisher in the romance business said no to Maid for Love.

Mark: I suppose these days you wouldn't sell those books to a traditional publisher for ... Maybe you would but it would be an enormous deal that would turn your head.

Marie: My new philosophy with dealing with traditional publishers is to get all the money up front. All of it, because now, you know what? Then whatever royalty rate they're going to pay me after the fact or whatever, 25% of net or whatever bologna it is, I don't care. That's my philosophy now.

James: How quickly in a few years it has gone from being kind of the glamorous side of the business and people using expressions like "vanity publishing" for self-publishing, but anybody in the know now looks at someone who signs a traditional publishing deal and many cases scratches their head, thinking, "What on earth would you be doing that?"

Marie: Right, and you know what? There's a lot of things still. I have good relationships with both my publishers. I have nothing bad to say about them. I've been treated very well. Obviously I came into traditional publishing at a different point in my career than a lot of other people did. I have a lot of friends who left traditional publishing to go indie, but I never had the big New York deal or the big New York publisher before. They didn't want me, and so now it's a whole different perspective because I went into it later, so the treatment is different. The marketing is different. The advances are very different. All of it is different.

Last year I signed the biggest deal of my career with Harlequin's, HQN, for the next four books in the Fatal series. That was well worth doing. I wanted to keep the series going. They owned the first eight or nine books at that point. To keep the series where it started that was a good deal for me to continue doing that, and they made it worth my while.

James: I'm not that familiar with the tradition publishing industry. Mark, you'll know more about this.

I wonder if 10 years ago publishing houses would have been happy to have an author publishing with themselves alongside their deal. They normally sign all of that up in one go, but that does show some progress.

Marie: I don't really think they love it still, to be honest with you.

James: No, but it's some progress, isn't it? Because the trad industry, they need to change.

Marie: No, it's tremendous progress, tremendous. I've been doing this for almost ... I've been actually published for eight years this year. I heard one author say at a conference that more had changed in the last two years than in the 20 that preceded it, and I believe that because it's all changed so quickly.

One thing that's totally awesome now is that the authors are getting the respect that they should have gotten all along. We're not treated like cogs in the wheel or the dreaded content providers; we're more like partners in this.

I often say to one of my publishers or the other, "We should be doing fill in the blank," and they listen to me and they do it because I ask them to. That wouldn't have happened even five years ago.

Mark: I can definitely see that change. I consult for some traditional publishing interests. You've seen the kinds of things that I'm doing and other indies are doing, and want to get onto that themselves, so there are probably five or six years behind us when it comes to some of these things.

Marie: Yes. For example, my Facebook following is like 10 times the size of one of my publishers. You know what I mean? It's like the authors are doing thing so innovatively, and it's like trying to pull them along sometimes.

Mark: Yeah, I get that. You see that a lot. You see Facebook adds coming into my feed from traditional publishers in this country, and they do the

basic errors, things that are really unforgivable, like the image size is wrong so Facebook has cropped it. I've seen this once before, actually, cropped it so badly that the title of the book and the author's name were both invisible, so I'm not entirely sure how that ad was going to perform. Not very well was probably my guess.

Marie: They are still learning.

James: That brings us back to content marketing.

Obviously I've been keen on hearing some of your tips, and particularly with the Gansett Island series. What were the marketing tactics you used and what were the ones you think brought you the most success?

Marie: The thing that has really been the juggernaut for Gansett is having *Maid for Love* free, which is the first book. It was funny because before everyone knew that that was such a good thing to do I did it in 2012, in June of 2012 when the sixth book came out, and I had no idea what to expect. It was a total game changer as far as just the number of people that were engaging with the series. Two books later was the first book in the Gansett series, was the first of my books to make the New York Times, at #6 too. Like, whoa.

Everything just exploded after that for Gansett and for my other books too. The "fallout" was tremendous, just the follow-through: you hook them on Gansett and then they go on to read everything else. That has been my experience with most of my readers, I would honestly say. Some of them are hesitant about reading the Fatal series because they're afraid it's going to be scary or whatever. Whenever somebody comes on Facebook to say that I always step back and let the readers take care of that. They let them know, "No, no, no, you have to read Fatal." Then they come back a week later. They're like, "Oh my God, I just read all nine books, and I don't know what just happened to my seven days."

