

## **EPISODE 127: BOOKLAB – WITH HELENA HALME**

Speaker 1: Two writers. One just starting out, the other a best-seller. Join James Blatch and Mark Dawson and their amazing guests as they discuss how you can make a living telling stories. There's never been a better time to be a writer.

James Blatch: Hello and welcome to the Self Publishing Formula Podcast with James and Mark. We've been happily saying for the last few weeks, it's been a nice warm England this now sweltering England.

I'm going to melt during this interview because I had to turn all my fans off and close the doors in my outdoor office.

Mark Dawson: I haven't got any fans, James.

James Blatch: You said you got a small fan.

Mark Dawson: I have a very small fan, yes, it's tiny. Actually very appropriate SPF at the moment, we are SPF 50.

It is very, very hot here at 30 degree or so in Salisbury probably the same for you. I think we've forecast that for at least the next week, 10 days. So it is pretty bogging hot I was going to say in the Southwest.

James Blatch: It's going to be into the 90's in oldspeak and yeah, but a beautiful place to be, England when the sun shines. Which is ironic because when most people listen to this, you and I will be in the US.

We're going to Thriller Fest in New York next week and I've posted the details in our group of a get-together in New York, we would love to see

you if you are even a casual listener to the podcast you want to come along to this bar I'm going to tell you details in a moment.

Tap us on the shoulder, we will buy you a drink, and say hello, and we'd love to meet you.

The bar is called The Stout. It's The Stout Grand Central. I think The Stout actually have three or four locations in New York, so it's the one at Grand Central Station, or very close it. I'll give you the address in a second.

It's going to be Wednesday, the 11th of July at 7:00 PM eastern, so 7:00 PM local in New York. Yes, 60 East, 41st Street New York, New York. So great they named it twice.

It's basically across the road from Grand Central, between Madison and Park I think, is that right? Is that between Madison and Park? Yes, between Madison and Park.

If you get to that next Wednesday, if you listen to this in time, we'll release it on a Tuesday. We'll be in nice, cool air conditioned bar in New York.

Now you're all going to have a busy time because you're meeting all your regulars, aren't you? Apple and Amazon et cetera whilst in New York.

Mark Dawson: Apple before the SPF drinks, so if I turn up half a cup you can blame uncle ...

James Blatch: Steve Jobs?

Mark Dawson: Tim Cook and then yeah, I think I'll probably be seeing Amazon.

From New York I'm getting on a train and I'm going up to Boston. I'll be in their offices on the Monday and then I'm going to fly to Los Angeles, which

is actually longer in the air than it is from London to New York from Boston to LA is six and half hours.

Then I'm going to be going to a meeting, which is quite certain on the Universal Lot. So I'm going to the Grill on the Universal Lot. There is a reasonable chance I might see someone I recognize. I was talking about TV shows with the producers that I'm working with, so seeing them.

Then on the next day I've got a date in LA and then I am hopping on another plane down to Denver where I'll be speaking at RWA, Christy from RWA; having dinner with her on the Wednesday, there is an SPF meet up on the Thursday, at one o'clock. I think it's at one o'clock, the details will be in the group.

Then finally on the Friday, jump on another plane and fly home again. So it's a 10-day, I'm not normally away that long, so 10 days for me is quite a long stretch, to be away from the family so I'm going to pack in as much as I can.

James Blatch: But we would love it if you were able to come and see us either in New York or Denver.

Later in the year there will be an opportunity in Florida, and we're a very people-oriented company. I know a lot digital entrepreneurs and digital companies, you don't really see their students, you occasionally see some writing, which is a kind of testimonial. But we can't wait to go meet our friends who are involved in SPF and film them. So they're very much a front of house thing with us. So we're all about the people.

You've probably seen them in the Facebook groups, some very nice SPF pins, of which I've lost mine, but I've got stacks more and I think we may end up checking a bag in, which I hate doing but we'll get those pins over there.

So that's it New York next week if you listen to this in time. Now if you were just listening to this because you want to get some value out of listening to a Self Publishing Podcast, this is a very good episode to listen to, it's going to be longer, I'm going to warn you now this will be a longer episode as the first Booklab was.

Booklab was I think my idea originally. I'll edit that out. It may have been Mark's idea. The idea is that we simply choose somebody in the SPF community, and we take one of their books.

We get the experts to look at their book cover, their blurb, and they look inside for a little bit of an idea about the first chapter or so of the book from an editor. The idea is that we all learn from the observations that are made and that person in particular gets a great deal from this package and gets to repackage their books.

The first one we did was David Barron's and I think I've already reported back that David has told us it has made a difference straightaway to his sales, to his visibility, which is what we want this to be.

It's not just a cosmetic exercise, it's got a tangible affect your sales. That's why we're doing this and we're all learning from each one.

Now we've picked somebody else, you had a look at the selections and there's a very strong random element to this and anyone who's our Patreon gold is eligible. But I think it was right that we picked a different genre this time and we went for Helena Halme, who's based in the UK, actually originally Finnish and it's a romance book.

Mark Dawson: That's right. I wanted to move away from the mystery and thriller that David did to cover romance, which is still one of the ... I think it must be the biggest selling in genres, so important that we at least cover that fairly towards the start of the Booklab series.

Helena had suggested that she would like to be considered. I had a quick look at her books and I thought it was a pretty good fit.

James Blatch: Now if you want to follow along I would really advise for this episode that you watch it on YouTube. Now I know we do have most of our audience still consume the podcast audio wise, and for most episodes that's absolutely fine, you're not going to miss out on much.

In this particular episode there's a bit of visual stuff to it, so the cover goes up and Helena herself goes through her covers on screen and so on so. It may well help you to watch this episode on YouTube, maybe as well as listening to it.

But if you do want to follow along audio wise you will need to go to this page, which is [selfpublishingformula.com/booklab2](http://selfpublishingformula.com/booklab2), Booklab 2 all one word.

There you can download the original blurb, the new blurb, and a link to the Amazon page that we're talking about, and the cover as it is at the moment, as we're speaking at a moment. So and I've asked Helena just to hold off making any significant changes for a couple of weeks so people can see what it is the experts were looking at at the time.

Having said that, let's move into the feedback from the experts, let's start with the cover, because that's how we judge the book and that of course, is our resident expert, Stuart Bache.

Stuart well, a little spoiler, quite liked the cover. That's as much as I'm going to say, let's hear what Stuart thought about the cover.

Oh I should say, I haven't said the book's titles,. Helena Halme is the author, the book is 'The English Heart'. Okay, so she has a series 'The Faithful Heart' et cetera. This is 'The English Heart', you'll find that in Amazon.

**Let's hear what Stuart had to say.**

Stuart, so a little bit different this time, as I've been saying to the other guys as well we had what we call a romance effectively now. The English Heart, Helena Halme, and the cover for most people who will be listening a few people, a thousand or so watch it on YouTube, they will try and put the cover up onto YouTube so you can see it as we talk about it.

**Why don't you start off by describing the cover to us, Stuart.**

Stuart Bache: It is a beautiful scene with a couple, it has a nice serif typeface. It is very women's fiction, works straight away, you instantly know what genre it is. So, it has a lot of positives this cover.

James Blatch: And we've a couple with their backs to us.

Stuart Bache: Yeah. Almost a beachy scene.

James Blatch: A beachy scene, looking out to sea, holding hands behind their backs with her head cradled onto his shoulder.

Stuart Bache: Yes.

James Blatch: As they look wistfully to the sea.

**The first thing I suppose, I can hear you're going to say already and I'll say it as well, does the job as a romance cover, doesn't it?**

Stuart Bache: Absolutely, it uses the writer's typeface. It has everything about it if your static is right.

James Blatch: We shouldn't underestimate the importance of that because we mentioned this before but when you get that bit wrong it's really, really fundamental because you've got to look at a cover and know what the book is.

Stuart Bache: You have seconds of browsing whether in a bookshop or online you have seconds so you need to know straight away what it is, and you know, it's not just about title and author, it's about the look and feel as well.

James Blatch: Okay. Right well, let's dive a little bit deeper.

### **With a more critical eye could this cover be improved?**

Stuart Bache: There are a few little tweaks that I would have made. I think I've had a look at the series as well and it's very strong, it's a really strong series style.

The only thing I would suggest was maybe ... I'm just looking at the cover on my second screen down here, because I have two screens. But it is that, I would just make sure that the author name stands out a little bit more, and this has actually happened on her other covers as well is that she has a lovely style that has been added but what it does is it interacts with the type a little bit too much.

There's two things you can do there you know, these are complementary color, so that's color that's usually opposite on the spectrum, so with the blue in the background opposites tend to be oranges, yellows, and reds and that will really pop.

Otherwise, the actual typefaces themselves are great, it's a lovely Serif, it looks like Garamond or something like that. It works really well. I think the other thing that I would do is make more of the series name, it's just disappears. It's just so very white, you might even miss it.

Her quote, I'll beef that up. Now there are a few ways you can do that, so you can actually cut the main quote down and sort of sell in, bring the size, type size up. Or you can limit the actual the added, it's at the bottom, who

it's by, who the quote is by, take all the details off that, you don't need, it's not necessary, and just make the quote big and then have the author name or whoever it's from, whether it's the Sunday times or something like that, you can just have that, that's what's necessary, really.

The other way, another tip to bring the author name up a bit is just add a little bit of white or something very, very light coloring just behind the type, just to see what boosts you up, so if you're happy with changing the colors to something like a range but orange, which people might find it garish, but just lighten it a little bit more and just reduce that noise that's interacting too much with the type.

James Blatch: Okay. So I mean it's big and clear the author name, Helen Halme here, but what you're saying is it's too similar to the blues, not far away from this.

