

EPISODE 97: FUNDING YOUR WAY FROM THE 9 TO 5 – WITH C. HOPE CLARK

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 Blatch and Dawson.

Mark Dawson: Dawson and Blatch.

James Blatch: Dawson and ... oh yes, sorry that's the ... now that you're into your Hollywood deal, these things become critical don't they?

Mark Dawson: Yes, absolutely. I need to make sure my placement is in the correct position.

James Blatch: Billing arguments I believe they call it. And once you realize how this works you never look at titles in the same way again.

I'm watching Stranger Things at the moment on Netflix, which is absolutely fantastic by the way. Especially for my generation, the kind of ET, Back to the Future homage. But Winona Ryder was the first person, but the first season had Matthew Modine and Winona Ryder in, so they had that thing where it was starring Winona Ryder and then Matthew Modine was "and Matthew Modine" at the end of the titles.

So they're the two places you want to be, and then everyone else in the middle. Doesn't matter. Didn't have an argument though, agents didn't sit down and make a fuss.

Mark Dawson: Yep, seen that. Seen both, very good.

James Blatch: Yeah, yeah. Have you seen Stranger Things?

Mark Dawson: Yeah, seen both, yeah. Finished the second one last week.

James Blatch: No spoilers, I'm only halfway through the second season at the moment.

Mark Dawson: It was all a dream.

James Blatch: Yes, and Bobby Ewing came out the shower. Okay, good.

It's a slightly strange time of year. I always hope that it's going to be that time of year when everything winds down and we spend more time with our family. I don't know about you but my workload has in the last seven days gone colossally wrong.

Mark Dawson: Yeah. Yeah me too. There's tons going on at the moment so I'm trying to finish a novel. Well actually I'm not trying to finish, just trying to continue writing a new novel.

I'm dealing with lots of situations with offers that have been made to me from some retailers, which I can't really talk about. SPF is obviously very busy.

James Blatch: SPF's been busy, and I'm trying to write a book as well. I've had a really good run after the course finished, working on a couple of hours every day and really made some progress, but it's been difficult this week, and course editing. The exciting thing is that I'm working on two new

courses, which are going to be added to our existing courses in December and January.

Actually no, that's not true. The January one is not being added to our existing courses. It's going to be a standalone, very exciting course.

Can we announce it? Can we say what it is at this stage?

Mark Dawson: I think we probably can, yeah.

James Blatch: So this is going to be, it's been done by Stuart Bache, and it is a DIY Book Covers for Authors course. So it's going to be standalone, we haven't set the price yet but it's not going to be a gigantic price at all. I'm editing at the moment, and it's absorbing.

Stuart talks in every way you'd want him to talk about, so why thriller covers look like they do, why romance covers look like they do, the thinking behind it, all focused on conversion, on getting people to buy the book. And then at the back end of the course is the blow by blow, step by step, inside Photoshop, exactly how to take the raw images from somewhere like Shutterstock, and create these amazing covers.

And actually, it's a course that's very useful for any author, regardless of whether you're going to do your own course.

We're calling it **DIY Covers for Authors**, and that's where the most value is, but actually it's really important to understand the process so that when you talk to your designer.

There's a whole section on how to commission a cover and how to do the brief properly and how to understand the conversation and dialog that takes place if things aren't quite right. That's really useful as well. And yeah, I'm really enjoying it. So I'm quite excited about this.

Mark Dawson: I haven't seen it yet but I know Stuart knows an awful lot about covers and book cover design so I'm definitely looking forward to having a look at that when it's edited and has the usual SPF sheen of quality, that comes out of the Blatch lab, at some point next week.

James Blatch: The sheen of quality is being added at the moment. Yeah, I think you're going to like it.

Stuart's got a laconic voice, he's quite easy to listen to. And he's thorough in detail, which is what you need when it comes to kind of the tricky bits of this work. And it's the first time we've done this.

We have quite big course that are quite big investments and they're comprehensive. This will be a standalone course in a niche area at a lower price, and it'll just sit there. And also I think we're going to launch in January and then potentially make it evergreen.

Mark Dawson: Yeah, I think it will always be available, that's the plan.