The readers take care of things like that for me, but having that Book 1 free, and it's still to this day, I know a lot of people say "free" isn't what it used to be, and agree it's not necessarily what it used to be because so many people are doing it, but I'm still having amazing results with freebies. I really am, and I just did Books 1 through 3, the box set, at Christmas time for Gansett, and brought in thousands of new readers to the series that

have gone on the buy all the books. Then I'm seeing the uptick in the other series too.

Free is still working tremendously well for me. Maid for Love will be free solidly without interruption for four years in June, and I'm still seeing between I want to say 7,000 and 10,000 a month just on Amazon alone of downloads there.

Mark: That's impressive, and you do that with any promotion?

Marie: A little here and there, yeah, definitely. Also right now I've got two other series starters free, so I'm juicing all three of them together. We did that for some T.V. adds that we ran in my local area because a lot of my books were set in Rhode Island so we ran TV ads in Rhode Island, got a huge response to that from people saying, "I had no idea that we had an author in our state writing about our state and lots of downloads of free books in all three series." That's been very beneficial too.

James: Cost-effective, Marie? Because TV advertising sounds expensive to me.

Marie: It is. To me it was worth it to try it once and to see how it was received. The people that I worked with got us really great coverage. We were on everything from the morning news, to Saturday night live, to the afternoon talk shows, to HGTV, the Kardashians, you name it. People were seeing them everywhere, so it really was very beneficial in the sense of raising the profile locally, which it's the smallest state in the country but we still have a million people living here.

If you hook people on the fact that you're writing about places they know I thought that that would be worth trying. I can't say for sure will I get the money back. Probably not, but it's exposure, and it was worth it to try it once. We'll see. Maybe next year winter we'll do it again when everybody is stuck at home when it's cold. Maybe we'll try it again.

James: There are still some die hard students and people starting out writing books who dismiss the idea of giving away a book.

Marie: A lot of people do. One of my publishers won't do it.

James: Really? If anybody takes a parting glance at your career and comes away thinking, "I'm not going to give away a book," it doesn't make any sense. I scratch my head at that.

Marie: That, and the Fatal series, not for nothing, has also sold like 1.2 million. We've also had huge success by offering Book 1 for free. We've done it I think three or four different times now, and every single time the backlist just explodes, explodes. We do have the other publisher. We've got them down to 99 cents on Book 1, and that's going to be offered next month with BookBub, so we're very excited about that, but it's interesting to me to see that my least successful series in terms of just gross sales is the one series that's never had Book 1 as a freebie.

If you offer a book for free, I'm going to give away 100,000 copies of it in a week with BookBub, and that 100,000 is going to translate into 20,000 new readers across the series, and those numbers are just going to explode from there. Then you get not only them; you get their sisters, coworkers, cousins, aunts, next door neighbors. You get the whole kit and caboodle.

James: It's the very best marketing. You've got to start it, though, and you've done that.

You use social media organically very successfully. You've got a huge following on Facebook. Do you use social media advertising as well or do you advertise elsewhere?

Marie: I do. I have Facebook advertising running almost all the time. In fact, my accountant, we were talking today about expenses and she told me that I was our biggest problem with Facebook advertising. I'm usually maxing out my account at every chance I get. I find that it's really very effective. I've gotten a lot of new readers from it. It's been definitely worth doing. I have somebody working with me now who has been fully educated by Mark Dawson and who knows all the tricks. You know Melissa. She's been very good about getting me where I need to be with the advertising and kind of taking that on for me, which has been very helpful.

It's changing so fast all the time, and to try to keep up is just ... you know. It's better for me to write the books and let somebody else do that, and she's been great.

Mark: Yeah, that's true. I spend a good amount of money too on ads right now, and the problem I've had is that it's quite difficult. I've gone to agencies and said, "Would you take this on for me?" Isn't the cost that I'd have to spend to get someone to do that, so they look at me when I'm

talking about some of the tactics I'm using. They don't know what I'm talking about, so why would I-

Marie : I know. You have to take the time to educate them.

Mark: Yeah, exactly. It's very frustrating because it takes me a little bit of time, not a huge amount, but it's time I would rather be spending writing.

