



EPISODE 152: MEET THE 2018 KINDLE STORYTELLER AWARD WINNER – WITH HANNAH LYNN

Speaker 1: On this edition of the Self-Publishing Show.

Hannah Lynn: Now that we look at how we did things and now that we're trying to do things from a marketing way, we're just like, aah. You look back on yourself and you learn from your mistakes, don't you?

Speaker 1: Publishing is changing; no more gatekeepers, no more barriers, no one is standing between you and your readers. Do you want to make a living from your writing? Join Indie best seller, Mark Dawson and first-time author James Blatch as they shine a light on the secrets of self-publishing success. This is the Self-Publishing Show; there's never been a better time to be a writer.

James Blatch: Hello and welcome to the Self-Publishing Show, yes, with me, James Blatch.

Mark Dawson: And me, Mark Dawson.

James Blatch: Here we are now where we all talk casting our mind back, Mark, to a night that you and I spent with Jamie Lee Curtis, earlier in the summer, for this episode.

Mark Dawson: Oh God, that sounds terrible. Well, apparently, she was there; I didn't see her. We were in a hotel ... This gets worse. We were in a hotel in London, The Queensway, which is a very nice hotel. We had a drink with ... I was there with Louise Ross and Mel Sherrat was there, and Joseph Alexander, all of whom have been on the podcast, and you were there as well.



And someone, after we'd left and gone to an award show, which we'll talk about in a moment, said, "Do you know Jamie Lee Curtis was sitting behind you," and I didn't know at all. I didn't see her at any point. Which goes to show when I'm talking to someone, they get my full attention.

James Blatch: Yeah. Well, you're not very observant.

Mark Dawson: All that. Yeah, or possibly a little drunk. Any one of the three.

James Blatch: I did see her. She was sitting where we were originally sitting because we got moved and we got very politey.

Mark Dawson: Outrageous.

James Blatch: No, we were very politely told and we said, "Actually, we're quite happy here." And he goes, "No, no, I think I'd like you to move."

Mark Dawson: And then they didn't serve us for three quarters of an hour. Or did they did not know who I am.

James Blatch: Yeah, I thought that was a nice hotel. They did upgrade your room to an enormous suite.

Mark Dawson: We did. Yes, without bragging too much we were upgraded. We checked in and they said, "The room you booked has ... we've sold them all out but the good news is we've upgraded you to a suite." And I looked online, afterwards, and no kidding the suite starts at £8,000 a night. So it was the most expensive hotel room I've ever been in and it was very nice. We were in there for a very short time.

James Blatch: Yeah.

Mark Dawson: Who's laughing now?

James Blatch: Yeah, exactly. Well, probably her and the millions she and Christopher Guest have.



Anyway, she was there and she was sitting just by the door when we walked out. It was fun to see her but the reason I mentioned it, that that was not the main point of the evening, it was the Amazon Storyteller Awards night.

I took the opportunity to go down and talk to Louise Ross, which the podcast episode we've broadcast and you went along and I think Louise was one of the judges of that.

Mark Dawson: She was.

James Blatch: And you went along to the ceremony and today's episode of the Self-Publishing Show is an interview with the winner.

But before we do that let's just remind you that if you'd like to support the Self-Publishing Show, you can go to patron.com/selfpublishingshow. And that's a great thing to do because it gets you into the book club and we always get great feedback on the book club episodes such as last week's, and a great thing for anybody to have that amount of expertise thrown at them.

And we should also say that we are gradually moving over to selfpublishingshow.com as our new URL. So at the moment they redirect to our existing site, so they are the ones to use.

Hannah Lynn, did you get a chance to speak to Hannah very much in the evening Mark?

Mark Dawson: Well, not actually on the evening but one of the prizes that she got from being the storyteller winner apart from I think £20,000 or £25,000, a pretty decent price, she got to be mentored by some indie authors of her choosing. And she actually chose me and Louise Ross.

So, I went to London about a month after the awards and spent a couple of hours with her and her husband talking about marketing and promotion, and advertising, and all that kind of stuff. Louise then had the afternoon with her and we went out for lunch together.



PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

So we I've spent several hours with them since Hannah won. And she's lovely, a really good writer and you can tell that they work together, a husband and wife team, with regards to the promotion and the marketing, and the writing, all that kind of stuff. So it was very interesting to talk to her and to wish her well, and I think she's going to do quite well in the next few years.

James Blatch: She is. Okay, so the top prize for the winner was a day with you and the second prize was two days with you? That's horrible.

Mark Dawson: Is this a family friendly podcast or can I tell you to leave?

James Blatch: Hey, it's Christmas time.

Mark Dawson: No, it's not.