James Blatch: Always be available. Yeah, so we'll probably do a competition and give a couple away as well I think in the new year.

We'll have Stuart on in January to talk in some detail about book covers, not just about the course but we'll get him to talk about the whole process of getting your cover right.

It's an important part of the process, right Mark? As we've probably mentioned before on this podcast.

Mark Dawson: It's probably the most important part of your marketing. If your cover isn't any good, doesn't matter what your blurb is like.

And it certainly doesn't matter what's your writing's like because no one's going to be picking it up, unless you're a big name, in which case covers aren't quite so important.

But it's really important, and I've seen in my own career, going from a not so great cover to getting Stuart, who's been doing all of my covers for the last four years or so, the difference that that makes is really significant. It's remarkable really.

It's something that we all need to pay attention to. Yeah, definitely looking forward to getting that one out there. It's going to be a good course.

James Blatch: Good, okay. Now this is probably the penultimate podcast before we select our first Book Lab volunteer, so this is somebody who's going to have their work torn apart in a pleasant way, constructive way, by the experts. This is an idea that Mark had.

We're going to choose somebody who's one of our gold level Patreon subscribers, patreon.com/spfpodcast. As long as you're in the gold group by next week, I think that will be the deadline, we're then going to select somebody who's going to have all their assets looked at and poured over. Yeah, assets.

Mark Dawson: Phwoar.

James Blatch: Yeah, that's quite exciting. What you have to do, the instructions are on Patron, they're on a recent post.

You basically email us at our support email address, support@selfpublishingformula.com with the subject title "Book Lab volunteer" so that we know that you've got at least one book published and you include your Amazon link on that.

Looking forward to that, I think it's going to be a big thing for us in the next year. We'll try and get through as many as we can. Certainly, I think a minimum of three over are year, but I would like to do four, one every three months as a kind of target.

Mark Dawson: Yeah, I think that'll be easy. I think it might be a bit more than that actually, but we'll see how we get on.

James Blatch: Yeah. Good.

Okay, so talking about covers and courses and so on, how do you pay for all this stuff? Well, you pay for all this stuff by having an author career, by selling books and getting money.

I do realize for the vast majority of people listening to this podcast, that is kind of the Holy Grail, that's what you're aiming for and what you're getting to. One day we will be looking at Mark as equals, rather than looking up to him as some kind of god like author...

Mark Dawson: Never.

James Blatch: ...who makes all this money. No, never be an equal.

So that's what this podcast interview today is really about, it's about a real focus on converting what you're doing into money. So we'll be brutal about that. And actually, I say this podcast is one that took a direction I wasn't expecting.

C. Hope Clark, who we're going to talk to, has made herself an expert in the area of gathering funds for authors, the different avenues to explore, different areas to go through, and we go through those step by step.

But actually what the interview became was about plotting that journey from your nine to five to an author career, and the steps you can take and

how they're different at the beginning of that process as they are at the end.

Now, there is a giveaway. Hope has been very kind and provided a little added value extra to you for listening to the podcast, so keep listening. After the interview I'll tell you how to get hold of that.

So let's hand over to C. Hope Clark, and then Mark and I will have a chat off the back of that.

C. Hope Clark: I'm C. Hope Clark. I wear two hats for the most part. One is editor of fundsforwriters.com, which is a website I've managed for, it's hard to believe, going on 19 years. It's been chosen by Writer's Digest magazine for its 101 Best Websites for Writers for 17 of those years.

And the second hat that I have is mystery author, which was how I really started out. It's what I really wanted to do, but it took me a few years to get into it and I got sidetracked by being successful with the FundsforWriters. But I came back around to it, and I'm a mystery novelist, I have seven books out with two more under contract.

James Blatch: Okay, that's great. That's a really good introduction Hope.

I think we're going to talk about a couple of things. I will always quiz you a bit about writing because everyone who writes like to talk to other people who write and find out some of the things they do.

And then we're really going to talk about something, as you mentioned, that you've made your own really, which is FundsforWriters and building up some money from various sources.