Marie: Exactly. Going back to promotions and all of that, when you ask me about what made the difference for Gansett, not only the freebie, that was obviously #1, but writing more books and keeping them coming. Some years in there early days of Gansett I had four Gansett books out in one year, and the readers just love that. They love that they don't have to wait a long time, but then on the same token one time I went 10 months between Gansett books while I was writing Quantum, trying to sneak that in there. One of the best first week sales I ever had was when I waited 10 months. It's kind of like two schools of thought: Make them wait; make them drool.

James: It sounds like you're describing a relationship as well.

Marie: Yes, exactly.

James: Treat them mean.

Marie: I don't like to make them wait too long. I don't ever do that on purpose but if the muse is sending you in a new direction and you're going to write three books in three months and then put them out three weeks in a row, and you got this chance to do that, then it's kind of hard to say no to the muse when she's in that kind of mood.

Mark: We're touching on a lot of kind of medium to advanced tactics and strategies here, which is wonderful. I'm just thinking we've got quite a lot of questions from Facebook.

I asked for questions this morning and a lot of these writers are at the early stage of their career, and one of questions that came through again and again was, "If Marie could do one thing or give herself one piece of advice five years ago, what would that be?"

Marie: Write more books. Write more books. Inventory is king, and having the ability to do a lot of different cool things because you have a lot of different books to mess around with has made it that much more ... I don't know. It's made it easier to expand my readership because I have a lot of things that I can play with.

I have four standalone books under my control. I have 15 Gansett books, including a novella under my control. I have four Treading Water books. I have four Quantum books. That's a lot of inventory. It's almost 30 self-published books, not to mention the box sets and all the things that go along with them that give me a lot of stuff, so to speak, to work with. Just being able to do things like, for example, the box set #1 with the first three books for Gansett free at Christmas time this year, everybody was all over me about, "I can't believe you're giving three books away." Oh my God, the sell-through was unbelievable. What did I lose there? Nothing. I got readers that I wouldn't have gotten otherwise.

Mark: I can certainly agree with that.

The whole takeaway from this if anyone wants one particular takeaway is if giving something away is sensible if you've got your eye on this being a career rather than a flash in the pan.

Marie: Right. And if you have enough inventory following the freebie. You don't want to do it when you only have one more book right behind it. You want to do it when you have five or six. I like to make the analogy, if you opened a store and you had a single pair of pants, and a single shirt, and a single pair of shoes you wouldn't be in business very long because you'd be out of inventory. It's sort of the same thing. People who put out one or two books or even three or four and go crazy marketing them, when they read those three or four books they're done with you and they move on. Write 10 or 15 books and then go crazy marketing.

James: We've got a couple more questions we'll try and get in before we finish, Marie, if that's okay.

Marie: Sure.

James: Samuel James White on Facebook asks, "Did you enter romance because you thought it would be profitable or because you have a genuine love for the genre?"

Marie: I don't think you can do anything, spend as many hours doing what I do unless you have a genuine love for it. It's all I want to read. I have people tell me, "You have to read this thriller," the whole Girl on the Train sensation. I managed to read Gone Girl, but I was so happy to return to

romance after that was done because I wanted the happy ending. I write what I love and what I love to read.

I was a Danielle Steel fan. I think I was reading Danielle Steel at the same time I was reading Nancy Drew, not that my mother knew that, so I've always been a romance reader and I write what I love to read, but it is very profitable. If you're going to write genre fiction the romance readers are voracious and they read more books than any other audience. If you're a prolific author and you're looking to write genre fiction, romance is a good place to be.

James: It's a good one, isn't it? Also erotic fiction, which you've also moved into a little bit.

Marie: Yep.

James: And that's certainly since the e-reader revolution has been more helpful because when you sit on the subway people can't see what's on the cover of the book.

Marie: Yeah, and I find too a lot of people don't really care anymore what people see. That's kind of going by the wayside. I think Fifty Shades changed the way a lot of people look at stuff like that. It's just been great for the genre. My erotic romances have done exceptionally well, and I'm very committed to continuing that series. I like writing it.

James: There's another question here from Kelly Collins, who asked, "I think you're in the navy because your husband was. Did that influence your writing career or the stories that you tell?"