### **So it doesn't pop, it doesn't it stand out?**

Stuart Bache: It doesn't. I'm not one for the thumbnail thing, you know, I think it's been a miss to worry too much about what colors look like in thumbnails, you know, because we've been buying books for years before we had eBooks even in thumbnail form. No one cared then.

But it does disappear a little bit, the smaller it gets. You know, it is important.

James Blatch: I'm putting white behind it so that would be a sort of brushing, I don't know what tool you would use because you're the expert not me.

Stuart Bache: Brush, brush.

James Blatch: Yeah, brush and to make it a little bit more cloud, behind the title.

Stuart Bache: Yeah, I mean it just it could even just be really, really subtle. You could maybe select that very light blue and just, just subtly sort of just you know, brush behind it. It doesn't have to be much at all. Just anything that would just boost it up a little bit.

I always recommend or actually interacting with the layers, so actually adding a brush something that you can control rather than adding effects, so I think like a bit outer glow or something like that, which is basically a uniform glow that goes around every letter, because that looks fake.

Actually you don't really need to do much there you can just add just ... I mean you can even reduce the sky a little bit if you wanted to.

### **James Blatch: Darken it?**

Stuart Bache: Yeah, these are just things I'm just picking up. Little points, because actually everything is there. The colors, the contrast it has a really nice Instagram feel about it as well, which is really lovely. It has a very nice modern feel to it.

### **James Blatch: It's quite a high contrast, isn't it?**

Stuart Bache: Yes, I think the one that my wife likes the most is that there's an effect on Instagram called Clarendon, which is basically that. High Contrast, bright colors, strong, black and white. I think the other thing is these books are very nautical obviously, if you read the blurbs and stuff and this really works really well.

James Blatch: Yeah. It works, in fact it works really well with the opening few pages of this where there's this she meets this mysterious Englishman who lives at sea effectively and then looking out to sea and she's got her head on her shoulders.

Yeah, I think that works really nicely, good picture to have chosen.

What do you think about the Italics in the title? So if you just say again, you can look at this, I mean just go to Helena Halme's Amazon page if you're able to do that. If you're watching us on YouTube or trying to stick this up as I say.

The English Heart, English is in italics and that's to denote the fact that there is a series here, there's The Good Heart, The True Heart, The Young Heart, et cetera. When I first saw that I wasn't sure what I thought of that.

Stuart Bache: Yeah, it's definitely a thing, I think it's more of a design idea rather than something that necessarily, is necessary, it's an extra, it's an addition rather than something that has a strong point of yeah, it doesn't necessary make any better.

It doesn't make it worse, but it does may make you sort of focus on the word 'English'. I don't know whether that's necessary or not. But that, you know I would maybe in my design brand, I see a little space between The and Heart, so I don't know, reduce that but that's just not something that's necessary but just the way my head works.

I don't mind it actually, you could try it and all, it's just that in Romans are straight types or just standard type. Also, another way of maybe playing with this is that it's very, very popular in the genre to use proper script font, so not something that you'd find on your computer.

You can handwrite it yourself and scan it, and that's what I used to do for years. Or you can find some really amazing scripts, fonts now, there's even a few on Google fonts for free. You can try that, those work really, really well in this genre.

James Blatch: Obviously I had to get your brilliant course where you talk in detail about this. We should plug the course, shouldn't we? You can find that if you go to our website and slash courses.

But I do think having picked up the tone and theme of this, this particular book I think that the female lead is a relatively assertive, feisty character. Feisty might not be quite the word, it didn't quite fit. I think she's probably gone the right route and not using the very flowery script for this.

For me per se, I don't know if my opinion counts, but I wasn't 100% the Italics, I think it would work well, just equally well. So in your view it's not a disaster.

Stuart Bache: Not at all.

**James Blatch: It does make it stand out but it's not necessary, is that what you're saying?**

Stuart Bache: No, it's not necessary, it's just a flourish, it's not something that would make it sell more or less. But if there's a point in highlighting that word, then that's ... It's obviously it's colored.

James Blatch: We talked to Helena, I'd be interested to find out.

**Also, interesting to find out whether she does her own covers or they've been designed, I don't know.**

Stuart Bache: That would be really interesting, if she does these herself then I'm really impressed, they're really good, they're really, really good.

As I say, throughout the series, I know we're only looking at this cover but, I like to look at everything just because you get an idea of how they all work. You know, with one design it's great but if it doesn't then translate, then it doesn't work and so you have to really think about it, especially if you know

you are writing a series, you really have to think about how they all work together.

James Blatch: Yes, and making changes is complicated because you have to replicate that. I think I left out The Faithful Heart from that list, there is a few. She's written some others genre books Helena, she's a very interesting author.

Great, well, look those are some good practical tips for Helena and some learning for the rest of us and what makes a good cover, and we should say today is a special day in the Stuart Bache household because you have become an author yourself today.

Stuart Bache: Yeah, I hesitate to use that word because I know so many brilliant authors, but yeah, I've written my first nonfiction book, which is The Author's Guide to Cover Design and it's published today and I'm really chuffed and I'm very tired.

James Blatch: I bet you are. So now you know what goes into the author's guide to cover design, so you'll find that on all good online retailers.

Stuart Bache: You will, indeed.

James Blatch: Good luck with the book, Stuart and thank you as ever, for your very valuable feedback.

Stuart Bache: Absolute pleasure.

James Blatch: There'll be another one down the line in the future.

Stuart Bache: Yeah. Look forward to it.

James Blatch: In the meantime, good luck with your book sells.

Stuart Bache: Cheers, Thank you.

James Blatch: Cheers, Stuart.

So not much for Helena to do. We have an interview with Helena at the end of the podcast, when we've been through the expert's feedback.

She was obviously quite pleased that basically Stuart liked it, just to clarify that, I did say it in the interview also show whether Helena had done the covers herself. She had not and she actually, checks her cover designer in her interview.

But there are some small things, just about things like the name not popping out, and it took me a while to really see what Stuart was talking about, but then that is the value of talking to an expert who lives and breathes this one area.

Despite the fact, I suppose that as self-publishing authors you have to kind of ride different horses during the day, it's still good to have an absolute expert in one area to help you.

Mark Dawson: Yeah that's why Stuart is, that's what Stuart does as you say, and it makes a lot of sense. It's one of the big investments is to get your cover done professionally.

There is not much point writing a great novel and have it edited if your cover is something that you've knocked up yourself. At least if you're someone like me, if you got a decent set of skills and you know how to do the covers then you have a go, but generally speaking that's not something I'd cut my costs on. You have to make sure that you can get it.

James Blatch: Now we have really good and exciting set of feedback from Bryan Cohen coming up on blurb.

Before then let's hear from Jenny, and Jenny has this critical view of the writing of the structure, of whether it engages the reader or not. This is what she lives and breathes and thinks about all the time.

Jenny Parrott is the person we went to, to look at the book itself and we took the look inside bit. So this is really a marketing focus on this is the look inside the Amazon, which is actually quite substantial and comment about the characters, but it's several pages of the book and this is what Jenny thought.

Jenny, hello. Here we are again with all second victim in the Booklab and I have to say thank you so much for your contribution the first time. It was a really fantastic episode, over we got-

Jenny Parrott: Oh, brilliant.

James Blatch: We've had really good feedback on there and I think authors just listening to you talking, a very commercial way about the writing as well as, you know from a literacy point of view it was very, very worthwhile, so thank you for your contributions so far.

Jenny Parrott: Brilliant. Right.

James Blatch: We're moving on to our second one, I should say, just as we started this interview my wife has started to mow the lawn, which is excellent news for the lawn, but there's a slight buzzing sound in the background, I'm just going to point that out.

Jenny Parrott: You're just keeping it real for everybody.

James Blatch: Exactly. We are real people. Okay, so a very different book this time.

Jenny Parrott: Very different.

James Blatch: Yeah, romance. Helena Halme, The English Heart part of a series.

**What was your initial take on this sort of a presentation and the sale of the book in terms of the writing?**

Jenny Parrott: I suppose what I really felt with the editing, I hate to criticize another editor and you know, whatever has happened with this, I just felt it wasn't quite tight enough.

So the problem you get when you're doing an excerpt is that you want people to want to read on. There are a couple little things they missed that might give a certain type of reader pause-for-thought. 90% of readers might notice that, it's just those little tiny tweaks. I don't know, I would guess Helena didn't start with English as her first language.

James Blatch: That's obviously a Nordic theme and there are two ... Are they Finnish? I think Finnish potentially girls who start in the opening scene, visiting an ambassador's reception.

Jenny Parrott: Yes, yes that's right.

James Blatch: So that's how it starts. Can you clarify a little bit about what you're talking about, that 10% percent of readers...

**It's not gripping enough or there's no intrigue enough or ... ?**

Jenny Parrott: It wasn't so much that, it was actually I thought the story started quite well. I might have trimmed it very slightly but generally what Helena is saying is fine.

It's more those tiny little things like slightly too many ellipses, you know, the three dots being used and the book is set in 19-, I think 1980 at this party

and somebody says, "Can I," instead of, "May I," which in diplomatic language would be ... I mean even today people would probably say, you know, "May I offer you a drink?" at that type of reception.

James Blatch: Most of those, "Can I get your drink?"

Jenny Parrott: Yeah, yeah. You know those kinds of-

James Blatch: Which it makes no sense but it's what we say now.

### **There's a subtle change in language, right?**

Jenny Parrott: Absolutely. So it wasn't 100% in keeping with the time and so that is quite specialized sort of editing to, but to make the fabric feel completely robust of a historical period but without the reader noticing.

The problem is when you just get the shades of words, just going in a bit askew, some people will pick up on that. One thing I really think and Helena needs to watch is that she's using stock adjectives, so sparkling eyes, and then later on she had to, "I sparkled on a sparkling chandelier."