You've got a book, which I think if you're watching on YouTube I can hold up in front of the camera. This comes from your blog, The Best of FundsforWriters.

C. Hope Clark: That's right, that's right.

James Blatch: Okay. Well why don't we start just a little bit deeper about your own writing. You say you got a bit distracted because of the success of FundsforWriters, so we'll come onto that in a moment.

In terms of your own writing, when did that start for you and where are you with your career now?

C. Hope Clark: Oh my goodness, I've always loved to write. It's such a cliché. But I was editor of the high school yearbook, I just wrote anything. In college, you give me an essay, I aced it.

It was just something I thoroughly enjoyed to do. But I also did well in the sciences, so I spent an earlier career actually in the Department of Agriculture dealing in more of the sciences and finance, until I realized I was missing writing and I went back to it and actually retired early. I retired at 46 to write full time.

James Blatch: So you quit your nine to five in your mid 40s?

C. Hope Clark: I did. I quit the nine to five in order to write full time, but I did that after writing part time for three years before then just to see that I could do it. I love it, I absolutely love it.

There'll be times I'm burnt out and I'll step away for a day or two and that's about as long as it lasts. I have to come back to it.

I've always written and when FundsforWriters took off, that was a matter of writing non-fiction and I enjoy speaking with people, I enjoy teaching, and I had done so much research for myself, I had all this data, all this information that I put together into a newsletter, because I hated just looking it up and throwing it away.

At the time, there were very few newsletters for writers. So I started doing that, not expecting it to take off, I had a thousand followers in six months, which back then was tremendous. And now I have 35,000.

So as you can see, it's hard to kind of push that aside to do my own writing when it is doing so well. But it made me learn how to be a better writer to tell you the truth.

I had to write so much non-fiction and editorials and make so many presentations that just behind the scenes, quietly, slowly, surely, my writing really improved.

I went back to the novels about four or five years after I started FundsforWriters, and was amazed at how much better I could write. And so from thereon I hit the mystery novels again, and it took me a few years to find an agent and land a contract, but I did and I'm writing steady now.

James Blatch: Great. And yeah, there is a lot of discussion about whether blogging works commercially for people anymore or in different ways, but actually one of the hidden benefits is exactly that Hope, it's just writing.

If you're a writer, the more words you write, whether it's, as you say, non-fiction or speeches or fiction, it all helps develop your voice and your writing.

It's the same with reading. It's exactly what the editor Jenny Parrot said a few weeks ago on our podcast, is read everything, read the newspapers, read non-fiction, read fiction, and you will become a better writer.

That's the one positive about blogging, and I know some people, they spend a lot of time worrying whether I should still blog or not. But actually there's a real benefit just from simply writing as you've illustrated.

C. Hope Clark: Oh absolutely. A lot of people think they have to write and then immediately publish what they wrote. And I think blogging is an exercise in improving yourself and you get measured by how much feedback you get and how many people take a look at what you're writing.

You can look at all the stats and tell how many people are looking at it. Over time, you think you're not accomplishing much and actually you're improving in leaps and bounds, you just don't know it.

James Blatch: Yeah. I mean you making this decision, as you say, in your mid 40s, how driven were you?

How much of this book and your blog comes out of your personal drive to quit your nine to five and make a living from writing?

C. Hope Clark: I don't know. I was going to write whether I worked the other job or not, and the other job actually was quite successful, so it bit when I left it to tell you the truth.

It actually took a family decision, I sat the family down and said, "This is what I want to do." And my husband said, "Well then I'll take the next promotion that comes along no matter where it's at, if that's what you really want to do." And I said, "Sure, I can write from anywhere."

The next job was cross country going from South Carolina to Arizona, and I said, "Well, that's the price you pay. When you decide you're to make a leap like that, then you have to make some sacrifices."

I've always written, I always will write, I just wanted to see if I could do it full time or not and make a living at it. But I also learned the harder I worked, the better I made a living at it.

And when I sat back for a few weeks and rested on my laurels thinking my name was out there, of course it died down. It's all in the energy you put into it.

James Blatch: Sure, sure. That's good to hear then. As we've said many times on this podcast, there's no magic fairy dust. It comes down to some old fashioned equations, doesn't it, that putting the effort in.

