

## **EPISODE 128: HOW TO SELF-PUBLISH AND MARKET A CHILDREN'S BOOK PART 1 – WITH LAURIE WRIGHT**

Speaker 1: Two writers: one just starting out, the other, a bestseller. Join James Blatch and Mark Dorsen 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 on a Friday from the United Kingdom. Well, I should say from England, because ... Now, Mark, this podcast going out on the 13th of July, but we're recording it today on the sixth of July, the day before England's quarter final match. It's possible by the time this podcast goes out that England will be in the World Cup final.

Mark Dawson: More likely that they'll be gone, they'll be at home, beat up.

James Blatch: There'll be a home tour, a loser's reception. They've done really well so far, we're very excited, and this is going to sound like a clunky way of talking about football in a self-publishing podcast, but I was thinking about this this morning, that it's now to the point of, in England, in the UK, where everyone's excited about it.

Last night I was talking to a friend's mother who says, "I don't like football," but she was on the edge of her seat and screaming at the last match. We had a very dramatic penalty shoot out last time.

And why is that? It's because it's a live narrative, isn't it? It's a story. In fact, it's almost the ultimate one because you don't know what's going to happen minute-to-minute, but you want to know. It's a very strong human

desire to follow stories to their conclusion. It sounds clunky but it's not really, it's exactly the same thing.

If you can capture that in your writing, in your book, it makes people want to know what's going to happen. It twists and turns in front of them. It's just that sport does that live in front of us.

Mark Dawson: It does. It also is a communal experience.

I live in the countryside now so there's no one anyone near me, but when I lived in London, watching something similar to this, in the World Cup, and England scored, you'd hear cheers from the flats around you, and outside the house. It is a pretty unusual experience.

I have to say this though, I wasn't that bothered about it as it started. I wouldn't have been at all concerned if England had withdrawn from the World Cup after the poisoning incident in Salisbury. I would have been quite happy with that. Actually, now this has all started, I'm quite enjoying it.

James Blatch: Well, it was very low expectation, we've had a few years of hurt in the UK. And I say the UK because even all my Scottish and Welsh friends are now rallying around England.

Nicky Campbell is a famous Scottish radio presenter who spent all day yesterday telling us how much he's an English supporter now. Everyone's backing them and of course I would absolutely follow and cheer for Ireland and Scotland and Wales if they were in the World Cup. Up until the point where they play England.

You mentioned Salisbury, which is unbelievably back in the news again. And the reason we talk about this world news event is because it's so close together and the sort of things you write about, and it's happening on your doorstep.

We had this, a bid to be a Russian-inspired or Russian-delivered poisoning, it's never been conclusively proved of the Skripals.

Mark Dawson: Skripals.

James Blatch: Skripals. And then what appears to be an innocent couple just picked up a file, thinking, "We should deal with this or throw it away," and it picked up. Novichok in it.

Mark Dawson: This is all very weird. I'm actually in my secondary office today and that way is my window. And in five minutes I can be in Queen Elizabeth Gardens, which is a very nice park. I often walk through, I have my daily walks. That's been closed now.

Slightly more concerning to me, it's always felt very close to home. What's slightly more concerning me, this kind of park is closed I think on Tuesday, Tuesday night or Wednesday morning and my daughter Freya had been in the park with her school for a picnic, like 12 hours before. And then woke up in the morning, saying she said she didn't feel well. That was slightly concerning, but she's fine.

It is very weird. I think the assumption at the moment is that this couple someone who is a registered heroin addict and an alcoholic came into their hostel, again, not too far from here. We're in the park, on the Friday before, I think, and the suggestion is that they picked up something that contained the nerve agent.

Possibly, speculation of course, possibly something that could have been discarded by the alleged assassins. And it is on the way to the railway station. So it's not impossible that they left it. It's possible that whoever it was left by train and on the way out just discarded, it seems very unprofessional. But they were already the worst assassins in the world.

This incredibly dangerous nerve agent hasn't killed anybody, despite infecting five people. Maybe they just chucked it. This wouldn't happen in any of my books. They would be much more professional than that.

James Blatch: Your assassins are a lot better.

Mark Dawson: It is weird, it's quite strange. Straight back to Salisbury, just as the town was feeling like it was going back to normal, people were coming back again. This is actually much more ... not frightening but it will be very worrying.

