



EPISODE 159: WHEN TWO BECOME ONE: FROM MARRIAGE COUNSELLOR TO INDIE AUTHOR – WITH ELIN PEER

Speaker 1: On this edition of The Self Publishing Show...

Elin Peer: So, instead of just feeding our kids and buying things for them, we invite them to take part in the family business.

Speaker 1: Publishing is changing. No more gatekeepers. No more barriers. No one standing between you and your readers.

Do you want to make a living from your writing? Join indie bestseller 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: Welcome to The Self Publishing Show with me, James Blatch.

Mark Dawson: And me, Mark Dawson. Hello.

James Blatch: Hello Mark. How are you doing?

Mark Dawson: I'm all right. I'm damp and windy today 'cause it's Storm Eric.

James Blatch: It hasn't got a name, is it this storm?

Mark Dawson: Storm Eric, yes.

James Blatch: Eric.



PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

Mark Dawson: Eric, yeah, which doesn't sound like a very frightening name.

James Blatch: How much damage could Eric do?

Mark Dawson: Not much, but it's quite windy and it's very wet. So, we're sheltering. I'm sheltered in the office today.

James Blatch: My fence has been buckling in the wind. I have to say, if they are listening to this podcast, which they won't be, my neighbor's fence is the one that's buckling in the wind. My fence is solid and recently renewed. This fence needs work.

Mark Dawson: That reminds me of one of my favorite memes on Facebook after we had a minor storm can't be but a couple months ago. Given that we complain about the weather all the time, there's a picture of some picnic furniture blown over in the garden and the quote is, "We will rebuild." It's comparing it to real natural disasters which we're not very good at doing that.

James Blatch: No, we're not. There's been some extraordinary weather in the world. I was talking about this just last night with my friend who is a climate scientist. We just play tennis together but the weather they've had in the Midwest of America has been sensationally cold, I mean, life-threateningly, life-taking cold. Minus 29 with wind factors.

Mark Dawson: Polar vortex.

James Blatch: Polar vortex, yeah, and at the same time they've had record highs. In fact, I think they went from that to a record winter high in four days. Crazy with the weather.

Mark Dawson: Yes, anyway. We always start with the weather, don't we? It's getting predictable.

James Blatch: I like talking about the weather. We're British.



Mark Dawson: It was my fault.

James Blatch: We are British. People like us being British. They want us to be British. You have to put up with discussion about the weather. That's how that works.

Mark Dawson: I've just finished my crumpet and I've had a cup of tea.

James Blatch: Carry on. Carry on, Eric.

Okay, we've got a couple of things to talk about in this podcast today. We are going to be speaking to an author called Elin Peer, who's originally from Scandinavia but lives in the Northwest of the United States now.

A really interesting interview about characters; how her particular background lends itself to creating these layered, complex characters. So very, very well worth listening.

Actually, I'll give you a little teaser coming up, also done an interview, about how to create the perfect villain and hero which is coming up, which is a really good chat with Sacha Black.

Mark Dawson: I blame all my villains on John Doe.

James Blatch: Yeah, and your heroes. That's the complexity of the character.

Mark Dawson: He is a complex character. That's very true.

James Blatch: There's a subtlety to that. Good. Right.

We'll talk about a couple of things to do with social media advertising, your particular specialty, Mark Dawson. One of the drivers to your seven figures of income last year and there are changes, as always. There's always changes under the hood and sometimes front of house on these platforms.



Facebook have made a couple of changes in the last week or so. Good additions, Mark?

Mark Dawson: They've added some new content. It's been more than a couple weeks old. It's been around for a little while.

It's called Dynamic Creative which gives you the chance to really split test very effectively and easily.

So, split testing, if you don't know, is where you change one or two elements just to see whether those elements lead to an improvement in whatever it is that you're testing.

With an ad, for example, you might want to run different variations on the cover or you might want to change the text or the headline or even the buy button. All kinds of things that you can change.

With this Dynamic Creative, what it allows you to do is to upload up to 10 images, or 10 videos, or a combination of the two, 5 headlines, 5 texts, and 5 different button configurations. Whatever you want. Then, what Facebook will do, is it will serve those in combination and will see if it can find out which of them is the most effective.

You can then work out whatever you're optimizing for whether it's the click through rate or the number that buy. Whatever it is that you're trying to improve, Facebook will allow you to see that in a much more straightforward way.

I've been playing with that for the last week or so, and recorded a 10 or 15 minute video yesterday that went into the Facebook master group for people who are on the Ads course and that's got some really good feedback.

There's a lot of new stuff that we're going to be introducing over the next couple of months and I'll be dripping that into the mastery group before



we put it all together, codify it, and release it as an addition to the ads course. I'm quite looking forward to getting into that.

James Blatch: Yeah. I mean, there was some discussion about this is all our groups but just to say that the mastery group is the closed Facebook group for students of the Ads course and that is opening again in...

Mark Dawson: June.

James Blatch: June. May. I think May?

Mark Dawson: May.

James Blatch: May? I think maybe May. That's one thing.

Another thing I know that you've been playing about with in the last couple of weeks, 'cause I get emails from Amazon full of your books, is you've been doing data deals and countdown deals with them.

Countdown deals, I guess, is the one that you've been doing?

Mark Dawson: Countdown deals, yeah. So, I've got a big backlist now, so 35-ish books, I suppose, in total and almost all of them are in select, now, and there's lots of benefits to being in select. Lots of reasons why you wouldn't want to be, as well, but that's a discussion for another podcast.

Some of the benefits you can have include running Kindle countdown deals. So, you can take your price and drop it down to below the threshold where you'd normally be able to get the 70%, so you can sort of ... If you're normally at 99 pence or cents, you'd be getting 35% as a royalty. When you run a KCD, you can get the full 70%.