James Blatch: Yeah, well, it's after Christmas, it's between Christmas and New Year, still Christmas time.

Okay, let's hear from Hannah Lynn then Mark and I will have a quick chat off the back.

James Blatch: Hannah Lynn, welcome to the podcast.

Hannah Lynn: Thank you very much.

James Blatch: You're very up against the wall in this. That's okay. It's just as long as you are ... That's why I asked you, just before we came on air, are you comfortable?

Hannah Lynn: I am comfortable. My daughters were at their grandparents, but I chose my daughter's bedroom because it was just a little bit softer. And, like I said, I was worried about echoiness, so I thought sitting on her bed, surrounded by endless soft toys, seemed like a good idea.

James Blatch: Sounds like a perfect place to be. So you're more than comfortable, frankly?



Hannah Lynn: I'm more than comfortable, yeah. I've got badges of all sorts to keep me company.

James Blatch: Well, the first thing we should say to you is congratulations because you are the winner of the Amazon Storyteller Awards, which is fantastic. Well done.

Hannah Lynn: Thank you. Thank you very much. Yes, it's very exciting.

James Blatch: Just tell us how that came about.

Hannah Lynn: It came by as a rather large surprise. We released my new novel, or a previous novel, *The Afterlife of Walter Augustus*, in the summer and when we uploaded it there was the option of entering it into the Storyteller Award.

I didn't think too much of it because I didn't think I had much chance. My husband, however, thought, "Yes, we're going for that." And then I received an email in September just telling me that I had been selected as a finalist. So that was a big surprise to that stage and then actually winning it was a complete next to crazy from further.

James Blatch: So you went along on the night and I couldn't make the ceremony. Funny enough, I was there beforehand to do some recording with Louise Ross and we had a few drinks in the company of Jamie Lee Curtis, as you happened to be in our hotel bar, then they all went off to the award ceremony.

I missed the opportunity to meet you that night but I know that you spent a bit of time with Mark on that night and then subsequently, with a bit of mentoring, I guess, on the marketing side from Mark?

Hannah Lynn: Well, yes. Because, to be honest, as a self-publisher I do a lot with my husband, but we are finding our way.

James Blatch: Okay.



Hannah Lynn: We are trying to work things out as we go. So to have Mark there one-to-one is every self-publisher's dream.

James Blatch: He's useful, isn't he?

Hannah Lynn: I felt very fortunate. Yes.

James Blatch: Okay. Well, let's talk about your book or your book ground, that's my new word for the background about your books.

Hannah Lynn: I like it.

James Blatch: All right, so let's go with that. So your book grounds.

Afterlife of Walter Augustus was the award-winning book; Amendments, I think, is your latest book.

Hannah Lynn: It was my first. That was my debut novel.

James Blatch: Oh, *Amendments* is your first, is it?

Hannah Lynn: Yes.

James Blatch: Ah, okay. Okay. And then you've also had *Peas, Carrots and an Aston Martin* and *Peas, Carrots and a Red Feather Boa*, which are great titles.

Hanna: Yes. Thank you. Yeah, those are the latest ones.

James Blatch: Are these all standalone? Obviously, *Peas, Carrots* is a series, a miniseries, of two, is that right?

Hannah Lynn: It will be more. So there are more in the works on the *Peas* and *Carrots*.

Amendments is the first of a series. It was the first book I wrote and it's a difficult concept. It's got a time travel but not time travel element to it. It's



what I like to think of a passion project. It gets there over time. It takes a long time to get there.

James Blatch: Well, I think it's a brilliant concept and we should tell people what the concept is. The concept of *Amendments* is in your life, as long as you've registered, I think on your 21st birthday, you have an opportunity to amend up to two aspects of your life.

You just get this one chance to amend those two, which you can take at any point after your 21st birthday.

Hannah Lynn: Yes. So you can send an envelope to your former self, at any point, with a short messaging like, "Don't get on the bus," or, "I will meet Jeffrey somewhere," but you don't know when you sent the envelope. So you don't know if something happened the day before and you sent it straight back to yourself or if you lived with whatever the consequence was for decades and decades until you reached your 80s and went, "Actually, do you know what? Now, that's the one thing I'd change." So you have no idea.

And I think it's an interesting concept because it's one of those where I think a lot of us would think, "Oh, we'll wait. We'll wait and see how life pans out."

But actually, faced with it how easy would that be to live with something when you knew you had the option to change it? And then, of course, just because you amend something that doesn't stop somebody else making a different amendment which will, therefore, contradict yours. And it ends up in a web of not necessarily knowing where to go.

James Blatch: Yeah, absolutely. Then the classic intriguing elements that you need for a novel and I've already been telling that over in my mind about you can wait. Obviously, it'd be a disaster if you made your amendments and then got hit by a bus and a had a catastrophic injury for



the rest of your life. I think actually that would be, "I've used my amendments now, so I can't do that."