First of all, she's used it in a short number of pages certain words too often. But the other thing is, you know Mills and Boon is happy to sparkling eyes. This book, which potentially would be what publishing industry calls book club, you might encourage a writer to think of something that will ... You don't have to try and shock the reader with every adjective, but maybe just not be those shortcuts. In crime, it's always engines being gunned, that sort of thing.

I always encourage writers with adjectives, just think about them, because that's what you use describing something to a friend. I think that could be a more subtle or better alternative on the page.

James Blatch: Okay. But, you've said that Mills and Boon sell a ton of books. So there is also a pair of slippers you put on sometimes, in a very ...

Jenny Parrott: Completely.

James Blatch: ... comfortable ...

Jenny Parrott: Completely, like completely. But the thing is that books, at the level that Helena is at, they are caught by publishers and booksellers book, club.

The thing about Mills and Boon is they sell the same number of books every month, people go buy their 12 books or download them. They know what they're getting, they want familiarity.

The book club section of the market, needs to appeal to those readers, but it also needs to appeal to up the level of readers. So readers who read literally books but would choose a book club to go on holiday with. So that is for those readers you're appealing.

Also it's good for all writers not to get into the easy way. You know the steaming cup of tea. Once it's pointed out to you, you suddenly realize, "Oh my God, yeah, yeah. Oh, I can see that."

**James Blatch: You realize there's thousands of authors who're listening to this and racking their brains, going through their book thinking, "I need to remove all this cliché."**

Jenny Parrott: Completely. You don't have to remove them all, but it's all about making the text seamless so that you don't fail the, "Oh, I'm here again."

But particularly what no writer really should be doing is using certain words too regularly. I notice it with my own writing, you don't see it when you

write but by the time you get into proof stage, those words are normally popping out at you and at that point it is always worth doing a word check.

The second thing you have to look at when you're dealing with it, is you don't replace it with another word that you've kind of over used. So sometimes it's just easier to delete, everything doesn't need to have an adjective.

James Blatch: Yeah, to be described. Okay. Okay. Good, that's good stuff and the last time when we talked about Dave Barren's book, I think we both really liked the character quite quickly and got to know him quite quickly, and there was a bit of intrigue there.

**Did you think there was enough here as well to make us want to read on?**

Jenny Parrott: Absolutely. I did, I did. Yes, I definitely thought it was good. Yes, so actually this is a writer I thought a reader would feel quite confident in quickly.

One thing I would mention though is the short preface, I don't think it's doing the book a favor in this, partly because it is ... In publishing with historical, you have to make it of its time, but you have to make it understandable to modern day readers.

So here we have two films, which are appropriate to the time but they won't mean anything to a great trench of under 40's. They might have heard sort of vaguely, you know, 'Love Story' or 'The Way We Were'.

Basically what this preface is right very much on these films, you know, which are both 1970's films and then it's referred to Katie and Hubble without making it clear which film they come to. So when I read this first, I thought Katie and Hubble are going to be characters that we're going to be come out in the book.

It was only after I'd got the end of this I suddenly thought, "Oh I think I misread that preface," and so then I did a google on that and I thought, "Of course, they're in *The Way We Were*." But most people won't remember their names.

So it's one, you know, it's not an in return preface, it sets up the story in a way, but I think it falls into the category of creating more questions in the reader's mind than and it's kind of delivering an excitement.

James Blatch: Yes, I see what you mean, it's not crystal clear, is that the last sentence probably reflected on the two films then *Katie heart Hubble*.

I remember *Love Story*, I quite liked it but I can't remember the character names from *The Way We Were* and even if I have seen it, so *Katie and Hubble* exactly the same with me of some confusion.

There is that little preface, and I quite like a sort of single, I think it might be, you probably won't remember, but I did a kind of description of when a crash happens and the mood changes on a scorcher, and just left it hanging there by itself slightly background not quite like setting up the tone, but this ... So the only thing that I maybe of a sentence or two of *When Love Hit Me*, it was something I hadn't really tasted before and then go into the story.

Jenny Parrott: Yeah, or the other way you can do is actually write a bit more and then maybe she could describe the Englishman without really saying who he is.

She thought of his hands on the glass when she first saw him you know, something like that. I would probably have her remember me in a physical attribute of him. Partly because then for some readers he stays, you'll just see on some cases likely to be heterosexual love story.

James Blatch: Clearly signal. Okay.

Jenny Parrott: Oh sorry just coming back to that, and then what often works well is if you do that you can even use a section from later in the book and use it at the front, but when you use it then in later on it can be altered slightly, so it is an echo.

Because by then the reader has more information on the characters. So I think what's happened with this preface, there is nothing wrong with the idea behind it as such, it's just not really working hard enough for what it needs to do.

James Blatch: Okay. I remember when we talked to me about my book you suggested that I write a brief history of C.N.D. in the cold war to bring people up to date, to remind older people, and to tell younger people what the atmosphere was.

So I wrote that and I like quite the section, but I wonder about keeping people from the story, particularly in the look inside when ...

Jenny Parrott: Well this is the problem with ... Yes, they look inside but it swings in roundabout.

For some readers having some knowledge and starting them off with a bit of setting isn't a bad thing and yes, but it doesn't necessarily read well. You wouldn't want to have a whole lot.

Sometimes I kind of like encourage writers to fudge it a bit, so you have a bit more scenes setting in a you know, so it be could off the Ambassador's party or something with a way to get over the horrible headlines in the press.

**James Blatch: Okay, so you're working some context.**

Jenny Parrott: Then go to subject ... Yeah, very briefly and then what I normally do is and of course, I've not read this whole book I haven't seen what's at the end. I then will put sometimes a historical note at the back.

Sometimes even suggest books for people to go and read if they're interested enough in the period. So there are several ways you can do this and I think all writers must beware of thinking that because they are interested in a certain period and setting, their readers won't necessarily would be.

**James Blatch: Well you do deliver it yourself don't you, if you do really go down that road to people who are just like you.**

Jenny Parrott: Absolutely, but the way around that is to do great characters and here I think you know Kaisa is potentially quite interesting. So, I'm not particularly worried about this book and actually I think the setting seems good, I would be quite invested in wanting to know what happens to this.

One thing I do think as well though that the author would have benefited by just using his name to keep calling him the Englishman. He comes very emblematic rather than ...

James Blatch: Human.

Jenny Parrott: ... a character as such, whereas, you've already got his name, I can't remember what it is now. Actually my notes, I can't actually see what it is, but you know it's this sometimes tells the story.

James Blatch: Yes. Okay. Rather than him telling.

Jenny Parrott: Yes. So we've all got the impression, "Yes, he's an Englishman. These are Finnish girls."

James Blatch: I was going to ask you about names actually because obviously this is Scandinavian. It's advertised as Nordic romance, and I've always got a slight thing with words and names that are difficult to pronounce when I'm reading a book.

Because you read books quite quickly and unless you stop at that moment look at it a lot, try to work out how it's pronounced for the entire rest of the book, and your mind you kind of just fudge it when you get to that name and move on.

There's quite a lot in this opening section those names of places and characters, which are very Scandinavian and don't trip off the English speaking tongue.

**Would you advise on that, would say if you're going to use Scandinavian use them very easy to pronounce, so is that an issue totally?**

Jenny Parrott: Well, I definitely would have your main characters as easy to pronounce and easy to recognize.

So I was reading a book the other day and I think it was set in Japan. Anyway, it's Asian and I've read about six Asian books recently, so I can't quite remember where this one was set, but I think it was Japan. The names read quite similarly and because I want familiar names to me, I was having real struggles with the text.

James Blatch: Right, who is who.

Jenny Parrott: And who is the main character and so I think, you know, but actually I think you know, Kaisa or Kaisa and Tuli, I don't think they're bad names. They're quite like names we might say.

When you're getting on to the names of houses, roads ...

James Blatch: Lauttassari Island or Lauttassari Island. That's not too bad, Lauttassari, you can say that. Then there was Mannaheim streets, and this is the one that has got ... Is it an noon fleck of the two like a colon on its side?

Jenny Parrott: I don't know, oh yeah, I don't know.

James Blatch: It's T-Ö-Ö-L-Ö and all three O's have that double thing on top of it, so I don't really know if it's pronounced Töölö, but ...

Jenny Parrott: Yeah, Töölö.

James Blatch: Which is where Tuli lives by the way, Tuli lives in Töölö.

Jenny Parrott: Yes, well obviously no, you can't get a lot of Finnish speakers giving you a lesson.

James Blatch: Yes. I'm angry with myself, of course.

Jenny Parrott: Yes, how can you not understand?

What you want is a sprinkling of this sort of thing to give a sense of it but for that sort of thing, I always think about the more challenged readers. Readers who may take two months to read a book, that's the sort of thing that can be difficult for them.

James Blatch: It also takes you somewhere, takes you to another place and that's what it's like being in Finland, seeing road signs that look unintelligible to us.

Jenny Parrott: Absolutely. Yes, so you don't want to strip it completely.

James Blatch: No.

Jenny Parrott: But you see, the way I tend to look at it is the first bit of your book needs to get your reader and hold your reader.

So maybe we check back in the initial stages then you can allow a bit more color to come in later, once people aren't having to try and juggle who the main characters are and what the general setting is then you can start building up the texture.

James Blatch: Great, invested into that point. Jenny, superb as always.

Jenny Parrott: Thank you, thank you.

James Blatch: Thank you very much for your constructive feedback on that particular editor's eye on some of the language. I think that's really useful for all of us to hear.

Jenny Parrott: I really think this is true for all writers. If people are noticing you're writing unless it's a super literary novel yourself and you're writing the whole book in one sentence or whatever, try not to draw attention to your writing.