Marie: Not really but I will say that some of the places we lived did, and for instance we were stationed for three years in the Washington, D.C. area. The company I worked for before I left full-time was in D.C. and I was there a lot. I don't think I would have written the Fatal series if I didn't know D.C. quite as well as I do. So some of the places that we went made it possible for me to write books about them. The Fatal series is definitely an offshoot of the time I spent in D.C.

James: One more from Facebook.

Alana Foley asks, "How do you get noticed and keep your head above water as an author in one of the most competitive genres around?" We've kind of covered a lot of this, but it's still a good question, isn't it?

Marie: This is one of those things that it's the non-quantifiable ... It's the books. I hate to say it that way because you always sound like kind of a jerk but if readers didn't like my books we wouldn't be having this conversation. It's the books, the books, the books. Every single aspect of my focus all the time is on the books.

People say, "Oh, she's good at marketing and branding and all that." Yeah, I'm okay at that. I did a lot of that in my old job. I understand how websites work and yadda, yadda, yadda, but readers either like your books or they don't. If they do then you're golden, and they're going to tell people. That's the publicity and the promotion you cannot pay for is when somebody is up all night reading one of your books and they go to work looking like hell, and then they tell all their coworkers, "Oh my God, you got to read this book, blah, blah, blah."

It's the books. I can't tell you where the pixie dust is there. I feel very, very, very, very, very fortunate that whatever I'm doing the readers seem to like, but I can't tell you the why or the how of that.

James: There are a lot of readers out there if you look at Facebook alone and it's billion-odd users, so I think we also say to people that there will be a market for your books. Not everybody writes in huge popular genres.

Marie: Right, and that's why you have to manage your expectations too. If you write in a genre that has a very small readership then you're not going to be talking about selling three million books in five years or whatever because there's just not that kind of audience out there. A lot of times too I say to people, "If you give away 100,000 copies of Book 1 and nobody buys Book 2, take a look at what's wrong with Book 1." Nobody ever wants to hear that. Of course we don't want to hear that.

Mark: It's tough love sometimes.

Marie: It is. It's awful to have to say that to someone: "Well, have you taken another look at Book 1?"

Mark: Really it's free market research in a way, isn't it?

Marie: It is.

Mark: You make it free so that you make it easy for people to buy it and then read.

Amazon and all of the companies have dates on where people stop reading and they don't make that available to everyone, but that would be interesting, wouldn't it, if we could see where on our freebies where people stopped reading?

Marie: Kobo told me I had one of the best 100% read-throughs on KWL of any of the authors that they do business with, and I was like, "Shut up!" They showed me the little spreadsheet and everything. I was like, "Oh, well." I had never really given much thought to like when do people quit, because really all I'm looking at is what the sell-through looks like. So that was very nice to see that they're having good experience, the Kobo readers are.

James: That's certainly one of the explanations for your ongoing successes, isn't it?

People obviously adore the books. They're page-turners. They get to the end and they want the next one.

Marie: That's the #1 reason. It's the #1 reason. It's above everything else, all other things, and that's why when people ask me, "Where is all your focus?" and I have this great team working with me. They make it so all I do is write the books, really. My husband got laid off a couple years ago, and now he's home. He does everything around here, so literally all I do is write books, and I'm perfectly happy that way. That makes me happy.

James: Sounds like the dream.

Marie: It is. It totally is.

James: I just want to give a shout-out to Joan Barbara Simon and Sally Clements because they provided some of the questions that we asked earlier but I didn't name check them. We should do because there's a lot of people on Facebook who are very excited to hear this interview.

Mark: One of the things that stands out looking at your author page is the branding is top class, and by that I mean it's not just the cover, although that's the most visible and obvious of the branding elements, but the blurbs are all very tight. The pages are accurate. There are absolutely no errors. The reviews are great. All of that is absolutely perfect.

I just wondered if from those elements, which is the most important?

Marie: Probably the cover. The covers are critical, and actually we're in the process right now, it's been a very interesting experience, we're re-

branding the Fatal series again. Last year, I guess it was last, I can't believe it's already more than a year ago, we debuted the thriller covers that are on them now. I have to be honest. I was not thrilled with that because they took my brand off, and that's romance. I said from the very beginning I wasn't sold on it but they wanted to try it to kind of expand the audience a little bit.