On the other hand, "That's unlikely to happen." And is there any point in amending things when you're 80, where you haven't got your life to live, where you can make a positive change in your 20s?

This is just one of those things where you're jogging or walking along one day and just starting to think 'what if'.

Hannah Lynn: Yeah, I was living in Kuala Lumpur actually when I had the idea. I had just moved there and we were in an apartment with a lovely view, a really lovely view, no furniture, no curtains but a lovely view.

I just remember thinking, "What decisions in my life have I got that have taken me here and is there anything that I could have changed that would have not led here or would I have still ended up here anyway?" And that was the, "Okay, this is a book."

James Blatch: So fate is something that ... this place with the idea of whether fate exists or not, whether however many times you change things in the past, you always end up at the same place anyway?

Hanna: Yes. And I think, what's intriguing about it, or interesting about it is, I think everybody has that 'what would be your two amendments?' You could ask anybody, what would be theirs and there's nobody who wouldn't think over that question.

Even if the answer, I'm sure is, "Well, I'm happy where I am. I wouldn't change anything." You still got those 'maybe' ... "Maybe if I'd just done this or just tried that." Yeah, it can appeal to anyone in that sense.

James Blatch: Now when did you write *Amendments*?

Hannah Lynn: I published *Amendments* in 2015, just a couple of months after my daughter was born, which was chaos.



James Blatch: Yes, I can imagine.

Hannah Lynn: But I thought, "I've gotta do it now." So I had a newborn and trying to get all of that sorted but it had been a few years in the work before that.

James Blatch: And so the genesis of the idea came standing in a furniture-less flat, staring at a nice view in Kuala Lumpur?

Hannah Lynn: Yes.

James Blatch: Where did the book writing motivation come from? Is this something long-held by you or something you just decided to do?

Hannah Lynn: *Amendments* is the first novel I have put out there, it is not the first novel I have tried to write or have written. In the same way that *Walter* is my second one out there on my computer are countless drafts, first draft, second draft, I get to third and still don't feel it's quite right.

I've always been interested in writing. I've always been writing but *Amendments* is the first time that it all just came together. And the end product I was like, "Actually, I can carry on working with this. I can keep improving and keep editing."

Whereas the few times I've got to the end and gone, "I'm not sure I made that quite right."

James Blatch: But before you got to the point of being happy with *Amendments*, to publish it, were you writing with a view to publishing or were you writing as a hobby, part thinking these will never see the light of day?

Hannah Lynn: Dreaming about them seeing the light of day. But whether or not they would, I think, was ... it's one of those, "Yes, I'd love to do that but can I and am I good enough?" And those kinds of things, sort of.



James Blatch: Before *Amendments*, did any of your novels get to editor phase?

Hannah Lynn: No. Before *Amendments*, they got to the second draft staged and then they could just be pulled apart too easily.

I have a wonderfully critical husband who will pull everything apart to the nth degree; which at the time does not make for a happy marriage, but I think when it comes to actually the quality of books that's then presented as important.

James Blatch: Yeah. But *Amendments* did go to edit before you published?

Hannah Lynn: Yes.

James Blatch: Okay. And then you published it ...

So your first novel, self-published, did you go to agents? Did you write any query letters or ...?

Hannah Lynn: I didn't because at the time I was living in Asia and we didn't know if I could write as well. There's one of those, in my head, "These ideas are great and innovative and my writing's not too horrific." But you never know if that's just you.

Although I will remember forever the first time I handed this, *Amendments*, to my husband and he sat in bed and I handed him a paper copy. He just read it and went, "It's not actually bad."

James Blatch: Praise indeed.

Hannah Lynn: Thank you darling. Thank you. So because of where we were living and the situation and we read up about self-publishing and thought, "Well that seems like a really good idea. Let's see how it's received and if people understand where I'm coming from and also the writing style and then take it from there." So that's what we did.



James Blatch: It's first person, I think.

Hannah Lynn: Yes. Yes it is.

James Blatch: Yeah, all the way through. Okay. And so you've got a great cover, actually, and you uploaded it.

I don't know if that's the original cover, is it ... on Amazon today?

Hannah Lynn: It's not the original cover. No, the one on there isn't. It was actually just a case of the quality of the image with the original cover and going to the print format as well is why we changed it. Yes, so hopefully it's reflective of the theme.

James Blatch: And did you market it initially? What happened?

Hannah Lynn: Very little marketing. Like I said, I had just had my daughter, so we did a few tweets, put it out on these promotional sites, again, just with the idea of seeing whether or not people were receptive to it and to my writing.