It's also good for visibility as well. So, you can drive these offers out to your mailing list. You can run social ads. There's better visibility through Amazon. They'll be placed in certain places where these deals are promoted.



PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

You'll get emails. You've seen one of those emails today sent by Amazon, not by me, notifying people who like me or have bought books by me in the past that there's a deal on one of these books.

I've been trying to do that every two or three weeks, so just cycling through them. And one of the things that I've been doing is I've got my VA, Alexandra, one of the VAs that works with me who also does some stuff for SPF, she has been nominating these books for placements on places like Fussy Librarian, Kindle Books and Tips, ENT, and those kinds of sites just below BookBub that will send out those promotions.

Maybe spending a couple of hundred dollars or 300 dollars every other week to send out those, get those emails sent out to promote those books as well as it has worked quite well. So, on those Fridays ... I usually run them for four days, starting from Thursday through to a Sunday, and promote it on the Friday.

On those Fridays I always see a pretty significant leap for that promoted title, both in terms of ranking, so they're usually going to the top 200 on both sides of the Atlantic and also they will generate ... Maybe I'll sell 1,000 copies or 2,000 copies which is going to be around about 1500 to 1600 dollars.

That's not to be sniffed at, and of course, that introduces new people who wouldn't have seen me before who may go on to buy other books. So, there's lots of benefits to doing this and the only reason I wasn't doing it before was because I, frankly, was being a bit lazy. So, I'm trying to up my game and do that more regularly now.

James Blatch: I can't imagine you being lazy.

Mark Dawson: I'm not normally but I have been a little bit lax, so ... Fixing that.



James Blatch: And one final area to talk about. This is also something that happened some time ago but it takes a while to kind of roll out to everybody, and we have to keep a careful on this because we have course material that relates directly to it, and that is that the Amazon advertising platform is really undergoing a fairly significant change over the last few months.

One of those includes the ending of the product display ads, but the ability to advertise on the lock screen of a Kindle. There's always been adverts on the lock screen. In fact, I've seen one of your books come up.

I've seen, I think maybe Karen Inglis'. I've certainly seen other SPF community members' books come up on the lock screen in the past. Now, more regular access to that for people.

Mark Dawson: Yeah, that's definitely. There have been changes going on for a while and one of the things that's happened with this change is people are piling into lock screen ads, and they're too expensive for the moment.

So, my advice would be not to worry too much about them until the people who have got ... Just basically bidding 150 to get onto the lock screens realize that that's not going to make them any money and they clear off and the CPCs will come down again.

It's quite expensive right now, but yeah, lots of things are changing. I probably can't say what this is. I don't know whether this is confidential. I think it's very confidential.

I had a webinar last night. I'd been invited into a beta program which I think is closed at the moment, where Amazon is trialing a new ability to attribute sources, attribute sales that come through on your Amazon page.



So, in other words, you would be able to pixel other traffic sources. Then you can see the sales on your page and work out where they came from. This could be a massive game changer.

I've been looking at this for ages and there are plenty of other ways we've managed to get around that with using affiliate tracking but to have something central on Amazon where you can attribute.

You could have a column to see how many you sold via your e-mail list, how many via your Facebook ads, how many via your BookBub ads. The potential is enormous.

At the moment, it doesn't work. I'm in the program but I'm not able to generate these pieces of code that would enable me to track but Amazon is definitely thinking about this.

There are other changes coming down the track with regards to Amazon advertising that I definitely can't talk about on the podcast but I think the issue could be quite exciting for advertisers and people who are just trying to sell their books.

James Blatch: I'm really looking forward to the next revision of the AMS ads course. Amazon ads, we call it now.

Mark Dawson: You'd have to do the work, that's why.

James Blatch: Yeah, I know. Looking forward to it. I do actually have to do the editing.

Mark Dawson: I know you do.

James Blatch: But how crucial is that? The magic juice is to understand where the work you're putting in is to no avail and where maybe you're not working that hard and it's really valuable.



We batter that into people all the time in terms of analyzing, going through the data, and working smart.

Mark Dawson: Knowledge is power.

James Blatch: Knowledge is power.

Now, I have to say about the lock screen, I'm a Kindle guy, have been for some time and very rarely is a lock screen ad targeted anywhere near me. It's very often for a romance, or just books I don't read, genres I don't read.

Mark Dawson: Yeah, that'd be because the people who are doing the advertising haven't targeted them very effectively a lot of the time. So, you will definitely see that.

At the moment I think it's worse because people are just spending a lot of money, getting really high on getting these ads to fire, and maybe being a little bit indiscriminate with their targeting which obviously isn't going to work. Obviously, you will buy romance books because that's exactly the kind of book that you read. Yeah, probably not ideal.

Authors will do better to target more discriminately, but let's see what happens.

I think at the moment there's a lot of people who are running into these ads and spending too much money, bidding too high, and at levels that only the biggest indies with big back lists and big advertising budgets will be able to make work.

If you're bidding for a dollar a click, it's very unlikely that you're going to make a profit given the conversion will be 10% if you're doing well. It'd be very difficult to make a profit if you've just got a couple of books. You need a bigger back list to bid at that level.

That's not to say that you shouldn't be running more competitively priced ads, entering the auction with more realistic bids, because you can do quite



well when you do that, but just don't go crazy, because you can easily lose your shirt with these kinds of things.

James Blatch: You don't think it's the trad industry that's rushed in on these lock screen ads is upping the bidding price?

Mark Dawson: It could be. They're definitely slowly realizing that Amazon advertising and Facebook advertising is a good idea about five years later than everybody else did and they'll have bigger budgets than most other advertisers.

But I certainly don't think that they're going to be any better advertising than we are. It's quite rare for me to see a trad ad and to think, "That's being well done creatively," or from where I can see to work out that it's been well targeted.

We'll see. Things are shaking up all the time. Lots of things are happening.