The Skripals, they were the targets, we suspect. With this couple, it could have been anybody. People are now saying, "Don't pick up anything in the street." It is all very, very strange, I'm not worried about it but it is ... I don't think this is good for Salisbury.

James Blatch: The other coincidence is that they live in Amesbury, that's where they fell ill in their house and Amesbury is where my novel is set. It's the village where the married quarters are for RAF Boscombe Down, which of course is not where my novel is set, for legal reasons. My novel is set in RAF Poscumbe Pown. I have West Porten.

It is just a little conspiracy-theorist, go a little bit further on this, it is even closer to Porten Down, which is the UK's center for all of this. And of course that's the rather convenient conspiracy theory that this was somehow the UK's responsibility.

Fascinating news story. Touch wood. We do thank our lucky stars that nobody has died from this and hopefully these two will recover from it. A true tale about drug abuse. I mean that's the ultimate punishment for going down that road. Anyway. There you go.

We're about to go off the sixth of July recording this, going out the 13th. On the 13th you and I will be in New York for ThrillerFest. You are

presenting pretty early in the morning, I noticed, looking at the program, I think 8:30 the next morning after the SPF drinks.

Mark Dawson: Oh yes that's true, that's a recipe for disaster.

James Blatch: What are you going to teach your fellow thriller writers?

Mark Dawson: Hangover recovery.

James Blatch: You're an expert?

Mark Dawson: Actually the slide's on another screen. "Eight Steps to Making a Living as an Indie Author."

James Blatch: Okay, good. And it's a mixed audience there. You get quite a lot of readers go to that festival by the looks of it. You'll certainly get a lot of trad, there, so it will be interesting what reception you'll get. We'll talk to you about that.

And I think you and I will take some time after your presentation, after that day to record an episode on ThrillerFest. We'll cover some of the topics that come up. Not just for thriller writers, but for all writers.

I'm off to a concert after this and then to fly, and John and I are going to be visiting some SPF alumni around the United States to descend on them with our cameras which is what happens when you're a successful member of our course. As an added ... I was going to say bonus, but it might be a ...

Mark Dawson: Reason to not be successful really.

James Blatch: Keep quiet about it. That's what I'd say. Busy times.

Now when we talk about this stuff, and by "this stuff," I mean independent editing, independent publishing, and to talk marketing that you espouse and talk about, we get two very commonly asked questions.

One is, "Does this work for nonfiction authors?"

And the other one is, "Does this work for children's authors?"

Now we deal with nonfiction quite a lot and we are living evidence, SPF itself is living evidence that nonfiction can thrive in the digital marketing world.

The children's authors is a more difficult one and one of the things is, I'm not a children's author and you're not, either, but we are surrounded by lots of people who are. We've had good contact, Depesh Mandalia on here in the past.

But they're starting to hold their hands up now and come to us and say, "I'm a children's author, I want to tell you how amazing the digital platform teaching that you're doing is, that you're talking on the podcast."

And so we've got two interviews in a row with children's authors. The idea behind this is to unpick how they've been successful using this. There's a spoiler alert from the beginning that AMS ads feature quite heavily with both of them.

So next week we're going to talk to Karen Inglis who's based in London, is a UK author of children's books and has gone as far as to put down all her methods and the way that she's been success with marketing into her own book called "How to Self-Publish and Market a Children's Book."

Before then we are talking to Laurie Wright who is in, I think she's in Canada from memory, I think I probably deal with that in the beginning of the interview. Laurie Wright is a children's author who is, again, has broken

through to that career-earning amount of money. We're going to hear how she did that. Mark and I will have a chat off the back.

James Blatch: Laurie, welcome to the Self Publishing Formula Podcast. It's great to have you along. You're forming part of a two-part special on children's books, because we do get asked a lot whether the sort of things that Mark talks about and others in this area talk about, in terms of Facebook advertising, AMS, BookBub: "Does this work for children's books?" We get asked this a lot.

Now, Mark isn't a children's author so we have to rely on testimony from people like yourself and Karen Inglis and so on. But let's talk about you, the success you've had in trying on, pick that a little bit which might be helpful to people listening.

### **Why don't you first tell us when you started and what you've published.**

Laurie Wright: I've currently published seven children's books, picture books. I started a year and a half ago. I was inspired when I was a kindergarten teacher.