The Fatal series is about a D.C. homicide detective and a politician who are romantically involved. They're going to be in every book, kind of like the ...in Death series, the J. D. Robb ...in Death series, but mine is much more romance, whereas that one is much more on the mystery/thriller side.

They're going to be on the cover of every book, and the covers are spectacular, and it's what I've wanted all along, so I'm thrilled. I'm just hoping that they sell because I was like really begging and pleading for this, but I feel like my brand is romance, and so can we please bring the romance back? How better to do that than to find two people who really in my mind look like them and really kind of embody them.

It's really exciting. We had an awesome photo shoot, so I'm really looking forward to seeing how they do because wanted my brand of romance brought back to those covers, and when I signed the new deal with HQN I asked them, "Could we please do something about the covers?" They were all for it, and it's been a really amazing collaborative process that I've enjoyed very much, and I can't wait to show them to people.

Mark: The other question I thought would be very interesting, you kind of touched on this earlier and I kind of took a note because it was a bit unusual. You said something along the lines of back when you started out you put email addresses onto the spreadsheet. I've done too, long before I got into MailChimp and all that kind of good stuff.

Then you said these days it's almost more important to get them on social media. Is that something that you feel - that social media is more important?

Marie: I don't know that I would say it's more important. I would say it's equally important. I wish that all of the 62,000 people that liked my page on Facebook were on my mailing list too. That would be awesome, and I'm going to be actually doing a lot more to try to get them to join the mailing

list because Facebook is making it harder and harder for them to see my posts. We all have that same issue that we're dealing with.

I've actually done some things, like, for instance, started a blog that has a subscriber element to it, trying to get more people, direct access to more people on a regular basis without having a third party between us. I feel like I'm really, really insanely dependent upon Facebook, and that kind of scares me sometimes.

Mark: Yeah, and they've demonstrated in the past ... If we were talking about this three years ago, that you could put a post up and you would organically reach over 50% of your fans, these days you're looking at about 3% unless you start spending money which is ...

Marie: The goal.

Mark: Exactly. Of course they've made their decision for a number of reasons, and their advertising platform is stupendously powerful.

Marie: Yes, yes, it is. It's crazy.

Mark: It's pay to play, though. It isn't something that you're going to get for free anymore.

Marie: I have Facebook stock too so I'm okay with that.

James: A foot in both camps.

Marie: I'm just kidding. I'm just joking. I'm really joking about that.

James: We bought that yacht you've got. We paid for that.

Marie: Yeah, exactly. Between that and my Apple stock. No, I'm just kidding.

It's harder and harder and harder to get anything done on Facebook. I took a picture after a snow storm. We had this incredibly spectacular sunset. The sky was on fire, and I took a picture of it and I posted it to Instagram, and it automatically feeds to my Facebook page. The reach was something like 350,000. I'm like, "Why couldn't I get that in one of my books?" It's still possible to organically explode on Facebook. It's just you got to have the right situation, I supposed.

James: You'll have to get something in the sky.

Marie: Yeah, it's never about the books, God forbid. All their crazy rules about 20% text and ... Ah God. I also just learned a really valuable lesson, which I will be happy to share with you guys and your listeners.

I had on the new Quantum book, Rapturous that came out in January, I had bare shoulders. Facebook hated those shoulders. They hated them. The lesson that I learned was, "Okay, here is the thing: I knew six weeks before that book came out that I was going to have trouble promoting it on Facebook. I should have changed the cover and I didn't."

You know what, it was the first book in 22 books that didn't make the New York Times, and it was because I had such trouble advertising it. I think too Amazon didn't give it as much play as they normally give my books because of the cover. We are in the process right now of re-branding the Quantum series, which is only a year old, and a custom photo shoot was done for the first three books that I love, but I can't put people on the books because it's just I can't get the right combination of the erotic content, you know what I mean, and be able to advertise it too.

Mark: The genre has conventions that people expect to see on the covers that marks it as, "This is erotic fiction."

Marie: Yeah, so we're going with objects over people. If you look at the Fifty Shades covers and you look at the Crossfire and Meredith Wild, they're all in that same vein. There's no people.