James Blatch: A trad ad. Sounds a bit like a Japanese mafia.

Okay, let's talk to our guest today, who is Elin Peer. As I mentioned at the beginning, she's from Scandinavia; from Denmark, in fact. Mark bumped into her in Barley and we'll chat about your impression of Elin and what she's doing after the interview, Mark.

The interview itself is fascinating, about characters, about insight into characters, and how her books are working.

Also, she's a husband-wife partnership in terms of self-publishing and, in fact a, bit of a family affair bringing her daughters into it as well very impressively. It's a great interview. She's a great person, and we'll have a chat off the back.

Well, Elin, I'm going to say welcome to the Self-Publishing Show. Thank you so much indeed for joining us from the Northwest, right in the Northwest of America. Not of America; because that would be ... I can't



even know how to say it. It's not the United States, either, because that would be Alaska. But anyway, Northwest of the middle bit of the United States.

Elin Peer: The Pacific Northwest's what we call it here.

James Blatch: Oh, okay. That's what I needed.

Elin Peer: Seattle, yeah.

James Blatch: Yeah. Not the bit where you can walk to Russia in winter which is even further Northwest. Excellent.

Elin Peer: You can see it from Alaska. I was there and you can see Russia, but I don't think you can walk to it.

James Blatch: Well, doesn't it freeze over at some point of the year? Anyway, I don't know.

Elin Peer: Probably, I don't know.

James Blatch: I'm at the limit.

Elin Peer: Thank you for having me.

James Blatch: You're welcome, it's great to have you here. I'm going to make sure I say Elin which is the correct pronunciation of your name.

Elin Peer: Yes, Elin Peer.

James Blatch: Elin Peer and where does the name come from? Where does Elin come from?

Elin Peer: Well, it's a Scandinavian name, like me and it is my middle name. Peer comes from my...It's father and my grandfather's name. They were great storytellers. None of them were published but they were great storytellers.



PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

My grandfather, we have a tradition in my family, and we get certified troll hunters, which comes with the territory when you grow up in Scandinavia. So, we would go into the forest and he would tell me stories about how he couldn't see the trolls but as a kid, I could. So, it was on my shoulders to see them.

Of course, I always did. So, that imagination came from those two men and I honor them by having their name as my last name as my author name.

James Blatch: Brilliant. Of course, there's a long tradition of sagas from the Northern European countries. So, you say Scandinavia. Is that Norway, Sweden, where about?

Elin Peer: Denmark.

Mark Dawson: Denmark, okay, the one I didn't mention, so...

Elin Peer: Yes.

James Blatch: Okay, and I could see that blonde hair, that very Scandinavian look. I've got a sister-in-law whose Norwegian and we go there from time to time. Spend quite a lot of time, actually, in Scandinavia. Breathtaking part of the world. Just gigantic fjords and...yeah. Although, Denmark's a bit flatter.

Elin Peer: It is, and I have to say, living here in Seattle, I adore the nature 'cause it's a lot like Switzerland or Austria or Southern Germany, which I used to live in, and I'm a mountain girl and forest and woods and I just love that.

We don't have the mountains in Denmark. So, I feel at home here.

James Blatch: Good. Well, we've got a geography lesson out of the way.

So, let's talk about writing. And, Elin, I think one of the things we want to talk to you about is sort of almost creating and crafting a new genre, an



individual genre which you've done and we're going to talk about how you've made that work. It's a frequent complaint or a challenge that people raise is that they've got a unique genre that they don't know how to market et cetera. So, that's the area we're going to cover today.

You should, first of all, explain how this genre came about 'cause I think you started, or your background is, in counselling and helping people in the real world.

Elin Peer: I had a company where I was as personal coach and I focused on families. Helping families with teenagers that...A lot of my clients were very distraught to the point of heavy stress, suicidal thoughts, self harm, that sort of thing but also the parents, 'cause it affects the whole family. So, did a lot of marriage counselling.

From that background, my challenge was to get the young kids to read the books and also the parents, 'cause a lot of people have good intentions but sitting down and actually reading 400 words from Tony Robbins or someone else, they just don't get it done.

I figured out ways. My business partner and I, we came up with a concept of writing books that were interesting. That was full of love and coming of age and that sort of thing. So, we did. We wrote some books and the kids loved them. We never marketed them but the kids loved them. Our coaching clients did.

But from that, I learned that I love to write and so I created Elin Peer, my new author name at that time. This is about three years ago. I created that name and I just wrote books not having taken any sort of author course. I had no idea about genres.

I just had stories to tell and in those stories, there were a lot of tools given 'cause that was my world. I can't really have a conversation with anyone without challenging their limiting thoughts or coming up with "Have you thought about this?" It's always a new perspective on things.



And so, that became rooted in the way I write and my readers started reacting to that. I would get e-mails from people saying "Oh my god, this book. It was nothing like I thought it be. I thought it was going to be a romance" and it does have romance 'cause there's always a happy ending but it also had all these deeper, food for thought perspectives, and they would say "It changed my life. I used to be this girl and you helped me see. You helped me heal."

And so that's when it daunted on me at some point. Well, I'm not sticking to the romance genre and the limitations that it has but I have created something that is working. It's working and the audience is talking about the books and sharing the books with their friends and family. So, it grows and grows and here we are.

James Blatch: So, if I got this right, the idea was to try and sneak in a self help book in the guise of a romance book or a book that a kid, a teenager, might actually read.

Elin Peer: Yeah, that's how it started. And that book was a lot...I mean, it's not great writing. It was in a different language, first of all, 'cause English is not my first language and it was my first attempt.

Looking back, I never talk about the books. I never tell people what they're called because I've grown so much as an author since then but the idea was there.