I taught kindergarten for ten years, lots of motivation for helping kids there. I wrote the first book on and off for ten years. Of course, that was just before the advent of the Kindle and all the self-publishing movement. When you Googled, "How do I get published?" It was very overwhelming and very traditional.

I let that go and life continued. Fast forward ten years. I took one of many courses by Jennifer Sparks, who does a self-publishing course and my mind was lit up with the possibilities. I am a very impatient person. As soon as I understood the difference in timing between traditional and self-publishing, that was the deciding factor for me.

I was not waiting two to three years after waiting ten years to finally take that step. I hired an illustrator and did the very basic minimum, what-you-gotta-do to get it published. At that time that was the goal for me, was just to be published.

I published in September of 2016, my mom bought a copy, my sister bought a copy, my friends bought a copy, and nothing happened for about six months. I thought, "Well, that's how it goes." That's how it goes now, so many books now are published everyday on Amazon, I'll continue on with some speaking engagements, I speak at teacher's conferences, I did a TED talk last year.

Then I discovered AMS ads. And the world opened up.

James Blatch: Wow, how interesting. And not dissimilar from Karen's story as well. AMS ads has been the one platform that's probably performed the best for her.

By the way I love to hear it took you ten years to write your first book, that gives me some succour.

Laurie Wright: It's a kid's book, it's 24 pages.

James Blatch: That's like a century on that base. Tell us a little bit about the book. 24 pages.

**Children's books really come in such a variety. Some are basically picture books, others are text-heavy because they're for slightly older children. Where's yours?**

Laurie Wright: Mine's geared to anywhere from 3- to 8-year-olds. My 10-year-old will listen because he's in some of the books but otherwise it's much too young for him. They're very simple.

If you go to a book store, to the children's section, they're like works of art, right? They're gorgeous, gorgeous pictures. There's pop-ups and all these fancy things.

Mine are simple, simple, simple. Heavy on the faces, which of course people recognize and look for. Very simple language. They've been well-received. So it's working for my books.

James Blatch: That's really good, okay. The steps you took initially were the basic steps of publishing it and getting it on the platform and you didn't really do any marketing at that stage. This is 2016, right?

Laurie Wright: Yeah.

James Blatch: So, you started taking courses.

### **What was the journey to get to the point where AMS ads took off for you? What had you tried?**

Laurie Wright: I might have had a Facebook page, I don't remember when I started it. I definitely just had my personal page.

I was trying the route of going in to speak in classrooms and at schools to try to spread the word, "Look at this great book I have, here's a lot of resources to go along with it. I'm going to come in and teach your kids."

What I quickly found is that schools here in Canada anyway, I'll be specific, in Alberta, have no money. Very tight lockdown on the budgets, they don't have money for speakers, they don't have money for books, especially if it's coming from an outside influence. If the teachers bring it to the principals or the administrators or whatever, the librarians, then they're more likely to buy.

So what happened was, I had published just the paperback version. I was in the "20 Books to 50k" Facebook group and Brian Meeks started being more active and talking about e-books and AMS ad.

I was of the mindset, I'm a children's author, children don't read e-books, and on top of that, I don't believe that they should read e-books, little kids, 3- to 8-year olds. Why would I do that?

Anyway he was looking for beta sort of participants in his Facebook group so I joined because he's a great writer and he had me with every post. I joined the Facebook group and I really just watched and read and hung back.

I don't know what prompted me one day, maybe it was seeing other people's success, but I figured out how to turn the picture books into e-books and started writing ads.

When you publish with CreateSpace there's a \$100 threshold to get the check and I'm in Canada, so I was getting the checks, I didn't have a US bank account at that time. I got my \$100 check, I think, in November of 2016 because all my friends bought one, or some of my friends, my good friends.

I didn't get the \$100 check again, probably until March. However many books that is. Not many in that time.

Once I started running ads in April of 2017, I started selling five a day, ten a day, 25 a day. By August, it was 50 a day. And then by last fall it was close to 100 a day of that one first book that it took me 10 years to write.

All I did was AMS ads. Everything else I do, I do have an email list, I am not good at working it yet, I am not good at sending that out. I do have a Facebook page so I do post. I am on Instagram. I can't specifically draw a

line from any of those social media things to my sales but I definitely can from AMS ads.

James Blatch: Wow. What a fantastic upsurge, upturn in fortunes from that slow start. Congratulations on getting that. Obviously the book is good.