So it is those little things and sometimes it's laziness and we all have to fight that. So I'm not saying you have to try and be dramatic and different, but just try and make it seem less, allow your story and particularly your characters to have precedents.

I think all books benefit from a read of just what the language is like. If when you're reading your own book, you're suddenly thinking a bit it's dull, do pay attention to that because you're invested in your own book.

James Blatch: Yeah. More than anyone else.

Jenny Parrott: Yes. If you're finding it a bit dull, take a bit of a premium shift, or sometimes it works if you add a little more in front or either side of that

to kind of give it something to sit against. I think we can all sort of feel our way into this much more.

But you know, in Helena's case I think the writing fits the purpose. It's not so bad or so brilliant that people are going to be horrified by it or amazed by it. But she's a clean writer.

James Blatch: Well, that's a good commercial place to be.

Jenny Parrott: It's a really good place to be. So in her case it's just that little bit of fine tuning to think, "Okay, well how do I make characters from 1980 act as 1980's characters, speak as 1980's characters but be intriguing for modern day readers?"

Poor thing, she now will be typing nervous for adjectives for a while and I just I don't do that, but just recognize that she, like all of us, we have pet things just sneaking.

I hope it does well for her and certainly her readers who like books. Long term, the one thing I did want to say is the word romance is both good and a bad thing to class it as yes, it sets very clearly what the book is.

But some readers, even people who like quite commercial books are a bit snobby about romance. So it might be a to have almost I would maybe suggest something like the Nordic Chronicles or something like that.

The Nordic Community Chronicles, or I can't think of what they should be now, but probably she might be limiting her market with romance. But on the other hand, it maybe that romance, it's very discoverable on Amazon.

Actually with this as well she does, I'm sure you got the metadata sort of cupping covered in another podcast. But she really needs to get as many keywords, so you know, Nordic, Finland, romance, embassy, love, you

know, all of those things up, so that when people search this one pops forward.

James Blatch: Yeah. Key as keywords absolutely.

Jenny Parrott: Yes, absolutely, but think widely because sometimes you can get a best seller flag by flagging it for a not particularly competitive area. So, that might be something.

I would probably put Finland and then maybe Finnish historical fiction. Or something like that, that might be the sort of thing that will sort of come up.

**James Blatch: Find a niche list.**

Jenny Parrott: But now you'll be dealing with that in another area, but it is something as a writer if you're going to self-publish, and there's a particular scene, so say it was set on a lake I would have ... It might be island, it's a sensible one, but something like you got a scene on a lake, I put lake in on this, so just because some people might have a fetish for lakes and you know, if they like romance, well job done.

James Blatch: Good. That's an issue, yeah. That's great. Okay.

Jenny Parrott: Okay.

James Blatch: Brilliant, superb. Thank you so much indeed.

Jenny Parrott: Thanking you.

James Blatch: Look forward to the next time out.

Jenny Parrott: Brilliant. Okay.

James Blatch: I have said to Helena in the interview with her at the end, there's going to come a point with this Booklab where the experts hate everything about it. I'm going to have to do the, give the feedback, and then do the interview at the end of it, but so far they've really kind of liked what they see.

Jenny did pick up on some points and I think an interesting aspect of this and Helena touched on it as well, is taking feedback and this is probably the most difficult feedback to take for an author because the cover you're a bit distant from, the blurb you're a bit distant from, but the writing is you.

When somebody says you've overused this word, you want to think about inflections and stuff.

**I guess there's a couple of ways of taking that, but the correct way is to say what changes do I need to make to make this work?**

Mark Dawson: Yeah, you can be an idiot about it and pretend that it's not valid or you can be sensible and commercial and take it on board obviously.

No one is saying that there is a right and wrong because there is a subjectivity about that kind of common treat, but at the same time, Jenny's a very good editor. Jenny, I've used her, it's very good to have a use of Jenny, I've also got copy editors, print editors, and if they suggest changes I almost always incorporate them.

If Jennifer, my copy editor, will spot that I'm using the word too much, even it could be like four times in a 90,000 word manuscript and it is an unusual word like I don't know, elucidate, I've used that a few times more. Once is enough for whether because it is unusual and it stands out.

So she'll spot that and say, "Well you need to change that," and I bet there's no point in being offended by that because if it caught her attention

it's also going to catch that reader attention. That's what you're paying for, you need to pay attention to that kind of feedback.

**James Blatch: Does a driver ever gun the engine when you write your books?**

Mark Dawson: Not as much as I used to.

James Blatch: Because that's on most thrillers I've ever read. Da Vinci Code I think so, he uses it probably about 17 times, you can't get into the car without a gunning the engine.

Mark Dawson: Yes, so we could have a whole podcast dedicated to the writing of Dan Brown. But we won't do that because we're nice people.

James Blatch: And he's swimming in notes.

Mark Dawson: He's swimming in money, that's all we know.

James Blatch: Exactly. I'm not being critical, just pointing it out.

I think Jenny actually mentions gunning the engines at some point in the one of the feedback interviews we do. Okay, now finally, I have actually ... No disrespect to Stuart and Jenny, they did a great job on this one, really useful, but I think the blurb was an area that could be improved on and it was good to start off with and Bryan liked that, but Bryan has done a really superb job on the blurb here.

So, again if you want to follow along you can download the original blurb, all saved at Amazon if you're within two weeks of the date this goes out, which is the 6th of July at Amazon.

But if you want to go to [selfpublishingformula.com/booklab2](https://selfpublishingformula.com/booklab2), you can download the original and the new blurb that Bryan has written for this book so let's hear from Bryan.

### **Bryan, the blurb genius. We need an alliterative title 'The Blurb Beats Master'?**

Bryan: Well, I originally when I was coming up with the company name, Simon Whistler, formerly of the Rocking Self-publishing Podcast called me Dr. Descriptio.

James Blatch: Oh, I like that superhero, that's Marvel-esk.

Bryan: Yup, yup so that was your alliterative title.

James Blatch: Yeah. We're here with Dr.Descriptio. You'll now wear your pants on the outside of your jeans, and then project something into the sky. Yeah, I can see that happening. You maybe in the next Infinity War.

Okay, well let's put the doctor to the test, let's open the clinic and go in go into the surgery. So we have Helena Halme, she has a romance book, so very different from last time around but an interesting challenge I think for our three residents experts.

Now her blurb is on Amazon, we do ask Helena and our Booklab people to keep the blurbs as they are, at the time the podcast goes out so people can read it and then they can download the PDF to see the new version.

Her blurb is quite short, the opening line is, "They lived thousands of miles apart. She's engaged to be married and he sails around the world. Can their love go the distance?" Then there are one, two, three, four, five, more paragraphs.

You've sent me your blurb, and first thing I noticed about your blurb is it's quite comprehensive.

Bryan: Yes.

James Blatch: Quite long. So we'll talk about that in length in a moment.

**I'm also going to point out that actually her blurb is a little bit Cohenesque, right?**

Bryan: It is.

James Blatch: There is a little setup, she's obviously been listening to the podcast and listening to you Bryan, because it's a little setup and there's that very important element of tension that you always talk about being in there. So I guess you started by looking and thinking, "Okay, well she's made a good start," did you think that?

Bryan: I loved that Helena's blurb was so strong to begin with and I thought David's was pretty good from the first Booklab.

I love that this was strong to begin with because it allows us to go into the nitty gritty of how to take a good blurb and attempt to make it great. Because a lot of the blurbs we get from Best Page Forward, they're not half bad to begin with, but there are little things you can do along the way to try to get readers even more excited, increase that conversion rate of someone just browsing your page to someone actually buying, maybe take it from one in 20 to one in 15, or one in 15 to one in 10, so that's what we tried to do with this one.

James Blatch: Okay. That says a lot about you, that you like the challenge when it starts off already good, that you want to take it to the next level. So it's not an easy win for you, in that sense, if somebody's blurb comes in and it's terrible.

That's an easy win for you to turn that into something that's decent but you love the challenge of it really. You said to me straight away actually, that you enjoyed doing this one.

Bryan: This was a fun one because I like that while it is a romance, it's also a period piece. It's set in Finland in 1980, I believe it was, and so we get to have that historical element in there a little bit.

Booklab did a study a while back that showed when a book is set in the past they found that conversion increase when you include the location and the year right at the beginning there and so we've gone from as Helena has it, she has to mention that it's in Finland in the first sentence.

It's compulsory information, but if we just have Finland 1980, the scene is already set, we know where it is. We know it's probably cold in Scandinavia and so we've got that right off the bat. Then we can just skip that and focus on the character right away rather than having to go too in-depth into the time period.

James Blatch: Good. For those of us writing Cold War novels, that's good to hear, that's a good conversion there. England 1966. Okay. Good.

### **Do you want to talk me through your opening line, the new opening line?**

Bryan: Sure.

The new headline is, *"She has her life planned out. He lets the wind guide his sails. As the Cold War heats up, can they keep love alive on either side of the Iron Curtain?"*

This is not all that different from Helena's, to be honest. I think that we get to cut out the first bit that she has, "They live thousands of miles apart," and

focus in on the characters a little bit more right from the beginning, as opposed to go in with circumstance.

Because as I've said before, if readers care about your characters then as you share more about your plot throughout the description they're going to just be more invested.

They don't care necessarily just because there are two people separated by thousands of miles. That isn't enough. They need to kind of get a feel for the character, relate to the character first and then we can share more plot, you care a lot more about Kaisa, from knowing that she's kind of this by the book person first, and then getting to know that she's meeting this guy. It matters more than if you hear about the guy first and then who she is.

James Blatch: This is such a good instructional piece for people writing their blurbs that you can actually say quite a lot about a character or at least present some intriguing insight into character in a very few words.