What I liked about the book, about the compilation of your writing on this subject Hope, is it's very positive and it's very practical.

You're pretty determined in here to say to people, "This is possible. But you've got to be realistic about the steps to take."

C. Hope Clark: Very much. I am all about positive. There's so much negative out there, there's so many blogs and postings that tell you what not to do, "Don't do this, don't do that," or, "These are the rules, these are the rules that you can't break."

It's not that way, it's not that way. If you want to be successful you just put your mind to it and if this direction doesn't work, you back up, regroup and take it into another direction.

It's not been a smooth ride for me, not by any means. But I have learned a lot along the way, and I think that's part of the fun of it. Now when I speak to groups and they're asking me, "How can I be successful?" I'm like, "Go out there and mess around with it, get dirty with it. Just try this, try that, and learn as you go. But just don't stop. You'll find the positive thing that works for you before too long."

But I don't like people just giving up after one or two tries. That means maybe that you didn't have your heart into it. If you want to do this, fall on your face a bunch of times and skin your knees, because you can get back up and it will work.

James Blatch: Yeah, yeah, and that's very much the tone of the book.

In fact, there is a chapter in here, I'm trying to find it, called Quitting the Day Job, and you very directly tackle that, and I think you quite rightly point out, it's daunting, it's scary.

I'm somebody who's done something similar a couple of times in my life, quit a well paid job to start a new career. I know some of my friends have said, they've said to my honestly, "I could never do that." Speaking for themselves. "I've seen what you've done and I admire it, but I could never do it."

I think partly that is just the unknown aspect of it, and what they look at maybe looks reckless but it wasn't really because I'm a bit like you, do a lot of research, work things out.

It's more calculated than it looks, and I think that's what this does, what your writing does here, is it tells people, "This doesn't have to be a leap in the dark. In fact, all you do for the six months, two years, five years leading up to it is turn lights on to see what it is you're doing."

C. Hope Clark: That's right, that's right. It looks like you just took a leap and you didn't. I spent three years planning to take my leap, and I judged what I could do by working 10 hours a week or 20 hours a week, and calculated how much of it would have to be marketing versus writing, and how much would have to be administration, the price of a good website.

It took a lot of research and a lot of self management, I guess you could say, and that scares a lot of people because having all the responsibility on your shoulders is scary to a lot of people who have worked for The Man for a business or worked for a company.

You go to the job and you work nine to five and then you go home, whereas when you're working for yourself, you are it and that's very, very scary to a whole lot of people. But to me, it was fun.

James Blatch: Yeah, it's liberating and it is scary that first morning you wake up. First of August 2013, I think I was on the top of a double-decker bus in London thinking, what have I done? But the feeling of liberation, you never lose.

And it does of course make us pretty much unemployable. It's very difficult to go back and work for somebody in a kind of nine to five environment. I doubt I'll be there again.

Your situation, there's a slightly tricky subject here because you mentioned your other half, I think you said your husband.

C. Hope Clark: Right.

James Blatch: And that's an important part of the equation that you take into account, you've got an other half and I'm in the same position as well. There's income coming in there.

Not everyone's in that position are they? So how do you do it? In your 35,000 followers now, you will have people who live by themselves, potentially bringing up children by themselves.

How do they deal with this?

C. Hope Clark: That is a little more difficult. I have to agree, I have to agree that I am married and I have a supportive spouse, which was great and still is great. I mean he's my biggest cheerleader.

If you don't have that and you are alone and possibly raising a family, it does get difficult, but that does not mean you can't do it part time and write

on the side, because I did it for years just to see if it could be done. And it actually was fun. I enjoyed it, because I had the security of the day job and then at night I was liberating, using your word, I was liberated in knowing everything I did in this part of my world was for me. And I'm test driving it so to speak.

So when somebody is on their own, I'm not saying, "Make these drastic leaps without knowing what you're doing." Why not work a nine to five and then part time do the writing, and then you start calculating, okay if you put in 5 hours, 10 hours, 12 hours, what this equates into an income?