Now that we look at how we did things and now that we're trying to do things from a marketing way, we're just like, "Aaah." You look back on yourself and you learn from your mistakes, don't you?

James Blatch: Well, if only you had an envelope you could send yourself too.

Hannah Lynn: Exactly, exactly. If I had an envelope, there's a good chance that marketing tips would be in it.

James Blatch: Listen, most of the very, very successful, financially successful and other successful, authors we speak to have the same couple of sentences where they say, "Well, I uploaded it and strangely nothing happened and I don't know why. Now I laugh at myself."

Hannah Lynn: Yeah.



James Blatch: But everyone starts like that and that's a great thing about self-publishing. It's a journey of discovery.

Hannah Lynn: Definitely.

James Blatch: Did it sell at all at the beginning?

Hannah Lynn: Yeah. I mean, not big numbers ... small really. My father-in-law buys a lot and we did free downloads and the free promotions so they were really successful. So at the said at the time we weren't looking at writing necessarily full time and, then, it was a hobby and a 'wouldn't it be lovely if'.

And also the genre of *Amendments* ... I think, now, New Adult is referred to quite a lot but when we published that three or four years ago, it wasn't. It was ... it's an awkward 21 year old protagonist in there and it was a case of, "I want to write this story. If people want to read that story and people enjoy that story, that's great."

But it was written for me as, "This is the story I want to tell." I didn't have a marketing mind, I wasn't thinking about how it would be marketed and how marketable it would be. I was just like, "I want to write this story."

I think you can tell that in, sort of, how this genre doesn't necessarily fit cleanly into a genre or how the protagonist doesn't. But in that kind of weakness, I also think there comes strengthen in the stories because, like *Walter*, it's the story I wanted to write therefore my passion, within it, comes through. I hope.

James Blatch: Yeah. I know, absolutely and it's a great start for a book and funny enough the editor I'm working with now her first and most important question to me is "Why do you need to tell this story?" It was not, "What genre do you think this is going to be most successful in?"



She wanted to know where it came from and why I was writing it; and that's when she made her judgment whether it was going to be a good book or not as well as what were my motivations for writing it.

So that's exactly why it's probably a good book. I meet people all the time who have clinically chosen a genre to write in for commercial reasons and are going great guns and enjoying doing that. So there's no ... or you have to write what is not true. You can do all sorts of ways.

So *Amendments*, which is intriguing and all that writing you did, all that drafting you did, was for a purpose.

Because, as people say, the more you write, the more you find your voice. And that first book, the great failing of most but not failing of it; one of the catch 22s, to quote a famous book, of the first novel is you don't have the word count behind you to be at ease in your own writing.

It was you'd actually put yourself, probably, there just through these multiple drafts, which is great.

Hannah Lynn: I don't know if I was there, completely happy with it. And still there are times when ... because I like to change genres because I've got stories that I want to tell, I'm not sure about it.

But I trash an awful lot. I get to 60,000 or 70,000 and just go, "No. Actually it's gone." And I think that one of the most useful things I can do for myself is be able to acknowledge where my writing's working and what I liked the sound of as opposed to when I'm just trying to write.

James Blatch: So you then started looking into the marketing side a bit more seriously with *Amendments*.

Did *Amendments* become a profitable book for you?

Hannah Lynn: No, no, no.



James Blatch: What a shame because it's such a great book ... well, even to this day,

Hannah Lynn: Even to this day.

James Blatch: Okay.

Hannah Lynn: That's not to say that it couldn't be in the future. I think one of its strengths is that it is not time ... it is not of a particular ... What's the word? I've forgotten. Here's the writing element.

You pick it up in four years' time, it's not going to matter. It's not specific to a decade or an era.

James Blatch: Timeless?

Hannah Lynn: Yeah. So, hopefully, in the future there may be some profit in the book there. It would be nice because I am proud of it.

James Blatch: Do you feel, then, that *The Afterlife of Walter Augustus* is a much better quality book compared to *Amendments*? As a writer, you've shown your improvement in that?

Hannah Lynn: I feel I get more confident in each book I'm writing. And I said my husband and my father-in-law recently read through *Peas, Carrots and a Red Feather Boa* and were just like, "This feels like we've got it. Like you're happy and you've got your voice and you're just writing away with it." Which, obviously, is a lovely thing to hear.

Walter was interesting in that it only took me 17 days to write the first draft of *Walter* because I knew what I wanted to write so much.

I then took two years to redraft it to a state where I was happy with it. I don't think it's perfect. There are things I look back on and go, "Oh my, that could be tightened up and this, that and the other." But I also wonder if there would ever be a stage where I would look at it and go, "It's perfect."