She has her life planned out. That actually says a huge amount about somebody, you know a lot about somebody, if somebody says that she has a life planned out, you've got this image in your mind already. That's, as you say, rather just saying she lives here, that's about the character, character driven.

You've done the same thing with him, "He lets the wind guide his sails," that tells us a lot about him as well. So I really like those two.

I'd like to say not dramatically different from what Helena has done, but subtly different enough that suddenly I think it has ... I hope she agrees as well, has done the job of elevating it a little bit into the next level of sparking that intrigue and wanting to draw you in a bit.

Bryan: It's funny how just a couple of words can make a huge amount of difference. "He sails around the world," is circumstantial. "He lets the wind guide his sails," is more his philosophy, almost.

So, it's changing it from being about what is happening to this person versus what is going on inside of this person and that's what we like to always do.

Like you said, it shows that full picture of the person in their mind, in a reader's mind before even reading the rest of that description.

James Blatch: Yeah, great. The other thing you've done quite early on here is you have mentioned, effectively the Cold War, and there's a mention of The Cold War, and a mention of the iron curtain, which are circumstantial, but that's quite a powerful scene set for those two characters.

Actually in Helena's she hasn't mentioned, there is a mention of the British embassy, which is the opening scene. We talk about a little bit about the Navy, but it's not immediately obvious reading that, that this is set in the cold war.

Because of course you know, for those of us of a certain age Finland was the front line of The Cold War. It was the border with Russia and all sorts of shenanigans went on there, so for those of us who are a little bit older that means something.

Bryan: Yeah, and it's that I assumed, we assumed is the target audience. You've got folks in their late 40s, 50s who know about this and Helena does have Soviet Union mentioned in there.

But what we tried to do by bringing it into the hook is almost to show this from the beginning is a star crossed lovers situation and that is an attempt to raise the stakes as high as they can possibly be even though in most romances you're going to have the happily ever after.

We haven't read the book, I haven't read the book, so I don't know if there's a happily-ever-after, I have to assume there is, because that's the trope of the genre, but by having it as a question from the beginning will they get together?

Because there are so many things stacked against them, it makes you lean forward in your chair, you want to find out, and so you're more likely to buy the book.

James Blatch: You've mentioned the hook there, which is one of the terms used when you break down how these paragraphs work. It's really worth it and you did that podcast with us and obviously if people are involved in any of our courses there's some training in there as well to really spell this out.

Okay. Good, so great top line, "She has a life planned out. He lets the wind guide his sails. As the cold war heats up, can they keep love alive on either side of the iron curtain?"

Then you go into a little bit more detail, and this is where ... When I was first looking I was surprised at the length, is there a ... It's something you aim for in terms of ... Actually having said that, you put the old version underneath I think maybe my eyes were scanning down and including that in it.

**Maybe the word count is about the same as what Helena had before, maybe it's a little bit longer.**

Bryan: I think ours is a little bit longer. I think we established the scene a bit more of her meeting Peter, of Kaisa meeting Peter in Kaiser's paragraph. In Helena version it just kind of establishes that she's not looking for romance because she's already engaged.

In ours, we kind of go more into her surprise and actually finding something with this person because it seems that they have this, Kaisa and Peter are protagonists, have a connection pretty early on in the story, and so whether or not they end up in a relationship in the long term that's kind of more of a later question. So we want to establish that these people might be meant for each other.

It took a little bit of extra time because she's already in a relationship, we need to make sure readers don't feel like she's cheating or something. So I took a little extra time to establish that she's in a passionless situation that it's just transactional with her existing fiancé but it's actually maybe love with this other gentleman.

We'd usually have something, maybe a sentence or two less, for this paragraph but we felt this needed to just give her a little more establishment searching. We know what is her impossible choice, stick with the dependability but no love or go with this person who's sailing around the world but she very well might have love? Hopefully that excites the reader and gets them interested.

James Blatch: Now I can see that straight away and it brings to mind, there was a film and I'm struggling to think of the name of it. It had the name of a teacher in character as name was the film but she cheated on her boyfriend who was established at the beginning, and the rest of the film was supposed to be a quirky romance about her falling for this other guy. But because she's sort of over it he just went off and casually cheated with somebody really.

I remember talking to one of the producers who I knew later and she said it was such a mistake. They realized that what you've done here is you've got this girl Kaisa who's got her life planned out, and then you've set up the she's a bit surprised, she's a bit torn, she's not sure what's happening here.

Now that it's completely different. That's romantic, right? That's somebody who's had the wind knocked out of them by something that's hit them in the face and they don't know quite how to react to it, that's perhaps that's what love is. When love happens for them so.

I'm not a romance writer and I don't understand the trope like you do, but you've obviously got your teeth into those little subtleties where things can go wrong for you if you put somebody off for what looks like low moral behavior at the beginning.

Bryan: That one is a tough one because there are a lot of romances that turn on that being in a loveless relationship and going to something that's potentially better, so you don't want to trigger anybody who's maybe been cheated on or has been in a rough relationship. So it just goes to show this stuff is not, you know, paint by numbers.

James Blatch: Straightforward. Yeah, no it's not.

Bryan: It's sometimes a subtle plot device requires extra heavy lifting in the blurb stage.

James Blatch: Yeah, so there is the Kaisa, I mean if you have, again Helena appears to follow the Bryan Cohen school of blurb writing because there is this paragraph that setup Kaisa, a paragraph that sets up of Peter, the protagonists, and you've done the same thing, and you fleshed out Kaisa a little bit more. Very character-driven as you described there.

We've got the strong impression of somebody who had everything sorted out, knew what was happening as being knocked off of her feet. Then we come onto Peter.

**How have you differed with your description from where Helena's was?**

Bryan: In Helena's I like what she has here. She starts though a little bit with the physical features, which there's nothing wrong with obviously readers like a tall, dark and handsome Naval Officer that is not going to turn heads away certainly.

But we try to make sure that he had his reasoning there, that he had his impossible choices as well, what is standing in the way of him wanting to get together with Kaisa and so we get this ... I really like this sentence, "Not even the excitement of hunting down Russian submarines can compare to the thrill of his lips on hers."

Now what does this sentence do? It has a comparison between the excitement of his life versus her life but what does it also do? We're bringing back in the Cold War a bit.

Subtly we're bringing back in the plot but we're not using the plot, you can tell I get giddy about that sometimes, we're not using the plot to just share the plot.

We're using it to show where Peter's priorities might be changing. We're using it to remind readers of the stakes, and it's just this comparison of the submarines versus kissing, hunting down subs versus kissing. It's just such a fun little image that if Helena had frankly written a more boring book, we wouldn't have been able to have that kind of comparison.

But because she set out such a great framework for what this book is doing plot-wise it gives us, as the blurb writers a lot to work with.

I think one of the reasons that our blurb's a little long is just because we had so much fun with it. It's possible that it's attached too long but giving these lyrical terms a phrase, I think gets the reader excited about what's to come.

James Blatch: What I like about this and what I think you've really drawn out more than Helena's initially did, although, I agree with you I think Helena has worked very well, is on the face of it are very different characters and we set it up at the beginning. She's got everything sorted out, he's letting the wind send him around the world.

You've created two people suddenly put into the same position where things are not what they thought they were. You say that he saw his future rising up the ranks, and suddenly this kiss is as exciting as everything else that was going on in his life you know, and on the navy submarine.

That's the same thing that's happened to her, right? She thinks she's got problems at home perhaps, which you don't allude to as much as Helena does. I think she uses the expression, "Someone in an unhappy relationship."

Basically set her up as somebody who's quite structured and then she's thrown by this and he's exactly the same. That, again, for a romance book is quite an exciting prospect. Two people sharing that same giddiness on their part.

**I can imagine that's the kind of a very drawing element for somebody who enjoys reading about blossoming romance and blossoming relationships.**

Bryan: Absolutely. We try also not only are they compared with what they're going through initially and how it's changed, but we talk about cliffhangers. There's obviously a cliffhanger we like to throw in at the end of the blurb itself to leave readers wanting more. We've always pushed for that.

But in a romance description in particular, and this is slightly different than in, say a thriller or a mystery description, we almost have a bit of a cliffhanger at the end of each paragraph as to what is standing in the way of what they want.

Kaisa, how could she give up her sure thing relationship, and with Peter it's about his commanding officers are literally standing in his way because she's from a Soviet friendly nation. So we're seeing the stakes at the end of each paragraph, which is either we want the reader to go click the buy button right after that, or they keep reading.

James Blatch: Okay, and that's the third sentence, third paragraph, fourth after the top line.

So you've done two characters, we've set these up beautifully. We've then got this torn choices, and I've noticed the use of languages, star-crossed lovers, famously of course, Shakespeare's term for Romeo and Juliet. It's nicely invoking the greatest love story of all time in many people's eyes, and a lovely little line of what the relationship sink on the high seas, which is beautifully poetic.

Don't know if Helena had that one, did she? She may have done or something similar but I can tell you guys enjoyed doing this. Then we come into the crucial last two.

So you've either got somebody clicking buy at a point and frankly I'm ready to buy at this point.

**But if I do carry on reading, what is the point of the last two paragraphs here?**

Bryan: So we've got the sailing paragraph and the call to action, the sailing paragraph is the, as you said, the reader hasn't bought yet so we have maybe some hesitations, something that's standing in their way just trying to remind them that if they stumbled upon this description or they came upon it from an ad, they're probably targeted for a reason.

They like this kind of book, so just reminding them that this is contemporary women's fiction novel with some romance. It's got the historical aspect to it, chemistry, it's got characters that aren't just one dimensional, these are all things that Helena's target reader, probably at the target reader she already has like these things.