Mark: I would just like to say, the Calendar Girl books, the reason the covers of those they're quite not bland; they're very striking but they're not particularly what I would say erotic. They're not selling too shabbily at all at the moment.

Marie: I know, so I'm taking the people off, and I'm going with the objects that signify what the books are about. We're going to try that. It's not like the books aren't doing great. The books sold phenomenally well, but it was a lesson learned, that, "Okay, if you can't promote this book in pre-order you're not going to be able to promote it release week either." I don't know what I thought was going to happen but it was a real wake-up call, like, "Okay, do an early test. If the book is questionable, if the cover is questionable test it early, and if it doesn't go through change the cover." To me Facebook advertising makes the difference between a New York Times bestseller and one that did very well in USA Today but did not make the New York Times, not that that really matters. It's like winning a gold

medal or an Academy award: You're always a New York Times bestseller after the first time, but when you got 21 in a row you're going for the title. James: I think it's also about being agile and reacting. It seems like it's an exception that proves they're all the way that you operate your business, Marie, but it's a good lesson for authors perhaps are naturally quite good at sitting down and structuring their books and not naturally necessarily business people.

That agility, that ability not to be proud about things but to react and change that's what makes businesses successful.

Marie: And you know, that's exactly right because I was proud of that photo shoot. Those first three covers were rocking. You know what I mean? They were awesome, and the way it all came together, I found the guy, and then his girlfriends, pictures on Instagram, she looks just like the girl. She's a medical student not even a model, and I talked her into doing it. It was perfect, and it really launched the series, but this was a realization that that strategy is not going to work long-term, and it's time right now to change it up, so we're doing it. The new covers are going to be ... They're baller. I love them.

James: Sometimes you have to kill your babies.

Marie: Yeah, you have to kill your darlings even on the covers, exactly, yep, but it was a lesson learned.

Also having a book at \$6.99 in January might not have been the best thing I ever did. People are broke after Christmas, and I've seen the sales are very steady well into February, but I think a lot of people that would have bought it in January are buying it in February because of the timing after the holidays. I think there's lessons, always lessons to be learned, always.

James: That's never going to stop.

Marie: No. Just when you think you've got this something changes and you're like, "Okay, now what?" Then you got to recalibrate.

James: I love it.

Marie: Me too. I love it too, and my team calls it, I get one of my brilliant beyond brilliant ideas, and they know that it's going to take over their life for a week or two.

James: It's also important because for the people who are going to work hard, and put the effort in, and learn, and have the right attitude, they're going to thrive in that environment. You want it to be a bit like that. You want to be the person who's going to put the extra effort in and rise above the rest. If it was too easy it would be a saturated market and we wouldn't have an opportunity to thrive in it.

Marie: That's very true, and I do think that the way that the market is right now it is separating, and I hate to say, the men from the boys, but the people who are in it for the long haul career-wise. The people who are looking to get rich quick are finding that it's not going to happen. There is no easy path. If there was an easy path we'd all be on it.

I think it's awesome when books like Calendar Girl and Fifty Shades and some of the others that have broken out, like my friend Lauren Blakely just had a huge hit with her book Big Rock and Vi Keeland with The Baller. You just never know what's going to be a huge hit. Vi spent three weeks on the New York Times. I love to see that for an indie author. That's awesome.

Mark: It's good for everyone.

Marie: It is. It's good for all us, especially like in her case too with the sports romance, that supposedly sports romances are like ... I have one and it was so hard to sell, and blah, blah, blah. Back in the day when I was trying to get into publishing sports romances were like taboo, but there she is three weeks in a row with an indie romance based in the sports world. Good for her.

James: I was just going to say, we've interviewed one of our students who's had what appears to be an overnight success. He's had a fantastic success with a book that he wrote, specifically sort of reverse engineered the book to match the success of Facebook ads, but it's his ninth book. It looks like an overnight success to everyone else. "You've suddenly made it." He had crafted his trade over nine books to get to where he is.

Marie: Exactly.

James: So exactly what you were just saying.