And then before long you're judging, okay I'm working 20 hours a week at the nine to five and I'm working 20 hours a week at the writing, the self employment. Which one's making more money? Which one would I rather do?

I'm not saying make leaps, I'm saying make calculated steps toward the end of being a full time writer.

James Blatch: Yeah. There may be smaller, more calculated steps depending on your position and if you're lucky enough, like we are, to have another income that it gets factored in and that can make it a little bit easier. I mean there's no shortcut to that, is there?

It's going to be tougher for some people in that sense.

C. Hope Clark: It is. It just is, it just is. No two lives are alike, so you're going to have to take a lot of things into account.

You can have a significant other who doesn't like you writing and still brings in the income, and that's a little bit of a stressor too. I get those calls all the time, saying, "My significant other doesn't support me, psychologically, emotionally, yet they bring in the money and I feel guilty that I'm starting off making so little."

Yeah, there's no two people alike, so you've got to take all this into account and calculate your future. You just do.

It can be done. You can't give me a situation where I can't help you through it and tell you how it can be done.

James Blatch: You obviously have quite a close contact with your list, the people who follow you.

It almost sounds like you may have a kind of agony aunt relationship with some of them who come to you with their individual circumstances.

C. Hope Clark: My readers are loyal, and I refuse to not answer an email. If someone writes me and needs some advice I answer them. And I try to do it within 12 hours.

It's getting more and more difficult to do of course, but I just believe in that closeness. I think this day and time when everything is so automated and anonymous, that we need a sense of touch, a sense of personal experience with that other person and I love being a mentor.

I hear some sad stories out there, I hear some great ones too, but I want to help that person who thinks they've hit a wall, get around it, over it, under it, however they can get through it.

Because there are options, and I think a lot of times we get stuck and mired in our own little world and don't see what other options are there. And I like being that person, having talked to so many, literally thousands of people, and seen them pull through it. I can give you a lot of options, and I thoroughly enjoy doing that. To me, that's the most fun part of what I do.

James Blatch: And you end up doing live events as well I think?

C. Hope Clark: I guess so.

James Blatch: Yeah. I mean you get invited to speak at conferences and so on?

Would you go a step further and potentially coach people face to face?

C. Hope Clark: I don't know, that's a possibility. It's a little difficult juggling the FundsforWriters and my own writing. The novels of course are extremely time consuming, I'm not a fast fiction author at all. It takes me about nine to ten months to get through a book if I don't have anything personal come up in my life.

Sometimes I do have to just pick and choose what I don't do and what I do. I did coach, about five years ago I was doing a lot of coaching, and oh my goodness, it was consuming, consuming my world. Because I did have a lot of people interested and a 30 minute session could easily turn into 45 and 60. It was difficult to balance all of that time. I had to back away a little bit, especially when I started landing my contracts.

James Blatch: Let's talk more specifically then about the challenge of transitioning from somebody who perhaps has a full time job, harbors a desire to be a writer.

What are the first things they need to start thinking about to plot that journey?

C. Hope Clark: First, I don't know, which one's the first one?

First of all, decide you're going to be a good writer, because there's a lot of people out there who think that anybody can write, and sure I think most people can turn themselves into a good writer, but that takes some serious investment of reading, writing things that don't ever get published.

So you've got to make sure that you are constantly improving your craft and improving your trade. And you never arrive, you always have to improve yourself. So I don't want anybody to think that they have arrived and they're already a good enough writer that they don't have to keep traveling that journey.

But in practicality, I think you've got to decide what type of income you can rely on, what do you need in terms of an income?

And then you've got to back into how much you need to earn per hour to make that happen.

You need to have some good health insurance. That's critical. That is so critical. And a lot of people make the leap thinking, I just have to make the money. No, all it's going to take is one broken arm or some little car accident that lays you up for six weeks and suddenly your income stream is dry.

So you've got to make sure you've got good health insurance and that you have a little bit of a pot of money in the bank.

I did all of that before I made the leap. I made sure I had the bills paid, I had put some money in the bank, and that I had my health insurance lined up before I ever took the leap.