### **Describe the book to us a little bit. What's the story?**

Laurie Wright: It's actually really a concept book. The book stories is called "Mindful Mantras" and what I saw when I was teaching kindergarten is this learned helplessness, as a result, often, of parents helicopter parenting and also not having enough time to just let their kids try to solve their problems, make the mistakes, try to tie their shoes for ten minutes if they need to.

Kids came to me in kindergarten not knowing how to even to attempt to solve a problem. If they had a broken pencil, they would sit with a broken pencil, not get up, not go anywhere. They could sit for a long time if I didn't intervene.

This really bothered me. I still, 12 years later now, if I speak to teachers and say this whole thing started from this idea of learned helplessness I get a lot of head nods. It's still a problem, it's still happening.

The book is called "I Can Handle It". It just teaches kids, you can handle these everyday problems. I give them three solutions, the character does. A silly, a very silly, you would never do it, completely irrational, and then maybe a more rational solution. And every page is, "I can handle it. I can handle it. I can handle it. I can handle it. Can I handle it? I can handle it." It's been very well received.

James Blatch: That's really good. A self-help book for children. That taps into the feeling that my generation of parents have, which is the worry. I was probably the generation that was left to fend for themselves. We, I think, overcompensated as parents. That's an ongoing discussion we have.

Every dinner party I ever go to, we have that discussion about how much independence we give our children, and so on. You seem to have tapped into that, which is fantastic. A very worthy area to talk about.

I was going to ask about the school visits before we move on. I know Karen does those as well. The schools, as you say, is a familiar story. I can tell you the schools in the UK don't talk about having lots of money, either. They are on very, very tight budgets.

**Does that help in any way to spread the word about your book with parents and children? Are they worth it, basically?**

Laurie Wright: In my opinion, no. But I'll tell you how I assess what I do to promote my books. I have three kids at home, I'm the primary caregiver, everything has to be weighed out, like is my time worth it?

I'm actually in a small town south of Calgary so I could travel in my town fairly easily and I go to my kid's school, just for free, as a courtesy, go in and talk and do some teaching for them. The hour it would take to drive in to the city that's north of me, do whatever I'm going to do in the hour, come home, in my opinion, that time is much better spent doing marketing, making a new book, I do some videos to promote the books, all that kind of stuff.

It's not worth it, in my opinion. If they were to buy five books ... I sell 200 a day on amazon. So it's not worth it when I weigh it out. If somebody's just starting, maybe. In my opinion, no, for me, it's not worth it.

I have a lot of teacher friends and we're all on Facebook, so they know what I'm doing. The best has just been organic. People find the books, share the books. I just had an order come through for a preschool conference in the States, she ordered off my website, 200 books, and I said, "That's great!

What are you using them for?" It's for a preschool conference. I did nothing to market that.

James Blatch: That's really good.

### **You say it's a series of books now?**

Laurie Wright: Yes, there's six. Six? I think.

### **James Blatch: All of them are the same theme of tackling learned helplessness?**

Laurie Wright: Yeah. All the idea of just empowering children with these mantras. What happens is if they say it enough times, it becomes their self-talk. It becomes this positive self-talk, they internalize it, and when they encounter a problem, they say, "Okay, I will try. I can handle that. I will be okay." All that kind of stuff.

The mental health crisis is scary for me as a parent of young children. I do what I can. The books are all meant to try to boost a child's self-efficacy.

James Blatch: Let's talk about the successful area, then, of the advertising, of the paid ads, which is the AMS ads. Talk to me a little bit about the construction of your campaigns.

### **What aspect of AMS ads are you using? The language you're using and so on? What's worked for you?**

Laurie Wright: I tried the product display, which was really successful for Brian, that's who I learned from. They have never been successful for me.

So I do sponsor products, which is keywords. I usually run an auto one, which is where they pick your keywords, and I do one where I pick my own keywords.

I run two for each book usually, to start, and see where they go. I will say, the past couple months, it seems like it's gotten much more difficult to be successful, my bids have had to go up, my cost per click.

In the beginning, I think the automatic one is 25 cents, so I would do 25 cents. And it wasn't ever very successful. When I bid 30 to 35 cents, I wind up paying 20 to 24 cents, usually, at the highest per click. They get seen more when my initial bid is up, 30 to 35 cents.

So my copy, is ... I am addressing parents usually, "Does your child have this problem? Do you want your child to be self-confident?" That kind of thing. I try to keep it short and punchy and relevant to that area of emotional health.