The additional potential reader she could find they also find these things compelling, they find these are the things they want in the books they want to read. So if they hadn't bought before that paragraph the hope is that these details about what those readers will find inside are exciting enough that this makes them want to click the Buy button.

James Blatch: Yeah, and your last, literally your last sentence is, a strong call to action. *"Buy The English Heart to experience a vibrant turn of courage and love in the face of war today!"*

I think that's a sentence that a lot of self-publishing authors would find it difficult to write, because a lot of people do just struggle to be quite as overly self-promoting as that, even though that is the right thing to do at that stage.

You could remember people have gone all the way through this blurb they're showing a lot of respect and a lot of interest in your book, and so at that point you need to say something obvious to them, which is buy the book.

Bryan: I think that authors are so good at inhabiting characters in their books. These characters say things and do things that they would never do themselves, of course.

If you're writing a blurb or any kind of marketing copy, you need to remember that you're almost inhabiting a character because in the old world, the old mahogany desk world, as my friend Jim Kukral might say,

people would not write their own descriptions, authors would not write their own descriptions. The publisher would do that.

So you have to remember you're inhabiting the character of the publisher who might say and do things you would never do, so do not think of this as you speaking highly of yourself in a way that is in immodest.

You need to remember you are the publisher when you're writing this description, you are the publishing company. The publishing company would not be modest, they would not hold back, they would be open about wanting to sell you this book.

So if that's at all helpful to picture yourself as the publisher instead of as yourself that is an exercise I would recommend.

James Blatch: Putting on that different hat, inhabiting that character is a great description. Okay, great.

Then it's very interesting for me to see what somebody gets for me by the way when they invest in your service and how it is getting this free of charge group, selected her as our Booklab victim number two. But what you actually got is you then get a little bit of code with the HTML to bold up the right parts and separate out the paragraphs so it looks pretty on Amazon.

Then beneath that, and I haven't realized how comprehensive the service is for me, Brain, you get your Facebook ad copy all done for you, you get your headline, your subheadline, and then a whole series of Amazon ad headline options, and you've got 10 of those.

### **This color of work goes into each one of these for you guys?**

Bryan: It's funny because we've started this a few years ago. It was just me in a room basically, and at first it was just the description but we've always

tried to give authors everything they really need in order to not just put up the new description but also to run ads to it.

Amazon ads have been so popular and one of the issues I think is authors just trying to figure out, "Okay, well what different can I try as an Amazon ad headline?"

So we give we give a variety of options at Best Page Forward to make sure that you're testing different things, you're seeing which one converts the best. Then you can focus maybe increasing your bid on your Amazon ads with the highest converting copy, with the best keyword targets that you have, and going for that.

We do try to provide as much as possible because we're authors ourselves, we know what goes into this and I've thrown a lot of money into Amazon ads and Facebook ads myself. I'm fortunate that I've got to test to see what tends to work best.

James Blatch: I think it's a great service and I think a lot of authors will sit and write a 100,000-word book but will struggle to write the 12 words for an advert to outsource that to the expert. I think it's very useful thing.

It's very interesting to see this in its entirety and we will include all of that, include in those Amazon headlines so you can study them on the PDF to get to download along with this episode.

Bryan, it's a good one tonight, it's been 26 minutes talking about the blurb for this romance book, So a little bit over time but think it's been really interesting and very instructional as always to hit how you've approach this and the theory behind the words.

Bryan: Thanks for having me, James. I mean this is so fun. Obviously, I love to nerd out about this.

If I were to letter grade it would be a B+, it's a good description. Taking that to an A, we have to get into the nitty gritty. I appreciate you giving me the time to go into depth about this, and obviously, if anyone wants to find out more [Bestpageforward.net](http://Bestpageforward.net), find out more about what we do and we're happy to share the goods with you.

James Blatch: Superb. Thanks, Bryan.

Bryan: Thanks, James.

James Blatch: Bryan really got into this and he was motivated, I think by the fact that it started off good, which gave him and his team a challenge.

Mark Dawson: Bryan is moving more into this area now considering on blurb writing, and he's got a very good system in place. He's got good people working with him.

I saw some blurbs for me. There is a form that Bryan uses, which people will start to recognize that, but it's effective and it's good to see him getting his teeth into Helena's blurb.

James Blatch: But what was interesting is that Helena had done Bryan's course and used his formula, he recognized that. But he improved it and made it very good indeed. So she was very excited about the blurb.

She's desperate to change it. I told her of a couple of weeks just to hold off, but it's coming soon.

Now let's hear from Helena herself. By the way, it was an absolute delight to interview Helena. She's a really lovely person, great to speak to. So you are going to find out now.

This is what Helena Halme thought about the feedback that you've just heard about her book.

**Helena, how did you feel when the email dropped into your inbox to say you've been selected as the second victim of a Booklab?**

Helena Halme: I was delighted. I mean I was really, really delighted. I thought this is fantastic because there are so many things that you don't know about your own books, and there are very, very few people who will actually tell you straight what the issues are, apart from your editor.

As an independent author it's incredibly important to get a neutral viewpoint. Then weeks went by and then I started thinking, I thought, "Oh, oh, oh, they're going to criticize it."

I'm definitely taking the positives out of it because you know this is something that money can't buy so you know, positive, positive, positive, she says.

James Blatch: First of all, let hear a little bit about you because Jenny and others were second guessing that English wasn't necessarily your first language and there's obviously a Scandinavian theme to the books.

**Tell us a bit about your background.**

Helena Halme: I was born in Finland and I moved here because I met a British man.

James Blatch: It sounds like one of your books. Was he a sailor?

Helena Halme: Yeah, I mean I met him, my Navy husband at the British embassy in Helsinki.

James Blatch: Are you being serious?

Helena Halme: I am being serious and I was engaged to be married.

James Blatch: Wow.

Helena Halme: Yeah, a dependable boring man.

James Blatch: Where do you get your ideas for your books from?

Helena Halme: So that part is the same, yeah.

I came over here in my 20s and I started working for the BBC as a Translator. I don't know if you've heard of Caversham, I've literally just moved out of the place.

James Blatch: Yes, So Caversham is the historic home of the languages monitoring service that the BBC ran, that's basically also fed into MI6. There are not a lot people who knew that the time.

Helena Halme: And also CIA so, yeah. We were official spies, I think.

James Blatch: Yes.

Helena Halme: But I had to sign the Official Secrets Act.

James Blatch: Yeah. I have some crossover because the BBC office is protective of its neutrality and goes to great lengths to tell people it's not a state broadcaster. Caversham was a bit of a cross area, because obviously it's very ... BBC had the technology to listen in to people around the world. During the Cold War is a very important place.

Helena Halme: It was. Yes. I mean there were lots and lots of people there who couldn't go back, who escaped from the other side of the iron curtain, which you know for a writer obviously this is wonderful stuff.

I always felt really lucky that I could just go back whenever I wanted, of course, flights were very expensive then.

Anyway, so I came over here and I worked for the BBC and then we were married, obviously. I had children and then I started to find those hours were a little bit difficult because we were listened really until midnight, I think.

So then I left that and I trained as an accountant because I went to work for my husband in his construction industry business. I tried to escape for about 20 years. During that time I wrote.

Then in 2004, I took an MA in creative writing in Bath Spa University, thinking that I needed you know ... We're Finns, we believe that if you wanted to do something else we have to train, we have to qualify. So I felt I needed to qualify as a writer in order to write. You don't but it was a fun year.

James Blatch: Was it useful?

Helena Halme: It was very useful yeah.

James Blatch: Okay. Awesome.

Helena Halme: But these were times you were looking for an agent, there was really ... There was only Vanity publishing, which was really, really looked down upon and people didn't want to do it.

I think one or two people from our core state, of course, there weren't the resources, so it was incredibly difficult to do it. So, I started looking for agents and I wrote a book 'Coffee and Vodka' in fact is from that, from the course, which is a very kind of dark sort of family moves from Finland to Sweden. They're quite a displaced family after the move and there are issues. There's domestic violence, it's quite a dark family sort of drama.

Then thinking that I might want to do something a bit lighter even though it comes very, not very naturally I then wrote *The Red King of Helsinki*, which was a spy tale. I don't think you can call it a thriller because it's a bit more like William Boyd's.

My books, it's sort of a moral character. That's set in Helsinki in 1979 and then came about Cold War about KGB spies and yeah. I loved writing that book. It's really a young adult because the hero or heroine is a 17-year-old school student.

I just literally did a school talk last week but it's a made love story because it's, you know it's a little bit adult but at the same time ... I mean when I wrote it I didn't think young adult as a genre existed.

I don't know, should I have perhaps write that, change that to write under a different name? Because it's got so many other themes that I have in all my books, which is about displacement, about different culture of my political events affecting the small person and the regular man on the street. I've kept it under my own name.

**James Blatch: When did you move on to your series that we've looked at? We've looked at *The English Heart* but I see there is a series there.**

Helena Halme: I started blogging. *The Red King of Helsinki* was quite successful with agents so I got an agent interested. So I then started blogging in 2007, and I had quite a popular blog, I think it's because I was one of the few people who actually was from Finland and blogging amongst the bloggers.

So people say, "Why did you come over here?" I said, "Well, I'll tell you a story." That's how the story started and I thought it was just going to be a couple of blog posts, but 25 blog posts later, I realized I was writing a novel because actually I veered from the truth quite significantly.

James Blatch: You're allowed to do that in a novel. That's okay. So The English Heart was the first one then. That was the semi-autobiographical, as it turns out.

### **I don't think you say that anywhere in the book?**

Helena Halme: I don't because the thing is that it's not as much autobiographical as people think. There are a couple of things that actually didn't happen but I know this.

James Blatch: That's fine. So that was the first one then you got The Young Heart, The True Heart, The Good Heart, and The Faithful Heart as well, I think.