James Blatch: I know. Well, there is a quote that I came up with quite often on this program, which I think is Francis Ford Coppola saying that any creative project is never completed, it's just abandoned at some point.

Hannah Lynn: Yeah, I agree with that.

James Blatch: I think he said that about filmmaking where, I think, it works.

But *Walter* has a best seller tag. Right? So *Walter* has been doing well.,

Hannah Lynn: *Walter* has been doing okay. It's plodding along. I mean, we are still very little leagues. I'm a little league self-publisher and winning this award has been great.

And, also, I hope great for other people to see that I am not a big selling author and but that doesn't mean I can't write good books; maybe I will get there or maybe I won't. But the fact of how many I'm published, or how many I'm selling doesn't necessarily reflect that it's not too bad, it's not too shabby a job.

James Blatch: So *Peas, Carrots and...* Tell us about this series.

Hannah Lynn: So this series, I had an idea about an allotment. We finally got an allotment this year which is the first time or that would have been great if I'd had it whilst I was writing the book as opposed to afterwards. I mean, it's something I've always wanted.

But I know from my family growing veg and all that about the amount of hard work that goes into it. I have no idea why I was waiting for a lift to work one day and I was thinking about the allotment and about what if someone had to do an allotment and was made to work in allotment.

Why would they be made to work in an allotment? And by the time I'd got to work, on my phone, I'd got a brief outline of where I was going to go with it. It was different because everything else I had written had a slightly, not necessarily supernatural but other worldly or element to it. And this was



just, "I just quite want to write a nice story about a man who inherited an allotment." And I went with that.

James Blatch: And this is going to be a series but I know less about these books so you have to fill me in.

And you said is it the same character through each or is the allotment...?

Hannah Lynn: It's the same character. So what happens is Eric Sibley is not given the inheritance he expects from his father and the only thing he does inherit, of any monetary value, is the beloved Aston Martin. And that comes with the condition that he has to attend to his father's allotment every week for two years and only when he's managed to have those two years does the car officially become his.

But Eric is already up to his eyes in work and all that comes with that and trying to juggle family life so he goes through a series of escapades in trying to avoid actually tending to the allotment to start with and then, hopefully, reaching a point where it's not too much of a chore.

James Blatch: What's your audience for this? Have you planned this one a more commercially?

Hannah Lynn: It's definitely more commercial. I think the older ... when I say older that's me involved but, sort of, you're mid 30s and up wards, the age where you're excited about getting your allotments and how many tomatoes you get off your plants. It's suited to that at age and upwards?

Yeah, I think there's definitely more commercial elements to that then in *Amendments*; not necessarily *Walter* but, see, *Walter* is a bit of a tricky one to classify.

James Blatch: But then some are very successful where you think about some of the traditionally published books that are very successful are standalones, aren't they?



For genre fiction it's, as we know from Mark's teachings, more of a whole, more of a slog to make it commercially viable.

So you're on your way now in terms of building up a back catalog, which regardless of it not necessarily being one series, it's linked by you as an author.

And, so, hopefully as *Walter* picks up, have you noticed sales going back to *Amendments*?

Hannah Lynn: Yeah, there have been a couple of going back to *Amendments*. And because we had no idea that I would, A, be nominated and B, be a finalist for the competition or win it, we'd actually put piece release date on the day after *Walter* and then had some, sort of, giveaways and things on there.

People who like *Peas*, I think, have a ... there's a good link between the feeling of *Peas* and the feeling of *Walter* and then the concept of *Walter* and the concept of *Amendment*. So there is that. You can tell it's me going through that, I think is the ...

James Blatch: Do you get to use the award for marketing purposes?

Hannah Lynn: In what sense?

James Blatch: Do you get a badge that goes on the front of your book that says Amazon Storyteller Award or ...?

Hannah Lynn: I have not got a badge. I would like a badge. I may, possibly, ask if there is any form of badge I can use. We have got it on the front that says winner of, but it is something where we need to look at.

James Blatch: I think you should get a badge with a ribbon and you could wear it out.

Hannah Lynn: Just all the time.



James Blatch: -in the evenings.

Hannah Lynn: I got this lovely little gold plaque but after that what was the most exciting thing was seeing my name printed on this little gold plaque because I'm like, "It isn't a mistake. They actually did do that. They didn't just read out the wrong name, it's here in black and gold."

James Blatch: And gone through the effort of engraving, it must be real.

Hannah Lynn: Yeah, it must be real. So that was brilliant.

James Blatch: In terms of marketing now, Hannah, what are you up to? What are you doing?

Hannah Lynn: We are trying to get ready for a, sort of, Christmas push. *Peas* is a series we know that ... and I say for both. That series in itself, hopefully, has got more marketability and will help feed into the others.