It was about a girl who would be cutting herself. Why is she cutting herself? But not just talking about why is she cutting herself, but also giving her the tools to understand how can she stop hurting herself. How can she grow to become self sufficient with praise 'cause it's a self esteem issue and I think when we talk about this genre...and again, maybe I haven't created it so much 'cause there's another...there has to be other people who do the same.



PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

I think every author uses storytelling to convey whatever troubles people in the world. I just take it a bit further 'cause I'm not only portraying what it looks like to have anxiety, or low self esteem, or marriage problems. I'm also bringing tools to the couples so that they can be happy or the individual so that they can grow and become more tolerant.

And so, again, I pitch a vegan against a guy who owns a number of steak houses or I pitch a psychic medium who sees dead people against a scientist who doesn't believe in that sort of thing 'cause that will put it on the edge and those people have to grow to different level of tolerance and acceptance and appreciation of others being different in order to have that happy ending.

In this genre, the two basic things is really what happens in everybody's life; yours, mine, it doesn't matter what color you have, what geography, what gender, we all have two basic fears. It's just imprinted in our nervous system.

One, am I good enough and if I'm not good enough, will you love me? And it really goes back to, if you're not loved, if you're not accepted, then what happens?

Back in the day, way way back, if you got expelled from the community, you were dead. How're you going to heal yourself if you got sick? How were you going to hunt?

That's what I'm playing around within my books all the time. The fear of rejection and a lot of banter, of course, because I pitch people who are so unaligned, who have nothing in common, except they are physically attracted to each other or they just have this chemistry going.

So, from that we can work on the differences and that's interesting because a lot of people are divided and there's a big division in the world right now. My books are always about coming together. Finding that balance, finding what unites us rather than what divides us.



James Blatch: We need a bit of that at the moment.

So, you create these characters, these flawed characters who have challenges in their lives, and then you kind of employ, through your writing, you employ your own skill set as a counselor to heel them or to help them through it?

Elin Peer: Yes.

James Blatch: And the result of that is something that somebody could read and hopefully relate to as well as enjoy the story.

Elin Peer: Exactly, and the way it works is, for instance, let me give you an example, 'cause, again, story telling is how we remember things.

So, you can read a book on love languages for instance but I have a character...I had a woman write me and she said "You know, I've been married for 18 years and it just dawned on me when I read your book, what's the problem in my marriage and now, I just see it so differently and I just want to thank you."

It was really one of the characters that I have in "Men of the North" who's not one to share emotions. So, he doesn't tell his wife that he loves her and she wants to hear it.

And she's complaining about it to a friend, and the friend says "I've been listening to you nagging about how he's always on your back about 'Have you remembered this, have you been drinking water, have you got your gloves, your hat?'"

And he says, "I know you're annoyed by that but what if he said 'Honey, I don't want you to be cold. Did you remember your gloves?' Or what if he said 'I worry about you. I want you to be healthy and I care about you. Did you drink enough water 'cause I don't want you to be dehydrated, babe.'"



But he doesn't say "babe" and he doesn't say "honey" and he doesn't say "I love you." He doesn't say it in those words.

But if you have that skill set, you can hear that he's shouting at her "I love you. I care about you. I want you to be comfortable. I want you to be healthy."

Yet, for her, it comes across as being on her back and nagging, right? So, saying "I love you," many many people say it in an awkward way but, never the less, they are saying it.

So, when you start to understand that little...when you interpret it, and she said "That is my husband. He's always doing things like that. Careful. It's like 'I'm not a child.'"

But then when she started seeing this is really him expressing his love for her, his interest...and I said "What would it be like if he didn't? If he never did care about you." And so, these are little things and, again, I want to emphasize that my books, a lot of people will read them and not get any coaching at all 'cause it's entertainment first.

But then, I have a lot of readers who read them many many times and keep finding new things 'cause I do go down to the explanation but it's never from a preaching perspective or coaching perspective. It's always like little hints or conversations so it's subtle and that's the way it has to be because otherwise it becomes too much self help and too little fiction.

It's that fine balance of humor, of bringing those nuggets of wisdom in a way that you don't even realize you got 'em except you sit back with a feeling of "Wow, I never thought about that. That's a different way. Maybe I could..." and you bring it up in conversation with your friends 'cause you read something and it was smart. That sort of thing. That's why it works so well.



James Blatch: I'll tell you what's really interesting about this is, for writers who have to create characters, is understanding how, the human condition, how flawed people are because it's very easy to write one dimensional characters. It's one of the first things a good editor will say is there's no frailty to this.

So, when you want to introduce that, I think listening to you is starting to get me thinking. Actually, I'm doing an interview later this week with Sacha Black about this, about how to create an interesting character.

But, it's really understanding this. It's understanding how, the nuances of somebody who finds it difficult to say "I love you" and expresses it in a different way, and I also think, maybe this is a British thing, it might also be Scandinavian, for men, is being loved is sometimes very difficult for my generation; My parents' generation in particular for men.

Being loved is as much a challenge and as much a flaw, as loving. And once you start to understand this, that's going to help you create these really realistic characters; interesting characters.

Elin Peer: And you have to be true to them. One of my issues has been, for instance, in Men of the North, which is my biggest success, portraying 400 years in the future, a society where men were isolated for 400 years and women ruled the world, basically. And there were men with them, but not as many, and they definitely didn't stand up to the women.

So, it's become unbalanced. And, of course, I'm choosing this scenario because it allows me to play around with masculinity in its raw essence, femininity in the raw essence and then clash them. And it's always about balance.

When you really have those two opposites, it becomes very easy to see 'cause they both have good points. None of them are right or wrong, just need each other to be balanced.



And one of my characters, he would never listen to someone who's wise or go to therapy session. I wouldn't be true to him if I made him do that. So, instead, I sent him Alaska. He just goes "Screw you all."