I still preach that, I preach that really hard, and a lot of people want to kind of sidestep all that saying, "Oh it won't happen to me." Yes it will.

I'm very much a practical individual. In my prior life I was an administrative director so I managed budgets, I managed personnel, I was head of HR. So I had to do a lot of common sense counseling in that world, and I like to carry it forward now.

I love the arts and I understand that passion for the arts, but you got to come down to earth and make sure you've got all the practicalities lined up before you take that leap, because you could be devastated in the blink of an eye.

James Blatch: Yeah. And this type of career, an artistic career, writing in this instance, is different from some of the sort of more traditional careers that people might leverage.

I'm thinking about doctor, the classic example a lawyer or airline pilot, where people might remortgage their house for, in the old days, I'm out of date now, want to say 40 or 50,000, but I think it's more like £100,000 in the UK and probably more than that in the States, to get that professional qualification.

Now that's a big investment into yourself, it's a risk, but it's not as big a risk as going into writing.

I'm just thinking, you would never advise somebody to take out a big loan or remortgage their house to finance themselves quitting their job and going full time writing. Because it's not that type of move, with any of the guarantees you will get if you are successful as a lawyer, a doctor, or an airline pilot.

C. Hope Clark: It is a risk, it is a risk. But I also will tell people, especially those who want to get into novel writing, fiction writing, is that do not think that you can't fall back on non-fiction, copy-editing, commercial writing, in order to make ends meet.

It's all going to help you in your skills as a writer. But sometimes you need to write what brings in the income.

When I could not sell my mystery novel, I finally wrote it way back when and could not sell it, I went into freelance writing, because I decided well, I'll

start earning a living, I'll make a better name for myself, and just work in this ... I always want to be a writer and if I can't do it as a mystery author I'll do it as a freelancer.

I did fine with that. I did great with that. And it is a quicker income. A novel is a long tail approach to earning an income, where freelancing is a little quicker. It all helped my writing.

It did help my reputation to the point that when I started hunting for agents and publishers, I had a portfolio behind me. So I tell all writers, "Do not discard freelancing and writing non-fiction that can produce a quicker income." If you want to be a writer, you do what it takes to be a writer.

James Blatch: Yeah. In fact, that's a very important part of your writing in your compilation I noticed, is finding those ways of paying the bills and, as you say, improving your writing in the process.

There are plenty of authors, several come to mind actually, who I've spoken to in my time at SPF here, who used to write, we call them CVs in the UK but resumes. Your qualifications and application for a job. What's the American for Curriculum Vitae? Résumé.

C. Hope Clark: Résumé, there you go.

James Blatch: There you go. I can't say it, I can't speak American. Separated by a common language, as Churchill said.

That's the twin track of improving your writing and paying the bills and not being snobby about it and thinking that you're Martin Amis or someone sitting there, slowly writing your next great American or British novel.

Is that world changing though? Because where people picked up those bits and pieces of work from five years ago even, may be different from today.

Are the opportunities greater today or are they lessening do you think?

C. Hope Clark: You mean in terms of finding ...

James Blatch: Yeah, in terms of finding those areas to take on writing jobs, smaller writing jobs, practical copywriting etc. Is that a vibrant market today or is it saturated? I mean I'm not really in touch with it.

C. Hope Clark: Actually, I think it's quite vibrant. Because I think businesses, individuals, corporate America, corporate everywhere, is getting savvy in hiring writers. They no longer have full time writers.

Five years ago, a lot of these organizations, companies, government entities, had writers on staff full time. Of course now they're contracting it out.

So to me, I think you've got better opportunity. It's a matter of being savvy with being an entrepreneur. You have to still be able to pitch yourself, and be able to tell someone what you can offer them. So a little bit of cold calling, a little bit of applying for a job only you're a contractor, an entrepreneur.

I think it's huge. I think it's absolutely huge. When I look up jobs for some of my writers, LinkedIn comes to mind, the paid version of LinkedIn. There's just an endless supply, endless supply of opportunity there.

You can't be picky. You don't want to turn something down because it doesn't sound like fun. There are days with writing that it's not fun. There is no job out there that is 100% fun. So you do what you need to do.