Helena Halme: Yeah. That's right. The first one, can I show covers? Is that all right?

James Blatch: Yeah, of course, you can.

Helena Halme: This is The English Heart. It started life as The Englishman. It's changed covers quite a lot but this is the final one. So this is the English Heart and then, number two is The Faithful Heart, which takes them so UK and how she finds life in the UK.

Faithful Heart is really something very dramatic happens in the Faithful Heart, so the Good Heart is dealing with that and trying to come to terms with it. That's the final one with the two hearts. That is really the final book. Apart from that there's going to be a Christmas book. I couldn't leave them.

### **James Blatch: A Christmas Special?**

Helena Halme: Yes, a Christmas special and then I wrote, this is a prequel for my prequel, which is a prequel and this is actually quite true to my own life. It's the relationship with the old man.

James Blatch: Intriguing, Helena. Okay well, look, for the YouTube watchers we've shown your covers on screen. So why don't we start with the cover then.

We gave your cover to Stuart, who you know is a renowned cover designer, and designs in all genres including yours. He gave his feedback, which was pretty positive right from the beginning. So you must've been first of all, quite pleased with that.

### **What did you think of the feedback you go from Stuart?**

Helena Halme: I thought it was wonderful. The fact that it's in genre, I thought that was fantastic because it's so important, and it's so difficult when you're a writer yourself to see your genre and to see what your book should look like, which is probably ... I guess why it's usually published authors don't get a say in their cover but you know, that's another discussion.

James Blatch: That's a surprising thing, isn't it?

I mentioned it to Stuart that it's quite difficult to get your own genre right and it's more common than you think to see a book and realize they've just got the cover on.

### **The cover does not tell you about the book, but it's silly how difficult that is but how important it is.**

Helena Halme: Yeah, and also the fact that he felt that the fonts were right, because that's the one thing I've been slightly worried about because I

wondered if I should go for a well flowery you know, more sort of ... I don't know the names of the fonts, you know what I mean.

James Blatch: He did talk about that as being a possibility and I think I felt, and he probably agreed, that your books aren't quite the script flowery genre. So, yeah, he was pleased with that.

I picked up the italics thing, which I'm not 100% about, but I can see how they work and I look across your entire genre, but he was much more kind of ... Is this fine?

Helena Halme: Yes, he was. Again, very pleased about, but I mean the reason really I guess the English, because it is the word, because it's about the Englishman. I'll get back to that, so the editors comment on that.

Also because that's the only word that changes with the titles of the book, so I think I like it but you know, I can see why people would say it just sort of few steps line of your eye, doesn't it a little bit?

James Blatch: Sometimes the spacing as well, yeah. But he was fine, he's the expert.

What he did say he felt needed changing is that your author name colors needed to be adopted or to get some sort of more white behind it to make your author name stand out.

Helena Halme: I was slightly surprised about that, but I get that point. Can I mention my cover designer?

James Blatch: Yes, of course.

Helena Halme: Jessica Bale does all my covers. We work a lot, and we've worked a lot of years together and she is incredibly good.

Just trying to think what book I gave her, but I gave her the brief with the book covers that I liked, and I felt were in my genre. Then she adapted them from that. I sort of wanted a little bit of '70s, '80s vibe in them as well, with the sun, and that sort of little bit of a hippy-ish thingy going on. So that was what I wanted, and that's why she's got this sort of the sun.

Even now when I look at that cover I can see what he means that it sort of gets a bit lost up there, doesn't it?

James Blatch: Yeah, a little bit. I think it's something a Stuart like cover design is going to notice more than me, but then he knows why people linger and stay on a cover, move on to the next one, so it's worth taking into account.

What I love about that is you've gone for this kind of '70s vibe, which Jessica has managed to find but inadvertently it's become very Instagram. It's becoming very modern look and over crowned contrast, which isn't absolutely my family's '70s photographs look a bit like that. But that's what Instagram does, it's a retro look, isn't it? Very trendy.

Helena Halme: Yeah, it is, and I love them, but can I show you the old covers.

James Blatch: Yes, of course.

Helena Halme: So it started life force as the Englishman, so that was my first cover. That was designed by a man, and I love that cover because that's actually my Englishman.

James Blatch: That is your Englishman.

Helena Halme: I mean I love this cover but it didn't sell very well when it started off as a Kindle but yeah, I think it's just a bit too unromantic.

James Blatch: I quite like it though.

Helena Halme: Yeah. Well, but you see you're not my target audience.

James Blatch: I like the military stuff.

Helena Halme: So that was the next one, which I went sort of bit more romantic and I did like this lady that did my covers. She wasn't a cover designer but she was a graphic designer, and so she then decided that she didn't want to do covers anymore, so I couldn't keep having it.

With my books coming sooner so I had to go back to Jessica, and Jessica then went really left field. Though I love these covers, they didn't really tell the story enough.

James Blatch: No. They don't add a glance to the genre, do they?

Helena Halme: No, no.

James Blatch: But a lovely color, the color.

Helena Halme: When you think about this is how books now are, when you you know ... Not Jojo Moyes but say Leah Morieti, quite often there's not very much in the cover. But any ways, so that's the sort of story. I've had lots of colors, so I'm really pleased because otherwise you would have gone, "Oh no."

James Blatch: Yes, if thrown out, but only subtle changes needed. Okay, Good. Well, that's great. That was Stuart.

Let's move on to Jenny then. Jenny read the Look Inside. Jenny is primarily, I think a developmental editor. She thinks about structure a bit.

### **What do you think about her feedback?**

Helena Halme: I got lots and lots of things that I'm going to take home from that and I'm going to obviously discuss with my editor, because I've got an editor who's been in the business for 35 years, I think, and she's in my genre.

She reads the kind of books that I write as well. I get, the one point that I absolutely agree with is the Englishman, I think I overdid it particularly in the beginning because it's new to her. Also because the book was called The Englishman, I think I'm definitely going to change that without even talking to Dorothy, my editor.

The other bits I was a little bit confused to be about, to be honest, but I mean I'm going to, as I said, I'm going to actually play that back to her and then discuss it with her.

What I was also pleased about was the fact that she did think that it was a Booklab book, which is exactly what all my book are. All my books are Booklab books, which is really, really good because that's where the cover is going that's where I'm going. So I'm not Mills and Boon but still it's romance.

I think it used to be called Little Romance in New York then. So I was pleased, really pleased about that, and sorry I've made some notes.

James Blatch: Jenny did make some quite small points that I would have struggled to pick up on and then reflect and the use of language and so on. Quite detailed.

I think it's quite a good thing, Helena, because again it means genre, she thought it was good and she was down in the weeds, if you like, as the Americans say.

Helena Halme: You're saying that 10% of people would notice these things. I thought that that was fantastic. So, I'm definitely going to do again .

You know Englishman, particularly was something I thought, yeah, yeah, I know I've overdone that.

James Blatch: Well that's good. So far, you're the second one, we haven't had anyone yet where our experts have said, "This is all got to change." This has been a positive response to, "This is well-written, this is good, and here are my thoughts." So we may get one in the future but so far it's been a pleasure.

Helena Halme: But that just says about self-published books, you know there's this-

James Blatch: Quality.

Helena Halme: I'm of the age where I remember when people were still quite ... There's an upper class English saying sniffy. But that just shows you, doesn't it? You know, you picked a couple of people random.

James Blatch: From my point of view is somebody writing a book at the moment just listening to Jenny analyze your text was a very valuable thing for us, I mean regardless of the detail of it from your point of view. Okay and finally we're going to move on to the blurb, which Bryan really got as teeth into, he was quite excited about it.

Helena Halme: I know, I'm so fluttered.

**James Blatch: You've got a very comprehensive new set of blurb.**

Helena Halme: I read it to my husband, I said, "This story was sort of ..." and he was like, "Wow, how did you know? Because it was actually more exciting to kiss you than to go and chase submarines."

I went "Aww, after 35 years of marriage it was quite nice." Anyway, I'm embarrassed now.

James Blatch: That's amazing that Bryan nailed that.

**He found that spark, the spark that makes the book work he found it and then put it to the blurb.**

Helena Halme: I want him to do all my blurbs now. I was so very nearly there but I think he's just added the magic into it, and yeah it's like, I honestly it's magic. I love the fact that he gave me B+.

James Blatch: That was helpful for him the fact that you had got high standard anyway. I think that's what, as he said in his interview, they wanted to really get it to next level.

Well done, Bryan, because that's two in a row now where the author has gone back to Bryan and said, "Right, you are doing my blurbs for the future."

Helena Halme: Honestly, I cannot imagine that he did that without knowing the book fully. I just think that's amazing, really.

James Blatch: That's a definite win and we should reiterate. Not everyone is watching on YouTube, they won't have necessarily seen the cover, but you should watch this episode on YouTube because you get to see all the visuals.

But of course, everything is downloadable at [selfpublishingformula.com/booklab2](http://selfpublishingformula.com/booklab2).

Helena, look thank you so much indeed for allowing us to tear open your marketing platform and put it back together again, it would be very useful

for us if you just leave, I don't if you plan to make an immediate change of just a few weeks maybe two weeks or so to allow the podcast ... The podcast is going to go on Friday but we're recording this on Monday. What's that Friday, the sixth.

So if we leave or at least two weeks from then before you make any changes so people listen to podcast go to your page you can see what we're talking about rather than the replaced version. After a couple of weeks we can go back. I know you're chomping at the bit to make some changes.

Helena Halme: I'm on holiday anyway.

James Blatch: What we're really interested in is what difference this makes to your sales because that's the whole point of this. It's not just a pleasing exercise to make experts feel happy. It's to make you in a better position to sell books so you can let us know.