He goes to Alaska and has a major, long period of time where he's cold, he's freezing, he's hungry and then it's an internal fight to take responsibility. "Why are you here?" It's not everybody else's fault and it takes a meeting with a guy in a shop who's just bitter and old, and he realizes "That's going to be me in 30 years blaming the world if I don't step up."

So, with other characters, I've been able to plan priestess and someone who's wise that can give this kind of insight but with him, he would have never listened and he couldn't get it from his wife 'cause she was from the North lands where he's from too and so she doesn't have that level of maturity.

And I was really...even as a coach, I was like "How am I going to help this guy?" 'cause some people just don't want to listen to good advice and they have to go on that journey themselves.

I think that's really important to stay true to that character. For me, for instance, being a Scandinavian woman, I have to no problem confronting people. So, if you said something, doubted me, I wouldn't be afraid to say "What? You don't think I can make it?"

But everybody's not like that. If I was raised in the Japanese culture, I would never challenge you that way 'cause you would be a male.

So, culture plays in but also conditioning and rising above the conditioning that you have with you, because we all do, is what makes this genre interesting. Then every side character has that conditioning with them as well and they become more than just one dimensional.

James Blatch: Yeah.



Elin Peer: So that's my strength. That is the character.

Listen, when you've done marriage counselling, when you've done personal counselling, you have a lot of people's deep desires and dark desires, and...So, even though I never mention names but it comes into... I have never been a goth but I've been with a person who was. I've never been sexually molested but I've been with someone who was.

I can pull on these experiences and other people's experiences and it becomes very realistic; the thought patters, the reactions to when you get under pressure and that sort of thing.

James Blatch: I can't think of better training for a novel writer than to sit through counselling sessions for a decade or so. Particularly, marriage guidance I imagine is, how do you say, you hear how people function.

Elin Peer: A lot of my readers are like "I didn't think they were going to make it" 'cause I corner them to a point where you won't see normally, at least not in romance, which is, I guess, the overall theme of my books. Because if you corner them that way, as a normal author, you wouldn't know how to get them out but I do, right?

I can take them even from the worst place of "There's no chance they can get back together" but I can help them do that. And by doing that, I also show you, the reader, you can do this, too, 'cause a lot of readers have relationships that are not perfect in some capacity. So, here, you know "So they made it work" maybe I can, too.

James Blatch: Where are you with the books? When did you really complete the transition from a counselor who wrote a book to help to somebody writing novels in a more commercial sense?

Elin Peer: Well, it started three years ago. After writing the four books, which were mainly for kids and teenagers, I had these stories brewing in my



mind and they were dark stories because I had specialized in bullying and I had a lot of things going on inside me, I think, energy wise.

I had this story about a woman being kidnapped and becoming a slave because that would be the ultimate bully. Someone who not only sees you at school but actually takes you, physically, and makes you his to treat badly.

It was a story of not only going into that slavery, but also getting out and how do you then, after, how do you get back on your feet? How do you not let an experience like that define you? So, that was not comparable to what I had been writing before and I did not want any of my kids or clients that had loved the other books to pick up these books 'cause they were darker nature.

I worked through that, I think we all have, something we work through as authors and so the first series was a bit more dark than what I'm doing now. It's a lot of more humor. So, I think it become really defined last year.

I've been doing it for three years. 2016 March was my first book and then now, with the Men of the North, it's just become something my readers are expecting of me.

Every time I plot a book, I always have this "Okay, so this person has a lot of anxiety or it can be side character. Well, let's play with that. What does it look like?" 'cause you can read a self help book and they will tell you, and the person has a negative thought pattern, but I'm showing you what it looks like. What are you saying to yourself if you have anxiety?

Even though you might be the biggest star, when you have to go on stage and you have the symptoms and the thought patterns, what does it look like? But also, what can you do to stop that? How can you overcome it?

I would say 2018 was the year where I really understood "This is my strength and I don't have to downplay it and I don't have to listen to people



saying 'You can't do this in romance. You can't do that in romance.'" 'cause I stick to the real life romance and people do stupid things all the time.

I'm not putting a nice bow around my romance books and people either love them or hate them and that's fine, but the people who love them, they really really love them and I go with that.

James Blatch: And you've got enough people who really love them to have made a success of this.

Elin Peer: Yes, I have, and it's growing every day. And the good thing is, a lot of people are talking about it. So, they will send me messages saying "Oh my god, I got my colleague hooked and she's sitting across from me and she's laughing and she's listening to the audio books" or something like that or this week, one of my readers who's been following me for a few years wrote on Facebook how meeting me and reading my books had changed his life.

So, it's something people sit up and go "Huh." Yeah, it's a snowball, isn't it? You start out small and you're happy with everything and I still am.

James Blatch: Commercially, it's working for you. This is your career now.

Elin Peer: Yes. I'm way into the six figures now and it just keeps going bigger, better.

I have to say, when I started writing, I did have a crisis of conscious because I have been working with these kids and families and it's an ego boost in a way, but it's also very satisfactory to have a family who, on the brink of divorce, maybe the husband said "I want the divorce" and then three months later, after working with them, now they're happy again. They're finding out "Why did we get together in the first place?"



Or a kid who's already tried to commit suicide and now you see them thrive or being successful and wanting to change and help other people.

That type of work is very important. When I started writing full time and I had to say "No," to coaching clients because I simply didn't have the time and I wanted to write, it was a crisis of conscience. I felt really bad 'cause it felt, in a way, I know there are other people who can do what I did, but what if she doesn't get the right person, right?

So, the pressure was on me but then people started writing "This book changed my life" and was writing me from Ireland, from Iceland, North, South, everywhere and it suddenly, really...it was "Okay, this is what I'm supposed to do" 'cause now I'm reaching thousands instead of doing one on one.

James Blatch: Out of interest, do you publish in Danish or Scandinavian languages as well or just English?