If you're writing on a subject you're bored with, then you try to write it so that it's entertaining, or you ... To me, if I've researched something, the

more I know about it, the more enjoyable it becomes. So I don't mind writing about anything and everything.

That's the attitude you've got to have, is that ... and I say this a lot when I'm speaking, is that you have to almost be a total whore when it comes to writing. It's like pay me, I'll write it for you, and I'll do a good job at it. You've got to be willing to do that.

I think I've never seen more opportunity than I've seen here lately.

James Blatch: That's good to hear. It must be very heartening for you with your readers.

You must have seen quite a few people go through the gates and come out the other side, and that must be good for you?

C. Hope Clark: Yes. Oh yes. When I hear that somebody say, I won a grant because grants tend to be my specialty, or I won a contest. An author ... oh gosh it's been about eight years ago now, I was trying to tell my writers over here in the US, "Look at international opportunities," and he won a large award in Scotland. I think it was \$5,000.

Oh my goodness, he sang my praises for months, and I'm like, "It was your writing, you applied for it, you just had to have some confidence that you could work outside of Ohio." I do, I enjoy seeing people do well at it. I really do. There's not a better feeling.

James Blatch: It's his achievement but you were obviously the muse.

C. Hope Clark: I'm the muse?

James Blatch: The muse. The inspiration for that. I get that feeling from your loyal band of followers, and I think you'll probably pick up some more

from this podcast as well. Because this is ... it's not something that necessarily comes naturally to people when they think about writing.

They may think in a fairly linear way of, for instance, in my case I'm writing a military thriller, so I'm going to be writing military thrillers and that's my route to becoming a full time writer.

Whereas in actual fact, to support that and to get there, it's a bigger, wider world than you may even have thought of.

C. Hope Clark: It's a monstrous world out there. I used to take a challenge when I was coaching and say, "Okay, tell me who you are and what you do, and let's see if we can't turn that into a writing career." And I still do that at conferences, where I'll just say, "Okay, tell me about yourself."

I do it in front of a group of people, and they'll say what they'd like to do, what their experience is. I'll ask them what's their education? Where have you lived? Just a lot of things like that. And then instantly, shoot them 10 freelance ideas that they could run with.

They always leave very enthused about it, and I'm trying to make them mine who they are and the experiences they've had and turn that into a career.

The sad thing is a lot of people will say, "I've had a plain life, I have nothing special that I've ever done, so there's nothing I've seen, done, experienced that can be converted into writing." And I'll go, "No, not so. Not so. I could sit with you 10, 15 minutes and turn that around."

Maybe some of that comes from my human resource background where I had to sit with people who were struggling in their work or hiring people, I've fired people. All of that where I'm trying to coach people to make the most of who they are. I love that. To me, that's just what our goal in life ought to be, is take who we are and make it work.

James Blatch: Absolutely. Hope where can people find you?

C. Hope Clark: Two places. I'm at www.fundsforwriters.com as well as chopeclark.com.

James Blatch: Okay. And FundsforWriters, you haven't done the gangster 4, did you? 4 in the middle? It is actually spelt F-O-R.

C. Hope Clark: Right, it's F-U-N-D-S F-O-R W-R-I-T-E-R-S.

James Blatch: Excellent. Hope, it's been a pleasure talking to you. I found the book really interesting. You've done something, which is you've just made an area, although it's quite a broad area as we just said, you've made it your own and become a bit of a guru for many people, and it's good to hear those inspirational stories.

We really appreciate you coming on and talking to us about it, and I hope it's put the spring in the step of a few wannabees, people who see themselves writing in the future but perhaps haven't quite plotted out that journey yet.

C. Hope Clark: Glad to help, and my email is always open, so let people know that. It's hope@chopeclark.com.

James Blatch: So, C. Hope Clark, full of good ideas. Very good of her to do that interview. Had a few technical issues and I think that was our second or third attempt to get the interview recorded, so I'm really grateful to her for spending the time with us.

Now as I mentioned there is a giveaway with this interview, and what Hope has offered us is a, for two weeks after this podcast goes out, so you've got the last couple of weeks of 2017 to do this, you can get a giveaway of her subscription to her paid newsletter.