Marie: The first of my books to hit the New York Times was my 25th published book, so it certainly didn't happen overnight. It certainly did not, and it doesn't for most people, I don't think. I think most of us, there's

obviously a few exceptions, but I think for most of us it's a long, tedious, often frustrating, slog. I used to go two years before anything good would happen, like, oh, I get a request for 30 pages from an agent, like, oh, celebration.

I was just thinking today, I was at the post office, and I hardly ever have to go there anymore because I have someone who does that, but my entire career could be summed up with my relationship with the post office.

Sending query letters back in the day before everything was digital, getting stuff back from them, self-addressed stamped envelopes, sending pages, sending full manuscripts and then waiting for nothing often. Then it goes to, "Oh, I finally sell a book and I got to send some copies to readers." Now I have somebody full time doing shipping and sending merchandise for my books. It's kind of like that evolution from completely Looserville to having merchandise for my series that's going out that readers are actually buying.

James: Do you think you'll slow down at some point, give yourself a break?
Marie: I don't know. I'm going to be 50 in a couple of months, which I can't believe, so probably going to hit the old folks home shortly after. I don't know. It's still fun. There's still nothing else I'd rather do with my time during the day. I would like to take weekends off on a regular basis. That would be kind of nice. I don't know.

I was just thinking today too I've got one series at 15 books. I got one at 10, one at seven, and then another at five. At some point I'm probably going to have to come up with some new ideas too although I really want to say this because my readers will go freak out if they hear me say it. No end in sight in any of them right now. No end in sight.

Then I have a fifth series that I thought was done until the readers told me otherwise. My most frequently asked question, and I love this because it's about the very first books I ever wrote back in 2005 and 2006, Book 4, they asked me to write a Book 4, which I did in 2012, and my most frequently asked question is if there's going to be a Book 5 in my Treading Water series. I'm thinking about it more now than I ever have before.

James: Pushed by your readers.

Marie: Yes.

James: This is very much like ... This is Arthur Conan Doyle, isn't he? He tried to kill off Sherlock Holmes.

Marie: There are some darlings you cannot kill.

James: Yeah, exactly. Marie, we are delighted for you. It's been brilliant talking to you. I think particularly the reader engagement stuff, I think you're a bit of an innovator and leader in that field, and I suspect if you don't mind at some point in the future we might quiz you in a bit more detail about that aspect of it.

Marie: Anytime. I love listening to you guys talk. That British accent is very hot.

James: Hopefully we'll do that in a dark pub in East London at some point.

Marie: I would love that. You know, we just had to hire a narrator for a British accent in my upcoming book. I wish I would have known that you guys were British when we were first talking about this. I might have had a job of work for you.

James: We may get some work out of this, Mark.

Marie: Absolutely.

James: Marie, thank you so much indeed. We will watch your career with future success, I'm sure, and we look forward to speaking to you again. Thank you for joining us.

Marie: Thank you so much for having me. It was fun.

James: A couple of things that I loved about that interview, great to talk to Marie. She's brilliant, by the way, but one of her quotes, "More has changed in the past two years than in the previous 20," which for somebody who's in the thick of it and seeing that change unfolding in front of her, and taking advantage of it is quite something.

Also something that stuck in my mind was when she was talking about a key tip for authors: "Write more books. Inventory is king." This idea that your living is going to be set on one book, it does happen but it happens rarely, but the systems that she uses to market, the systems that you use to market Mark, and we talk about the work best when you've got inventory on the shelf so that when you've got a reader and they like your book they've got somewhere to go.

Mark: Yeah, that's really crucial. As I mentioned I think to you I made that mistake. I didn't have anywhere for readers to go, didn't have a mailing list, didn't have another book for them to buy. So whenever I'm asked at conferences, or when I'm speaking, or in emails from writers, what my best tip is for developing the career, it's a bit of a cliché these days but it's just write the next book.

Keep writing the next book and things will become easier when you've got more stock.

James: I haven't finished my first book yet. I do need to pull my finger out. You can email us support@selfpublishingformula.com any questions, suggestions, guest suggestions. We're all ears. Please follow us on Twitter @selfpubform. We have been delighted to bring you Marie Force today. We have another amazing guest in Podcast 4, but I'm not going to tease anymore about that now. We will see you in the next edition. Good bye.
Mark: Good bye.

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