Elin Peer: No, I never published anything in Danish. I've been asked by publishers in Denmark if I have something; if I would be willing to write in Danish but no because it's a small small market and I feel, honestly, most Danes...even my mom can read my books and she...her English education is from the 60s and so, they can read English.

Obviously, I would love to share it with my grandmother or something but I just feel like my audience is here and they can translate them if they want to so we're working on that part with a Danish Publisher.

James Blatch: Okay. Well, that's why us English speakers are so lazy because ultimately everyone learns English for us which is very convenient.

Elin Peer: I don't even know if I could though because I never tried and I've lived in the US for seven years and I'm so used to writing English now. I think, 'cause some people are like "Well, you right in English?" 'cause it's



my second language, of course, but I think I'm much better in writing than I am in verbal.

And I think one of the advantages when it's not your first language is that you keep it kind of simple. You don't have these lusher explanations and I think, also, that comes down to the coaching part. I'm very good at simplifying the complicated if I can say it that way and that just makes it very easily digested.

Because, as a reader, we know from research that sixth grade level is the right one. That's where people just swallow your books because they don't have to stop and look up a word or go "What is that again?" So, I kind of, naturally, place myself at that level, I think, without trying.

And I have all these languages, 'cause I speak several, and I know that there is a word, I may not know the English word for it, but I can just look it up. So, I have a wider range in a way and I just keep it more simple in a way.

That's simple. It's simplistic.

James Blatch: I think that probably is a great advantage.

How are you marketing at the moment? How have you made the transition to fiction?

Elin Peer: From the beginning, it was...Well, not from the beginning, but in the beginning it was promos like doing promos. Reduced prices and giving away and that sort of thing.

I'm very very lucky that my husband is my partner in crime and he does everything related to marketing. So, he does Facebook, Amazon, Google, and, honestly, he talks about it and he has these white boards in his office.

Because the thing is when I say I'm lucky, I really mean it 'cause if you're like me and you like the creative part of it and the content but not so much the marketing and having that spouse to do that for you is amazing. I get a



little...when Mark starts talking about split testing and algorithms...I just freeze up 'cause that's just not my comfort zone and I think many of us feel that way and so having my husband as a software engineer and he works for Microsoft.

When Mark talks about these things, he's like leaning in like "Tell me more," right? So, we have this good division of "You do that and I do this." He sends out newsletters. I write the content, but...Yeah, so we definitely market. I haven't had the success with BookBub probably because I am exclusive with Amazon.

When I went to Bali, when I met Mark, about a month ago, that was one of the things that really daunted on me that if you are exclusive with Amazon, it's going to be a tough one to get a BookBub but what I do instead is that I will have like 30 or 40 promo sites push my book at the same time. So, it's a massive push. And then, I have maybe 15,000 downloads, maybe 10,000 maybe 5 but, depending on how many I book at the same time.

I just kind of push it out and that has worked for me really well.

James Blatch: I like the idea that when Mark starts talking one half of the partnership runs to the hills, the other half runs to the white board. You do need that. It's useful.

Elin Peer: It is and it's funny because in Bali, there were about 40 writers, I think, 38. You can't help notice how many of them are husband and wife teams. It's interesting and I am happy we have that same thing 'cause you need that support and if you have someone who's able to, or willing to, do the business side of it, that's obviously a huge advantage.

I saw there was a man, he was writing with his brother, and there was also two teams which was mother and daughter team and I'm lucky in the way that I have both my husband that does the marketing and the business and then I also have my daughter who helps me with the content, with the plotting. So, I have both.



James Blatch: Good family business. I like it.

Elin Peer: It is. You know what they say, if you want to help a man, don't give him a fish but teach him how to fish? That's how I do it with my kids.

My daughter, who is 14 right now going on 15 is a talented writer herself and has won literacy awards and she helps me with the plotting and becomes involved in little things like book covers and titles of the books and sees that side of the business and grows confident that "I can do this, too" and she can. So, she's my apprentice. That's what I call her.

James Blatch: Your little Padawan. Excellent.

Circling back, then, to the idea behind your novel. What percentage, do you think, of your readers are reading your novel and either deliberately looking out for things to help them in their lives or inadvertently are being helped in their lives?

And what percentage are simply enjoying layered characters and reading them like any other romance book?

Elin Peer: That's a difficult one. I would say maybe 90%, 85, maybe 90% are just reading it. Especially the new readers but if I look at the reviews, which I don't do very often, but if I look at the reviews, they often say things like "Wow, I'm sitting back, had not expected that." Alright and so the next book they pick up, they are going to expect something like that.

So, it changes. The people who are coming in right now, picking up the first Men of the North or one of my three books on my website are not going to expect anything else in a romance 'cause that's the plot blurb. I don't talk to them so much about "You can expect this."

And then it also depends what level are they at 'cause if you already know a lot of this stuff, you're just going to go through it like "Yeah, yeah, that's fine" but if you are new to a lot of the coaching tools, then you're going to



be "Wow" and "Ah-ha" and "Whoa, I didn't..." So, it's going to be different for every reader but I can definitely see that a lot of the ones that are my super fans, they expect it and they point it out and they read the books many times which is always a big compliment because they will swallow it and then they will reread it slowly and that's good.

So, maybe 90, 80, somewhere...yeah.

I don't want them to pick it up because they want self help but people who do not have the patience for self help books, they can get a lot.

This is going to be my 19th book coming out as Elin Peer, and in those 19 books, we've covered so much about communication, how to resolve conflicts, low self esteem versus self confidence. All those things that you...deep understanding of what's the difference and why is one better than the other. There's a ton of things in these books.

If you've read every book I've ever written, you're going to have a lot of tools with you that you use in your every day life or maybe not. If you're just going through them like "Next" and there are people like that who just swallow them up.

James Blatch: So, read a romance novel and become a better person.