Normally that would be \$18.75 a year, but all listeners have to do is to send Hope an email, that is hope@chopeclark.com, chopeclark.com. Send her an email, hope@chopeclark.com and just mention the SPF podcast and you'll get that subscription to her newsletter. Thank you very much indeed Hope for doing that.

Very useful, and at the beginning of your career, every little thing counts. So whether that's being paid for a blog post, being paid to do some extra writing. We've had authors on here who are doing five figures a month now, but started off writing peoples' CVs.

This is all important, that beginning process isn't it?

Mark Dawson: Yeah, you've got to start somewhere, and I remember when I started out, when we were working together, I wasn't exactly rolling around in money, but it was a question of figuring out what was important.

In those days it wouldn't have been advertising, not that anyone was advertising six or seven years ago, but it would be more important to make sure your cover is right.

I remember I went to a friend of mine who owed me a couple of favors and he actually, he painted a cover for me and he made my first website for me, and he did all of that for about a thousand pounds. So not a huge amount of money, I mean it's a significant amount of money, but for the cost of entry into a business where you can make tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands, or in some cases millions of pounds or dollars, that's a pretty low bar.

So it would be a case of just kind of saving up a bit if necessary. In the same way that you can chunk down your writing to 500 words a day, by the end of the year you've got a fairly decent sized novel. Pay attention James.

Or same thing goes for saving. Maybe you spend £10 a day on lunch, maybe spend £5 a day on lunch, save those £5 and by the end of a couple of months, you might have enough for a pretty decent cover.

It's about prioritizing and just trying to squeeze your budget as much as possible to get at what you need. And then as she says, there are other ways that you can find funding to give yourself a little bit of a headstart and accelerate things.

James Blatch: Yeah. And as we mentioned in the interview, you can go to chopeclark.com so chope clark it looks like, .com. You can see her books and further advice on that all important area of raising money to make that journey. And what a journey it is Mark. From the nine to five. We've both done it in different-

Mark Dawson: Don't use that word.

James Blatch: In different spheres.

Mark Dawson: I hate that word.

James Blatch: Sorry? Oh you hate the journey word.

Mark Dawson: Journey, I hate it.

James Blatch: Transition? That doesn't work though, does it? If you're on X Factor and you say to Simon Cowell, "This has been a transition."

Mark Dawson: I'm sure they would say that. That's equally bad. Experience I think is pretty good. Anyway, let's not go down the X Factor route, route, route.

James Blatch: No.

Mark Dawson: You say tomato, I say tomato. Let's call the whole thing off.

James Blatch: Okay. Talking of calling the whole thing off, think we've probably got to that point of rambling again.

Yes, I've got my mug as well, and I saw somebody posted this morning on Twitter, I'll try and give them a shout out if I can find their name. But yes it's been mug central, because anyone who joins Patreon gold level subscriber, not only do you get a chance to be in the Book Lab, you also get sent a mug.

Mark Dawson: And you also get a chance to win one of the courses four times a year. So it's pretty good actually.

James Blatch: You do.

Mark Dawson: It's a pretty good deal.

James Blatch: You do. That's brilliant. I've just clicked on Twitter and it said, "You don't have access to Twitter," it's been denied. What did I do to them? Anyway, okay look that's it.

It's going to be our Christmas episode next week, which means it'll be an episode that looks almost exactly like every other episode of the year.

We are aware that people do listen to these months later and we get comments all the time on the YouTube versions. I can see a comments that's one that's six months old. So it won't be overtly Christmassy, but it will have a nod that way.

Thank you very much indeed for listening. There you go, I finally got there. It was Lynne Milford, well done Lynne. She got a mug and she's posted it, and she said, "Now I feel like one of the team." She hasn't got the secret handshake yet though.

Mark Dawson: She is. I'm holding up my mug. James won't tell you but I will. There we go.

James Blatch: There you go. Excellent. Yes of course. Not everyone's watching. Well done.

That's it. Thank you very much, have a great week writing and a great week selling. We will speak to you next week. Bye bye.

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