James Blatch: The keywords means that you're targeting parents who are already searching on those types of topics, as opposed to parents who already are looking at other children's books that you want to pop up alongside.

Laurie Wright: Funny story. As one of my best keywords for the first book was "book book".

James Blatch: "Book book"?

Laurie Wright: Book book. You do the auto, it does its thing, you have no idea what keywords Amazon is using. You do the manual ones and they suggest.

And so when I was just starting out I was just yeah I'll do all what you suggest, you guys know what you're doing. Yes, I'm just going to click all of what you suggested. And then you go back in in a day or two and you look at what's performing. And the best one for a long time was book book. Also, book book book (laughs).

James Blatch: Sounds like children are typing on the keyboard.

Laurie Wright: Bizarre, right? (laughs) Who would be typing in "bookbook"? I don't know, I can't explain it. I can just tell you it sometimes works for me. "Children's books," "kid's books," those ones are all very generic so they don't seem to work as well.

So, targeting other authors that are in my same area of mental health and book titles, but also words like "feelings," "emotions," "anxiety," "depression for kids."

James Blatch: That sounds good and that technique is a good one. I thought of using auto-generated keywords and then going back.

I do the same thing for the campaigns I run for SPF, on ad words, I allow Google to come up with this 50-odd keywords, some of which you look at and think there's no way I would normally be running those. Give the data a chance to roll in and then you can go back and start switching some off and actually upping the bids on, as you say, surprising keywords that produce a result.

There is a bit of art to this, as well as science, right? A bit of trial and error.

Laurie Wright: Trial and error for sure. Luck. I don't know.

### **James Blatch: Are you full-time doing this?**

Laurie Wright: I am now. Yeah. I have one at home, one 3-year-old, so I put him in the day home one day a week. As my book started selling, he started going in the day home more and more, more and more days a week.

I'm sure as the case with many stay-at-home moms, primary caregivers, you feel like you're stealing time, you're stealing this half-hour, this ten minutes,

where can I get at my computer to download the reports, or check them or do whatever.

I didn't like that. Once I was able to afford it, because of my sales, he went into the day home full time and so from about 9 to 3 is my working hours. And then I get the kids and then almost every evening I go back and I'm back doing things on the computer for the books.

But it's also super enjoyable so I really enjoy it. It's full time, it's not like a job. It's so much better than regular jobs.

James Blatch: I had a very different experience. I understand it's really difficult to write a good children's book. I do sometimes think it's a bit like running a pub. People think "Oh, that'd be a lovely thing to start, I'd love to run a pub." And then they have six months of it and realize how awful it is.

I think children's books sometimes people start writing children's books, thinking, for a start, your word count, as you say, is 24 pages, not 100,000 words. It gives the impression that this must be a little bit easier on you. But it's actually really difficult to a good children's book written and selling, so you've done a great job there.

What the interesting thing for us, I think, is particularly zoning in on AMS ads, this is the one. We know the platform's good anyway because it gets people at the point at which they're ready to buy. They're already on the sales platform, rather than they might be browsing other people's pictures of dinner on a social media platform, in which case, you've got to kind of transition across.

And I suppose let's talk about the mail list a little bit.

**You're thinking about the mail list and starting that process. I'm guessing it hasn't worked tremendously well so far for you or have you just not put the effort in yet?**

Laurie Wright: I feel like I'm still quite a beginner. And in the beginning I was really naïve about everything. I didn't have the first clue. What I did learn from that first course with Jennifer Sparks was to put a link on the back of the books to a lesson plan, to gather the emails. I've done that right from day one.

My list is maybe 800, 900 people, and on every book, I offer a parent resource, a teacher lesson plan, and I've had a song made for every book on Fiverr, a little 30 second jingle with the mantra, I get my illustrator to do a coloring page, so I do have things to send out in the emails.

What I never really did was sell to them. What I started doing in February was asking for beta readers of my next book. Maybe it's not beta, maybe it's ARC, I don't know. It's once it's already done.

I wasn't asking them just to look at the words, I was asking them to look at the whole book once it was already done. The book that I did that for first came out of the gates blazing. I asked them to give me a review on a certain day, 40 people got the book, 10 people gave me a review when I asked them to. That book recouped the illustration costs within two weeks and did really, really well.