Elin Peer: Five times a year, I publish a book. About five times a year and they go "Every time I see it's available and it's up, I just drop everything and go read" and that's what you want as an author, isn't it? The book that will keep people reading all night or they will drop everything just because now your book is out.

For me, that's the biggest reward. And then, what they say is, it's like eating chocolate and having the benefit of going to the gym because I indulge in this romance novel with the sexy scenes and all the things that we love about romance but at the same time I'm also getting a new perspective and



new ideas for how I can be resolving a conflict within my life or growing a new perspective on something.

So, yeah, best of both worlds. I really feel like I'm giving sugar coated vitamin pills here.

James Blatch: Well, congratulations on the success and I can see why the books are addictive for your fans who like it because clearly you've got such a great insight into, as I say, the human condition; what we all struggle with and the baggage we are lumbered with. And as we grow up, how we shake ourselves away from it. Maybe, takes people their whole lifetimes sometimes.

And you're prolific. Five books a year. How long are these books?

Elin Peer: Oh, they vary from, I think, 85,000 words to 128,000 words. It's not short stories, let's just put it that way. The funny thing is they keep getting longer and every time, my readers say "They're too short." They're just too short and that's a good thing, again. They want more. I take that as a compliment.

James Blatch: That's an impressive word count by anyone's measure. Doing five of those a year. So, you're writing 1,500, 2,000 words a day every day.

Elin Peer: I don't write every day, though. I'm more of a sprint. So, I'll sit down on the weekends and I'll do 10,000 words. For me, and this has been just for me, I have a window of time with my kids that they want me and need me. So, I really do put that first but on the side of that, I'm able to still work around.

'Cause I take my kids to basketball but then I'll sit in the car and just type a thousand words while I wait for them. So, it is my full time job and I do spend a lot of time doing it but I work it around other things. Yeah.



James Blatch: Well, that's one of the great benefits of this lifestyle, isn't it? That you can do that and why would you not? Because, we both have daughters about the same age and it's going to be the blink of an eye when they're not here and they don't want your company. So, absolutely make the most of it now.

Elin Peer: And, that's also why I'm bringing her in. If you have a kid or a spouse for that matter, but if you have someone in your life who is interested in this.

So, what I did, for interest, was my kid was very interested in the whole process. She's not allowed to yet write. I'll do that but what I did ask of her was that she also becomes a coach.

She is very into sports and she worked hard, but she's now a sports psychology coach. 'Cause, again, this is what makes, I think, my books of a high quality is that I understand people and we read about people because we want to identify with them, right?

If you want to be a good author, then get this foundation down. Understand dynamics, understand psychology 'cause that will make you stronger as an author; or at least that's what it's been like for and she did it.

If your kids are interested, you can also point it back at them and go "Then show me you're interested. Show me your serious 'cause then I will involve you."

And, so I pay her. I pay her to plot with me. It's an after school job, you can say, 'cause then it becomes serious and no doubt, people may smile, but she is a major part of my success 'cause she does not have the fear of going anywhere. She will push the characters. She has a deep and good understanding of people. Comes with growing up with a mom who's a coach and sits and talks a lot.



I feel like I'm giving her the tools to go and do what I do and be a great partner for me if she really wants to do it. Obviously, we'll have to see down the road.

James Blatch: I like the fact you've got an apprentice with a kind of line drawing near. You can plot at the moment and, at some point...this is a proper apprenticeship staged over a period of time and she's not going to burn out quickly. She's going to learn how to train thoroughly under you, I think.

Elin Peer: And we have some good discussions. She challenges me 'cause she's very opinionated.

James Blatch: I know that feeling.

Elin Peer: I encourage that but also, in a productive way but it is a very strong back and forth "Seriously, you want to have him...but if he gets hurt, people are going to not like it." Yeah, but..."

So, we have these going back and forth and it is of great value to me 'cause everyone who's ever plotted know you're going to...the whole bouncing back ideas just makes it get to a higher level and she does that with me and not everybody can do it.

My youngest is eleven but when we went to Bali and she met all these amazing people and we were sharing also "What are you making? What are you making?"

We sat with one of them who is 25 and travels the world and writes books and he's making close to a million a year. And, my eleven year old, that impressed her and she said, after, she said "I want to be part of this book business but I don't want to write so much as I want to do what dad does."

So, it became kind of obvious. She loves social media. I don't. But, she loves graphic things. So, now I'm introducing her to Book Brush where we



can...If you don't know Book Brush, you need to look it up 'cause it's amazing. And so, she can help me with graphical design 'cause it's so simple and we can work together.

That process does not have to wait until they are adults. You can start it slow and let them be part of it. And the pride, James, that they have, that they are allowed and that their opinion matters.

I'm predicting, if she really wants to do it and we will pay her to have it as an afterschool job, by the time she's 16, if you want to put the work in, of course, she can send out newsletters. She can do ads on Facebook with the supervision of her dad.

So, you teach your kids and then, no matter if she wants to do book marketing in the future, she will still know how to promote a product which is a good skill set to have in this modern day and age. So, instead of just feeding our kids and buying things for them, we kind of invite them to take part in the family business.

We have a lot of shared visions. Like we want to be geographically and financially free so we can go wherever we want to go, right?

And this is what it looks like. If you want that for yourself, then let us show you what we do; how we do it. If that makes sense.

James Blatch: It does make sense. It sounds brilliant and I think that there's no part of the skills you're teaching aren't going to go amiss. In fact, one of the big areas, I think, at the moment is there are quite a lot of authors who frequently say to us "Can you do my marketing for me?" And they just don't want to do it themselves.

And so, there's this massive growth of home base, basically publishing companies, but they're run on a much more indie basis and I can quite see your daughter, if it does take off for her, she doesn't want to write and



doesn't want to work in your business, but some point she can very easily be doing this for other people and there's definite scope for that.