The things like classifying the genre of *Walter* was something I learned from the others. Where it is now, I don't think it's particularly marketable. I need to look at how to make it more appealing because it is a mainstream fiction book. It is very much your book club book but it doesn't fit into the typical book club book of genre or a romance or a thriller.

So we're trying to find ways to categorize it that have that will have more appeal to the market.

James Blatch: Well, it's terribly important getting the categories right and placing it. I can imagine that is more of a challenge when you're not writing a straightforward billionaire romance, sweet romance or military thriller for instance.

One way, of, course is to look at some of the bigger, the most successful, books in a similar genre and see how they're marketed and what categories they go for.



Hannah Lynn: I think that one of the great bits of advice actually that Louise Ross was giving me and it's completely bizarre. There wasn't was a moment where, because I met Mark and Louise and I sat at a table just thinking, "This is a little bit surreal."

My husband was there so I poked him and I was just like, "Just look at that end of the table. Just look at it."

It was the feel of the book because earlier you mentioned the best seller tag but the best seller tag that it's in is quite a specified and unique category.

And I think as self-published authors we're quite like, "Oh, we need that orange tag. That orange tag, that's the best seller."

Actually, placing it somewhere where more people will consider it is sometimes more important ... Well, is more important than getting that tag and that was something we hadn't really considered because we knew it was saying 'best seller' of its category.

We didn't realize that actually its category might be quite off putting to some people even though it fits in there.

It's the uplift which is popular at the minute. Those kinds of over books where you leave feeling a bit surer and a bit happier about life. Walter is dead, yes, but that's just a, sort of, underlying thing in the book rather than making that Walter is dead as the effort thing, if that makes sense.

James Blatch: Yeah, it does. That completely makes sense.

And there's a, sort of, quirkiness to that as well which goes back through a rich vein of famous authors who've always come at things from a slightly quirky angle and it still can be uplifting.

What does the mechanics of your marketing look like, your Facebook ads, IMS ads, you've got a mailing list?



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Hannah Lynn: Yes. So this is where I go, "I am part of a team and in all honesty, the main part of my marketing looks like a bearded man, which is my husband who helps me.

We are working on exactly what you said. So it's mailing lists that we didn't have before and we are putting a lot of time into building up our mailing lists and to finding Facebook ads that work for us and also having the click through because this is how we looked to the genre not fitting.

Because it looked like we were getting responses from people clicking on our ads but then not going and purchasing Walter. So the others have been invaluable and going, "Okay, maybe, we need to look at how our copy our blurb are written out, how we're classifying it."

But Facebook and the mailing list are where we're looking at; and also building up that mailing list for future projects now. I have already got a solid year's, and the rest, plan of my writing.

I have a problem with ideas not that I struggle for them but that I cannot stop with ideas; and looking at, "Okay, which of these ideas are viable from a marketing perspective?"

So, which of them do we want to start building up mailing lists for now before they're released next year? Which of them are, perhaps, going to be more standalone, in which case it will be linking to Walter, in that sense.

And, yeah, looking far more at the future. It's not a mistake because we didn't know how it was going to take off and what we were going to do. But at the time you put out your book and then you go, "What do I do now?" And, in hindsight, what it should have been is, "My book is coming out then what am I doing in preparation for it?"

James Blatch: Okay, yes. Well, that is the correct way to do it but ...

Hannah Lynn: Yes, that is the correct way but with *Amendments* we didn't know that. We were just like, "Oh, we can do that."



James Blatch: And have you a challenge to go back to your way of writing and your books. One of the challenges of the mailing list is that genre thing.

Mark's mailing list is people who love thrillers and they'll be on other thriller writers mailing lists and that's the link. Of course, you're trying to say to your person, "I know you love this book, I've written a completely different book but I think you'll love it as well."

I think you've been compared to Kazuo Ishiguro if I can say his name correctly, who is a fantastic author and has never written two books the same that I can think of.

I will read every one of his books that comes out. So it is doable, right?

Hannah Lynn: Yeah. Well that's what I think and that's what I like as a reader. The thing is I love Ishiguro. So I go to the library and I'm like, "Oh, there are those ones here." I'll take them off and I don't care which way I'm going with them.

It's the same with Murakami and with Margaret Atwood's and with Neil Gaiman. I like their books. And the authors I tend to like are these ones that flip genre. So it's not really a surprise that that's how I'd write as well.

James Blatch: Yes.

Hannah Lynn: But, yeah, it is more difficult. There is no denying that when you're looking at these, and it's a pickle, if you like this author, you'll like that. Well, how many can you pick that have this kind of humorous debt and a middle-aged shoe saleswomen?