I've tried to continue that with who's willing to read it. I don't have a certain team. I just go to all the mailing list, all 900, and just say "Who wants to read this book? This is what it's about, this is the character. Who's willing to read it, give me their feedback, and write a review?" That's really helped my last four books to come out of the gate stronger.

**James Blatch: How many people have you got in the mailing list now?**

Laurie Wright: I'd say still like 900ish, maybe not quite.

James Blatch: One of the issues with children's books is that you're writing for a specific age, or a fairly narrow band, you say up to about eight or ten is probably too old. Obviously, the logical problem here is that children get older and not every parent on your list has another child behind it to come up and still make that relevant to them.

**You face this problem unique, I think, to children's authors, which is that you've got a lifespan of a couple of years potentially.**

Laurie Wright: I'll let you know.

James Blatch: I don't want to sound negative, I'm an individual on your list. You have this rich vein of two years when they're all over you, and then it becomes irrelevant to them. Unless you decide you're going to write a preteen book, and then a teen book, a series of those various levels which might be quite convenient.

Laurie Wright: I have started a chapter book series. What happened was that there's a local lady who found me on Instagram. She sent me an email and she said, "This is so weird but we're like twins. I was a teacher, I'm a self-published author, I live in your town."

So we got together for coffee and I told her about this idea I had for a chapter book, but a lower-level chapter book. So for kids who are maybe seven to ten, early readers.

We don't want them reading about boyfriends and frenemies, and stuff like that, which if you're an early reader, often, you're stuck with these later books that are a little bit too advanced maturity-wise.

We planned out this four-book series of chapter books and I really wanted to try the method of just e-books and marketing with e-books. Anyway, she's a fantastic illustrator and it's going a little bit slower than we had

originally intended, so I do only have the one chapter book out and published yet. And that's a much harder sell than it seems.

James Blatch: But it is an e-book.

Laurie Wright: It is an e-book and a picture book. The e-book does not move very much at all. I've been amazed at my picture books. I sell on average 40 a day. I have seven out, well, 6 of the picture books, about 40 a day sell. Above 1,000 page reads, which to me, is astonishing how many people are reading e-books with their kids.

James Blatch: That is the ebook version.

Laurie Wright: That's the e-books.

**James Blatch: You're using CreateSpace for the physical book?**

Laurie Wright: I am. Yeah.

James Blatch: Good. Well this has been obviously a fantastic story for you and I hope it is going to, or is giving some optimism to people who are plugging away in this field and want a piece of the action. They want to be one of these authors who's posting successful results online.

But I think because they're doing children's books that they're at a significant disadvantage. But we're starting to hear more and more stories from people like yourself who've found a way and the AMS ads platform is certainly part of that story, isn't it?

Laurie Wright: Yeah, absolutely.

**James Blatch: What's next for you? Are you thinking about those older children's books or are you gonna keep going on your own?**

Laurie Wright: I'm going to finish that series. I have quite a few more children's books in the Mindful Mantra series planned.

What I like to read is Cozy Mysteries so honestly I loved to try my hand at writing that. I think I'm not a great writer. I just had a concept that works and resonates with people and has been really effective for the kids that read the books. So I'm not sure how a novel would go, but it's something I'd like to try for sure.

I think a substitute teacher that finds bodies. Right? I think there's a lot of potential for funny stories there.

James Blatch: Maybe it's the other substitute teacher. I'm already thinking this could work for you.

Laurie Wright: It's the secretary.

James Blatch: My final question just occurred to me, just about the economics of children's books which is a little bit different from simply putting words into a ether. It's all digital.

**The deal you do with the illustrator, is that a bit like a cover designer, you're paying one-off fees for the illustrations? Some children's books are so predominantly based on the illustrations that there's a split in authorship.**

Laurie Wright: Right. When I first started out, that was the biggest thing. I didn't know how to do, was how do I get it illustrated. And then I found Fiverr, which so many people know about but I didn't know about.

I went through the process of vetting a lot of illustrators and found one. On Fiverr you pay them for the work and you own the work. That's how that's happened.

My illustrations are very simple. When I talk about going to bookstore and a lot of children's books are works of art, that's not the category mine falls in to. Mine is very simple, appealing for a different reason, then, to children. I think what people have said to me is "The words you use, this conversation happened in my house, today with my child." It really resonates with kids and parents because it's their everyday life. I have three kids so I have lots of inspiration for that.