We know Dave Barron has got back to us and we've seen an immediate difference in his book sales and his covers probably needed more work than yours. We'll wait and see what difference it makes to you.

Helena Halme: I have got a promotion on my box sets so I have you sneakily, someone that's my box set, if that's all right, it's a different book.

James Blatch: Absolutely fine, absolutely fine. Well, good luck with that and hopefully people have learned something from listening to your feedback and I think taken it in a very good way as well.

That's the other nightmare I have as an interviewer, is I get somebody and they say, "They are all rubbish, I don't know what they are talking about." Because some people don't take feedback very well.

Helena Halme: I think that's against the traditional publishers and traditionally published authors versus not the one wants to generalize, but it is what they're used to doing, they used to fight in the corner with their publishers and their home machinery.

Whereas in this we know that we need to improve, and the more we improve the more we sell and we can do it ourselves.

I just don't think there's any point in not taking on what people have said. It may hurt, a little bit, but I don't think you know, really there is no point.

James Blatch: It's very important, very important. Okay. Helena, thank you so much indeed for joining us from Sunny Crouch end in London.

Helena Halme: Thank you.

James Blatch: It's unbelievably sunny in England at the moment.

Helena Halme: I know I can't believe it, we're going to Spain it's probably going to feel cold.

James Blatch: Yeah, almost certainly. Okay Helena, thank you so much indeed.

Helena Halme: Thank you very much.

James Blatch: I think I told you she was really delightful to speak to Helena, and absolutely took it all in the right way is keen to make changes and keen to develop her products as she sees it, and hopefully sell more books, which is what this is all about.

There's the second Booklab person in a row who said, "I am buying all my blurbs from Bryan Cohen in the future."

Mark Dawson: Bryan has mentioned to me that his business has ticked up.

James Blatch: Good.

Mark Dawson: That's a good testimony for Bryan.

James Blatch: Well it really is, and Helena was, "I can't wait to get the next set of blurbs from him." I think he did a really good job.

But the point of this exercise, as I told Helena a few moments ago in that interview is that we all learn hearing the critical feedback and in the changes to get made. We don't just learn from, I think hearing Jenny and Stuart and Bryan come up with areas that need improving and think, "Well, what about my situation?"

We also learn just about this process of which happens in the artistic world of having feedback, taking it on board correctly, and making modifications, which sounds a bit easier than it is.

I remember when I first started working in the BBC like most people, I wasn't great at taking that criticism and feedback and reacted probably badly against, and thought, "What do they know?"

Then by the end of my 10, 12 years there started to work out you need to listen carefully to somebody who has objectively watched you report and realized it was rubbish. I told you that. It's an absolutely important part of being successful.

Mark Dawson: Absolutely, and yes, my challenge the next one is to take a book that needs tons and tons of work, so you have some difficulty interest to see rather than the slum dunk given the first two weeks.

James Blatch: Yeah. Don't make it too bad, we haven't had really any bad ones.

Mark Dawson: I will certainly look forward to the next one. So I suppose we should mention if people want to be included in this Booklab for the third time and you need to be a gold Patreon subscriber, which you can do at [patreon.com/spfpodcast](https://patreon.com/spfpodcast), is that right, John?

James Blatch: That is correct. I'm not John, I'm James, but yeah, that's correct.

Mark Dawson: So Mark Dawson SPF podcast and then just drop us a line, say that you'd like to be considered. I'll have a look at the applications and we'll pick one out and see if we get on.

James Blatch: Good. Okay, a couple of little bits of news to mention that we were talking about just off air, which I think is worthy of mention.

ConvertKit, which is a mailing list provider is the one I use actually, and we have used the SPF and we're using it in our side businesses and we are affiliates for them so we're quite well connected with ConvertKit. They've announced a fairly significant rebrand and I'm just looking for it. Here it is.

I have to say right from the beginning, afterwards a name becomes meaningless because you just know what the name is at Amazon or its just a river right, but we want to know the name.

ConvertKit always felt to me as slightly odd though. I kind of know what they were doing with that name but anyway, they've decided quite bravely to rebrand having ... I think they turned over 10 million a month now, I think I read that, Mark plus probably after today that figure. They are going to call themselves 'Seva'. I believe it's 'Seva'. Let me see, where is it? Seva, it's S-E-V-A, pronounced 'sehvaah' so as in She-Vah.

Mark Dawson: The fact that they've had to explain that tells you that it's not a good name. I like it but I don't think this is a good name. Some of those

made up kind of focus group names are great for SEO and for getting traffic, because they are basic made up names. Does it tell you what they do? I know Amazon doesn't really tell you what they do but I don't like that much.

James Blatch: It means selfless service. They've made that up because it's a made-up name.

Mark Dawson: I hate this stuff. Terrible.

James Blatch: Okay. There you go. Mrs. Dawson is much more into rebranding and this kind of thing than you are. You do glaze over a little bit when we start talking about branding in all meetings.

Mark Dawson: Yeah, I know but with the fact that you have to explain how that word is intended to be pronounced and it still doesn't make any sense. There is you know, anyway, I don't know the name but I do like them. I think it's one of the better options for making things private. It's quite expensive, not too expensive. It's nice to put together, looks nice, easy to use.

James Blatch: It does, and I know lots of people in our community talk about mail alert and we're going to look more into mail alert after the one to one calls release in the autumn and make sure that's included in there as well. There are three new features that come out with the relaunch of Seva.

They are to do with templates and subscriber preferences, drop-down boxes, and so on in all the right places about just assuming that.

Mark Dawson: What about the name pronunciation?

James Blatch: Nathan Barry's head pops up to tell you explain to you they have a dream one that and the word Seva came into his head. So that's one change that we're going to mention.

The other one I'm going to mention is YouTube. I've probably mentioned this before in the ad words platform, which is not just used for running the pay per click, PPC stuff, across the Internet. It's also the platform used for running YouTube ad for something we do talk about and recommend for authors.

They have been running a new platform parallel with the old one for a long time now. I'm thinking 18 months knocking on two years it's been a little bit backwards and forwards.

They did initially try to put everyone on it. Most people complained and now you can run the two of them and they finally announced, actually announced it about three weeks ago, that they are going to cease the old platform in about a week's time. So the new platform will be the only one you can use from that period onwards.

At the same time they are making a change to the YouTube platform as well, in beta at the moment, but if you run a YouTube channel, you'll see that instead of create a studio, so if you're used to running a YouTube channel you know what the create a studio is. You're going to get something called YouTube studio is in beta and I've got access to it. I think, I think most people have access to it but it might be one of those things that they've already wrote up some people might be partners that we are at the moment.

I do think it's slightly odd and it's a bit frustrating from our point of view running courses and trying to advise people how to do this. When you go into YouTube beta, which switches you over, you can switch back via settings, you then discover that there's loads of missing features aren't there, so Playlist, Live Streaming, translation, transcription, audio library, customized channel, and then more are all missing from the beta platform at the moment, which pretty much makes it useless.

However, you can start to see what it's going to look like for you and don't really because there is so little functionality that we can actually use at the moment. I can't give you a definitive opinion on whether I think it's good or not, but I do know that I'm going to be re-recording the YouTube ads for Authors, course within authors over the summer and with this. So that's my headache. Not you, you've had enough headaches with Facebook.

Mark Dawson: Welcome to my world and also the fact that you mispronounced the word settings, with sweating is a proof of how hot it is at the moment.

James Blatch: It is, it is hot at the moment. Everything is hot. But we live in a world where they do change these platforms a lot, and to be fair to them, the bigger you are, the longer you've been running, the more difficult it is to make significant changes and probably better that they do improve over time even if it is troublesome at the time.

Everyone hates the new platforms all the time, all you get is hate for them, and every time Facebook changes their interface but eventually be able get used to it and like it.

Good long episode but I think worth it, because I thoroughly enjoyed listening to the feedback. I absolutely loved talking to Helena, it was a real delight talking to her. She came along to London Book Fair early this year as well. Hopefully we'll see her again next year. I've asked Helena to let us know about her sales because we want to hear this had a positive impact and hopefully hasn't destroyed her career.

Mark Dawson: 10%.

James Blatch: You want 10%, what if it's a 10% drop?

Mark Dawson: Ignore I said that.

James Blatch: It won't be. I think her sales are going to go up as a result of this, particular the blurb. Thank you so much indeed for listening and watching hopefully on YouTube.

This week we're going to be in The Stout near Grand Central Station, a bar between Madison and Park Avenue Wednesday night at 7:00 o'clock in New York. That is something like the 10th or 11th, can you look it up?

Mark Dawson: 11th.

James Blatch: 11th of July. I would love to buy you a beer that night and if you can't make it, we'll certainly be here again next Friday.

We're going to do a two-part special on children's books. It won't be just for children's authors, because we'll talk about marketing and AMS ads and particular what's working at the moment but with two successful children books authors, who are using the digital platforms that we talk about all the time to make a career, and we get asked a lot by children's authors does this stuff work for children's authors?

Well you're going to find out that it does in the next couple of episodes and you'll learn something whatever your genre, I promise you that as well. We may even present one or two of them from New York.

Mark Dawson: You know, it's at the top of the Empire State Building.

James Blatch: Yes, with a big ape hanging off.

Mark Dawson: No extra wage on that.

James Blatch: On that bombshell. Let's say goodbye. Thank you very much indeed for listening. We'll be speaking to you next week. Bye, bye.

Speaker 1: You've been listening to the Self Publishing Formula Podcast. Visit us at [selfpublishingformula.com](http://selfpublishingformula.com) for more information, show notes, and links on today's topics. You can also sign up for our free video series on using Facebook ads to grow your mailing list. If you've enjoyed the show, please consider leaving us a review on iTunes. We'll see you next time.