The way that I've also started writing, that I do write my books, is I try to have very normal characters of just very average people, relatable people. And so it's just trying to match those up is a puzzle, essentially, and one the that we're learning from. It would be lovely if there were a couple of big



authors, if you're a fan of, you would love Walter. Hopefully we will get there.

James Blatch: When you're sharing this, it's exciting to watch your journey. So just to, before we go a little bit about your writing process. You've given us a glimpse into the mind of Hannah Lynn, which is an ideas machine and you then go from idea, I guess, to bashing out to.

Do you outline, do you draft first or how does that work?

Hannah Lynn: Again, one of these things that we had a long discussion in our car on our long journey yesterday on how, essentially, I do need to change ... or adapt, I think will be a better word, how I plan.

Because, at the minute, I have a bit of an outline, I kinda know where I want to go. I always know how I want to end and I work towards the end and however I get to that end is great. But feasibly what that means is lots of drafts, each draft working out another kink.

Amendments we were on eight or nine drafts before it went to an edit and these are full redrafts. With *Walter* for the first three drafts, Letty was a 21 year old working in a bar with a waste of space husband and by the final one she's a middle aged shoe saleswoman with a secret moss bar habit and all of those changes to drafts in time.

So I am working on my plotting skills and on the "Okay, let's get it down." Because I'm working very full time, long hours at the minute the other thing I have is that I grab where I can and I love writing.

Whether it's plotting this or looking at this marketing thing or looking at this mailing list might be the right thing for me to do. I really love writing. So if I've got a spare half an hour, I try and write. Again, I've got to change that.

James Blatch: I feel that the practical side of you wants to streamline the process and find a more detailed way of plotting then that's going to cut out all these drafts.



But on the other hand, if time wasn't a factor, if the commercial wasn't a factor, redrafting and redrafting was, without question, going to be the best way of writing the best book, right?

Hannah Lynn: Yeah.

James Blatch: Because everything's improving in that process, the character development and all the stuff in the weeds, as the Americans say, when you only you get to ... you can't get to that point in plotting.

You can think about it and you know there's going to be stuff though it's only when you're writing when characters start surprising you with the directions they take, et cetera. But, so, nothing's been wasted.

I don't think any words you've been writing have been wasted but I can also feel your reality kicking in a little bit in terms of making this a commercial thing.

It'd be great for you to quit your job. What is your job, by the way?

Hannah Lynn: I'm a physics teacher.

James Blatch: Okay. And teachers, that's an intensive life during term time, at least you don't have a lot of time.

When do you write?

Hannah Lynn: In the morning? I work at a boarding school so it's long days, seven till six, seven till nine. So half past five in the morning is my 'get up and write' time.

James Blatch: Wow.

Hannah Lynn: Yeah. And it's not so easy to do when it's cold and dark or wintery. In the summer, that's fine if you're downstairs and lovely. Winter is a bit more of a challenge but I don't have a choice. If I want to write then that is the only time available to me. So I'll keep with it.



James Blatch: And just remind me what's next. Is there another *Peas, Carrots* next or ...?

Hannah Lynn: So, yeah, we've got another piece and *Peas Three* as well is well on its way. I would tell you what the name is but just not 100% sure yet. Definitely starts *Peas, Carrots, and ...* I know that much.

James Blatch: Yes.

Hannah Lynn: After that I am actually going a little bit back to *Amendments* and doing something slightly more Y-A and supernatural. And I have to sound ... I'm really excited about this from a, what is it? From a writing point of view I'm always excited about what I'm writing or I wouldn't be writing, I suppose that's like most people.

So we've got that one which will, hopefully, be three out next year is the aim and then any other projects which I can write in secret without my husband knowing about because I should be marketing the other one.

Yeah, I do sometimes come back to my computer and see just red capital letters written in, 'STOP WRITING NEW BOOKS' at the bottom of my documents.

James Blatch: Wow. He's a hard taskmaster.

Hannah Lynn: He is. It's highly unfair although without him, I would just be typing away at whatever I please.

James Blatch: He's obviously got his mind in some points in the future where you're sitting on a beautiful desert island living off the royalties from your books and he's quit his job.

Hannah Lynn: Well actually he is already. We swapped jobs a few years ago so he is at home with my daughter more. Yeah, maybe it's that.

James Blatch: Yeah, works as well.



Hannah Lynn: She is quite a handful. No, it's a team work thing. I think writing takes a lot of your time. Well, it takes any time that you can possibly offer it. And particularly, like I said, we didn't know about these marketing things and all that before we went into it but trying to do it yourself is massive; it's huge.

There's so much out there so having another person to support you, in whatever way they can, is just so important, for me at least.

James Blatch: Hannah, it's been a real pleasure. I'm sorry I missed you at the awards, the glamorous awards ceremony and see your name engraved on a plaque. But I can only congratulate you again.