James Blatch: It's functional, it does its job rather than goes on the wall. That's fine and I think the clever thing about your books is it's self-help for children. But actually it's self-help, it's helpful for adults because, for parents, having a more independent child who solves their own problems and doesn't say, "Mummy! Daddy!" the whole time is a positive thing.

Laurie Wright: As a parent, like you said you go to dinner parties and you're always questioning, "Am I doing the right thing? Did I do this right? What did you do? How would you have handled this?" To give parents the words to use to have the conversation with their children, I think, is really powerful and helpful.

James Blatch: And you write under Laurie Wright?

Laurie Wright: I do. I was not clever enough to have a pen name.

James Blatch: No need, no reason to, I'm not going to either. That's great.

Laurie Wright: When I start killing people, maybe-

James Blatch: Yeah, maybe those genres don't necessarily overlap. They definitely shouldn't. Thank you so much for joining us from Canada, from Alberta. It's been a pleasure talking to you and in this little mini look at, focus and spotlight on children's books. But I think also the whole AMS side of things shows people that there is a very fruitful platform out there for authors.

Laurie Wright: Absolutely. Yes. You can do it!

James Blatch: You can do it. There you go. That positive message.

Laurie Wright: You can do it.

James Blatch: And you can do it by yourself without asking for help.

Laurie Wright: Maybe a little bit of help.

James Blatch: A little bit. I do know a couple courses that might help. Thank you very much indeed, Laurie.

Laurie Wright: You're welcome, thank you.

James Blatch: So, Laurie Wright, yes, Alberta, Canada. I've done a lot of interviewing this week, so they've gotten a bit confusing.

Really nice to chat to her and inspiring story because it's what we always like to see, kind of an everyday person like you or me sitting in their kitchen, saying, "This is now what I do, I write for a living." Has been enabled by this digital revolution. And you can do it with children's books, Mark.

Mark Dawson: You can, yeah. We've had a few come through the course. It is more difficult because you're marketing to someone other than the reader. That's a challenge you need to get around.

But it's entirely possible, it's not as if these are unique problems that have only recently become evident when it comes to selling books for children. It's a very, very big industry, and that's what traditional publishing has had to wrestle with for as long as they've been selling children's books.

So we have those same problems. The difference is we have new tools to use and we're probably slightly better at using them than most of the traditional rivals. I'm not at all surprised to see people having success using AMS ads.

James Blatch: Part two of this miniseries is next week we've Karen Inglis, so join us for that and I hope that it's all of value, I'm sure it is of value, not just children's authors, as always you can listen to someone who writes and sells thrillers, and learn a lot from them even if your genre is romance and so on. We do put the spotlights on one of these areas occasionally. So Karen Inglis next week.

I should just say we got in a couple of weeks we are going to choose our next book lab victim off the Helena Halme, who was covered last week from where I'm standing now. The day I'm standing now actually. You need to be an SPF Patreon gold lever subscriber. It's just \$3 an episode to support us at that level and you can do that at [patreon.com/spfpodcast](https://patreon.com/spfpodcast).

Good luck to England in the World Cup final on Sunday.

Mark Dawson: I want Sweden to win.

James Blatch: Shut up, no you don't. England may or may not be in the World Cup final this weekend. If they are, we are going to be utterly beside ourselves.

Mark Dawson: We will be in New York when that happens.

James Blatch: We will be in New York, I think it's on a Sunday. What time is your flight to wherever you're going?

Mark Dawson: Oh my goodness, I'll be on the train. I'm on a train to Boston.

James Blatch: What time?

Mark Dawson: Mid afternoon.

James Blatch: I think you're alright because it's going to be in the morning because they're ahead of us, aren't they, in the US?

Mark Dawson: Oh no, it's Sunday.

James Blatch: Four o'clock, I think that's local time, I think that's British summer time, so four, three, two, one, twelve, that's eleven o'clock in the morning.

Mark Dawson: Right okay, I better check that out. That's going to be interesting.

James Blatch: I like the fact we're planning for England being the World Cup final.

Mark Dawson: Yeah, hilarious.

James Blatch: Come on, England!

Mark Dawson: That's the Nike batch.

James Blatch: Come on Nike, commercial sponsorship. Okay, that's it, we'll stop going on about football after this, I promise. Thank you very much indeed for joining us. We'll speak to you again with Karen Inglis next week. Bye bye.

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