Elin, look, it's been brilliant. Thank you so much. People may have heard this fairly heavy rain on my roof here. It's supposed to be snowing but, inevitably, it's just raining here in the UK and I want to thank you because I have had a broadband explosion at the end of last week that only just got resolved.

You were very patient with me over a few days whilst I argued with one of the largest companies in Britain. Try and desperately persuade them to reinstall the basic broadband that we took out.

So, thank you for that. It's been really fascinating. Really unusual, I think, interview as well. Just in terms of your background moving into novels. Very very character driven, that insight into humans and how well that's gone for you and how well it's made the books work.

Elin Peer: Thank you. Thank you so much for having me.

James Blatch: You've spent some time on the beach with the Peers. Was it the whole family there or was it just Mr. and Mrs?

Mark Dawson: There were three of them. So, yes, they were lovely. I met them...I didn't think I saw them at the conference itself but I was at breakfast one morning and they introduced themselves and said that they had flown over to...well, one of the reasons was to see me, which was extremely flattering.

They're lovely so I had a good chat with them all. Interesting to see that Mr. Peer works for Microsoft, I think, and handles kind of the more technical side of the business.



But, there were several husband wife couples, actually, in Bali. Perhaps not surprising given that it was a great excuse to have a tax free holiday and interesting to see how they all work.

We had a couple of them on the podcast before but interesting to see how everyone divies up the responsibilities. One will be doing the writing and another will be doing the marketing and all that kind of stuff.

It's a really good idea. It was lovely to see how well they've done. They're really professional. The content is excellent and it covers a great...the marketing is obviously on point because they've taken the 101 course, which is always a good idea and it's just lovely to see them doing so well. It was a pleasure to meet them.

James Blatch: Very interesting with her background having listened to these couples in the depths of despair at the point of break up and using that in the books and putting her fictional characters into desperate straits and then rescuing them because of the knowledge she's got about how the human condition works and so on.

That's how she got her knowledge for her books.

How do you understand our former MI6 assassins who are now alcoholics? Where'd you get that insight from, Mark Dawson?

Mark Dawson: Well, if I told you, James, I'd have to hunt you down and eliminate you. Even if it is your birthday.

James Blatch: It is my birthday. Finally, you mentioned it. I thought you weren't going to mention it.

Mark Dawson: 60 today. You don't look a day over 65.

James Blatch: 60. How rude. 42...ish.

Mark Dawson: Bollocks.



PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

James Blatch: Yeah. Okay, good. Well, thank you so much indeed for joining me on my birthday and thank you for your wishes as you've sent them along. This is going to go out a week today.

We're recording this on the 8th of February and it's going to go out on whatever the 15th is, whatever it is, can't do maths, next week.

I've been doing the scheduling today because we've got loads of interviews in the cans; some really good ones. Big stars, people like Craig Martelle, big prominent people in the industry coming up in the next few weeks and I'm looking forward to those.

I'm going to say thank you. I'm off to get drunk 'cause that's...

Mark Dawson: Have you noticed anything different in my shot, James, for those who are watching on YouTube?

James Blatch: Well, I've got a slightly different shot, of course.

Mark Dawson: Oh yes, you do. You won't be able to see.

James Blatch: The folks at home.

Mark Dawson: So, the folks at home will be able to see, over my shoulder, the...which shoulder? That one, that the counter that we've got for the Facebook likes. I switched that over this one. So, I haven't suddenly added 20,000 to my author page. That's the SPF count now, so...

James Blatch: Oh, okay.

Mark Dawson: I thought it was more appropriate to have the SPF count for the podcast and, of course, if I do author things, readers will think I'm more popular than I really am. So, everyone's a winner.

James Blatch: I could get one and stick it on the wall there.



Mark Dawson: You can get Instagram. You should get an Instagram one.

James Blatch: I'll do that because we're making progress on Instagram, aren't we?

Mark Dawson: We aren't, Lucy is.

James Blatch: Lucy is, yes, she is.

Mark Dawson: Lucy is running that and doing a very good job.

James Blatch: And the Instagram course has now been added to Ads for Authors and we have an interview with Stuart Grant which is in the pipeline as well.

Mark Dawson: What else do we have of our Instagram?

James Blatch: The only thing of our Instagram, which is very interesting, is...I don't know. Panicked for time. I can't think what else we've got of our Instagram.

Mark Dawson: I'll give you a clue. There's lots of them behind me.

Mark Dawson: It's a book.

James Blatch: Yes. We have a book. Excellent point. We have a very good book. Very detailed, very detailed, really well illustrated, put together by Stuart with the team here at SPF and you can download that book.

James Blatch: And the cost of that book, Mark, how much does it cost?

Mark Dawson: It costs et all...

James Blatch: Et all, otherwise known, as completely free to you. You can get that book at selfpublishingformula.com/instagrambook.



PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

Mark Dawson: All one word and if you go there, you can download the book and yes, it's a really good book. Excellent. We'll have Stuart on to talk through the process soon.

Mark Dawson: I am trying to get into Instagram. I'm a bit of a Twitter and Facebook person. How many social media platforms can one person run?

James Blatch: Yes.

Mark Dawson: I'm trying to get into Instagram a bit more. I do like the photographs and the visuals on it.

James Blatch: I think that's it. We'll mention the Instagram book at the beginning of next week's podcast 'cause it needs a push and we should've mentioned it earlier but well done for remembering at the last minute like my birthday.

Mark Dawson: I remembered everything. I just dole out my information over the course of the hour so there we are. I saved it. The two best bits for the end.

James Blatch: As my editor says, you allow it to unfold.

Mark Dawson: I do, yes. I have a natural flair for that kind of thing.

James Blatch: Thank you very much indeed. I am now going to get drunk. Goodbye.

Mark Dawson: Bye bye.

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