I spoke to a couple of the judges earlier in the evening who didn't reveal who the winner was but they were incredibly impressed and found a difficult decision. So you were in very good company of very good writers. So all those doubts you had before and they're completely natural and we all have them as, "Is this rubbish?"

Which is what I frequently think about when I'm writing. "Is this actually all rubbish? It might be rubbish."

Well, you've got a firm answer to that now so I hope you can believe it and move on. I sound like that was a psychiatrist session. Now you can believe that and use it and I go great guns because it'd be fantastic to see you sailing in the future.

Hannah Lynn: Thank you. It would be very nice, hopefully. Yeah, hopefully it will work out well.

James Blatch: Superb. Hannah, thank you very much for joining us and, yeah, we'll check in with you in the future and see how it's all going.

Hannah Lynn: Yes, I would love to come back and, hopefully, tell you things that we have got that have worked and saved me a little bit later on in the



journey where I know a bit more about what type of marketing works would be nice.

James Blatch: And meanwhile I'm going to think a bit more about what two things I would go back and change.

Hannah Lynn: Yeah.

James Blatch: Because that's intriguing. That's a film, you know.

Hannah Lynn: That would be lovely. That would be very nice to definitely.

James Blatch: It's a film. If I was film producer I think that ... If you're listening and you're a film producer that is a film. Okay, great. Thanks Hannah, we'll speak to you again.

Hannah Lynn: Thank you very much.

James Blatch: Bye-bye.

Hannah Lynn: Thank you, bye.

James Blatch: There she is. I think a very typical story of somebody who's trying to make their way as an author, juggling life and everything that life throws at you and getting that writing and she's been very disciplined and very dedicated to what she's done.

She's a husband and wife team, which is not unusual also in the indie space. And one thing I also wanted to say is what a great thing that Amazon have done here.

And I liked the fact that this is about storytelling. It's not necessarily about marketing because, ultimately, we all love stories and books and that should be the focus when we come to celebrate and recognize achievement, I think.



Mark Dawson: Yeah. And it's also certainly that Amazon takes seriously. So at the actual awards show the first person to talk was Doug Gurr, who is the head of Amazon in the UK and not just kindle. He is the head of amazon.co.uk, the whole store in this country; and I had a chat with him afterwards as well.

But then apart from him, Darren Hardy who runs the ADB over here was there obviously and also some senior Amazonians who also work on the Kindle platform were there too. So it was well attended.

One of the other nominees was a guy called Andy Maslin who is an alumnus of the course also, lives in Salisbury. I know him quite well and I thought he had a chance but then when I read the synopsis for the books, it was pretty obvious to me that Hannah was going to win.

It's a really interesting premise for a story and I wasn't surprised when her name was called out first by Lorraine Kelly. So there you go. Talk about celebrity for those in the states who don't know her. How do you describe Lorraine Kelly? I'm not quite sure. What does she actually do?

James Blatch: Day time host. Day time T.V. presenter.

Mark Dawson: Day time host on Loose Women isn't ... I think she was on it.

James Blatch: Yes.

Mark Dawson: I'm not saying she's a loose woman.

James Blatch: Well, that's what they call themselves.

Mark Dawson: But she is a loose woman. Yes, exactly.

James Blatch: Yeah, exactly. Okay, good. Well, it was a delight to speak to Hannah. It wasn't the best quality of line but we got the interview, got through that. And, yeah that's it, I think, for the Self-Publishing Show for this week.



Mark Dawson: And this year.

James Blatch: For this year, yeah, with our new show and we're coming into a new year.

We want to wish everyone a happy 2019. We've just been having a quick chat about doing a sum up of the last year and I look forward more importantly to what's coming up in the future in the indie world.

And, Mark, you're about to step on another luxurious apartments on a plane and go to Bali for 20 Books Bali, so I think we'll record that when you come back from Bali full of ideas and enthusiasm.

Mark Dawson: Yes, that's the plan. We'll see how that goes. I'm looking forward to that.

We'll be there only for three or four days, I think, but I'm speaking at that event on the first day and lots of very successful indies are going to be there so I'll, hopefully, get some good ideas on the way back from there.

James Blatch: Great. Okay. Well that will be in a couple of weeks' time. We do have a couple of useful episodes coming up on time management and journaling for authors and on dictation, which is the subject we get asked a lot about.

And the dictation one's coming up in a couple of weeks and that's going to be a good one.

We do get asked about dictation quite a lot and a lot of people want to get into it, so it was a good episode coming up there.

Right, that's it. Have a great New Year's eve, a great new year's day and have a brilliant 2019. We will see you next year. Bye-bye.

Mark Dawson: Happy New Year.



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