

[00:00:08] **Becca:** Good evening everyone. Thank you so much for joining me. I hope you are all really, really well. I'm very excited today because we've got lots of people on the call with us. Usually I only have one person to chat to, but I've got lots of people to chat to tonight. Uh, I am joined by the wonderful 20 21, 20 22 cohort from the Ultimate Novel Writing Program and their wonderful tutor, Helen.

[00:00:31] So we are gonna be chatting all about their roots to publication, what it's been like being newly published authors and all of that good stuff. So start having a think about any questions you want to be asking our lovely authors here, or our tutor, and I'm going to hand it over to them so that they can introduce themselves.

[00:00:49] So Helen, let's start with you. If you want to tell everyone a little bit about yourself.

[00:00:54] **Helen:** Yeah, so I mean, I've been teaching on the ultimate novel writing program. I believe it's now [00:01:00] called, it was called of course, well done, um, for six or seven years now. But my background is in publishing and, and I still, uh, work as a freelance editor and, um, and yeah, so, you know, started off in um, as assistance military agents, and then moved across to Faber and Faber and worked there for about 10 years and then did various different things after that. I worked as an international book scout. I did various work for agencies and so on, but always sort of always, working in publishing and yeah. And I was lucky enough to have, uh, have this rogue robot as one of my, as one of my years.

[00:01:43] So

[00:01:43] **Becca:** very pleased to be here. Brilliant. Thanks so much. And let's move on to our wonderful author. So Nikki, let's start with you. Could you tell us a bit about yourself and your book?

[00:01:53] **Nicky:** Hi everyone. I'm Nikki Downs and I wrote Silent Fall on the course, which is a book [00:02:00] featuring a climbing detective called DI Jack Kent.

[00:02:04] Amazing.

[00:02:04] **Becca:** And who was that published by Nikki. Storm. It's published by Storm Publishing. Brilliant. Thank you, Alan. Let's go to you.

[00:02:12] **Alan:** Hi. So my name's Alan Fraser and I was in the group with these, uh, this lot. And I, uh, I wrote The Muse of Hope for this book on the course, and that was published in 2023 by Lightning Books.

[00:02:26] **Becca:** Amazing. And have you guys come to the London Festival of Writing last year? I believe it was, was it the year before? That's Alan was, uh, teaching a session there. So, uh, we, we love doing that. We love getting our success stories back for events. Jackie Soy. Oh, Nick. Yes. You were as well, weren't you? Yeah, I thought about that.

[00:02:45] We've got loads of people who have come back. Brilliant. Uh, Jackie, we're gonna have to get you in for a session at some point at the festival. Can we, uh, can you introduce yourself as well, please?

[00:02:54] **Jackie:** Yeah. Um, I'm Jack Chandler. I live in Germany with my husband and two children. My first [00:03:00] book Ripped Into was published on 1st of May and became a hot new release.

[00:03:05] Within five days of publication and an Amazon bestseller within 13 days, I self-published it and I still don't believe it. The book, the pitch for the book is, the Job is Risky, but Simple. Find the girl, get her out, bring her home easy for the girl won't cooperate. The killers who had her want her back, and now they know where Fin Lives.

[00:03:25] The sequel 13 Chances is out for pre-order and will be released next month.

[00:03:30] **Becca:** Perfect. You've been working on your pitch, haven't you?

[00:03:33] **Jackie:** Absolutely.

[00:03:35] **Becca:** Very good. And Becky, let's go to you as well.

[00:03:38] **Becky:** Hi, I am Becky Jones. On the course I wrote Searching for Amy, which is a young adult title about a girl whose first sexual experience is videoed and shared online without her consent.

[00:03:51] And it's published by Elm Books who you won't have heard of because that is me. So yeah, I'm, I'm self published to.

[00:03:58] **Becca:** Amazing. Well, that's great. [00:04:00] So we've got two self-published authors on the call as well. So if you have any questions about self-publishing, we can answer those. So do start popping your questions into the chat.

[00:04:09] If you look at the q and a tab, that's where I will be looking for questions. I've got some questions to kick us off. Um, and then we will go to the q and A tab, so make sure you're popping them in there. So I'm gonna start off, we've already said that two of you are self-published, but I wanna ask what your roots to publication have looked like.

[00:04:29] So we'll go to each of you again for this one. So Nikki, what was your route to publication like?

[00:04:36] **Nicky:** Well, when I actually started the course, I hadn't written a word of silent fall, so I actually wrote it completely on the course and finished it. Just as we ended, I'd edited it and everything. I had my package already and I'd heard about Storm.

[00:04:50] They were a new digital first publisher, so I thought. Why not give them a go And with, often with digital first publishers, you just send them the whole novel. [00:05:00] You don't do the 10,000 words in a submission, you just send the whole novel off and they promised to get back to you within two weeks. I think it was actually far less than that.

[00:05:10] I got an email saying, oh, I'm really enjoying your novel. Tell us a little bit about yourself. And I mean, that was just amazing. I didn't, I must admit, I wasn't quite sure how to respond to it at first. But at the same time, the anthology went out as well from the course, which includes a small section of what you've written and that goes to a lot of agents.

[00:05:33] And I had an agent contact me pretty much at the same time, and I had to say to them, look, I'm gonna have to give you the full, if you want to look at it. Rather than the first 10,000. And she was happy with that and came back to me and Storm offered me a three book deal and the agent offered me representation.

[00:05:52] So I had to choose between those two things, which was really frightening. And I

[00:05:58] **Helen:** did

[00:05:58] **Nicky:** what an amazing position to be in [00:06:00]

[00:06:00] **Helen:** Interrupt was Storm basically sort of saying that, you know, they just don't deal with agents and so it was, it was either them or it was an agent.

[00:06:09] **Nicky:** They didn't get No, no, they didn't say that at all.

[00:06:11] But I just, you know, I thought, well, I've actually got something on the table and I think that's just, I decided just to go with that in the end. Yeah, I know a lot of people, you know, get agents and it takes a long time to, to be published and I, I dunno, maybe I was just too keen to get started. I don't know.

[00:06:30] You never know it's the right thing. Do you But. It stands out? Well, if you've got a

[00:06:33] **Becca:** book deal on the table, then it's, you start to question do I need the literary agent? So it's a really good position to be in. I, I'm published by Digital First Publisher, but I got my agent first, so I'm actually kind of doing both.

[00:06:45] So yeah, it's, it's really, really interesting. Alan, what was your road to publication like?

[00:06:51] **Alan:** It was, uh, long and rocky. So I started writing about 10 years ago, and I wrote like 192,000 word novel, at which point I then [00:07:00] started trying to learn about how you should write a novel. And, um, that was when I came across Jericho.

[00:07:04] And, um, I actually written the first draft before I started on the course. So I'd done, I'd done a draft or two, but I think I've probably done my second draft. And so the course was really kind of, polish in it. And I'd had, I got a full manuscript request pretty early doors and I got another one a bit later.

[00:07:23] I, I was, I was getting reasonably close, but not really not really landing, not landing a deal or not landing an agent. And I tried start trying small presses and was, again, getting a little bit of interest but not managing to land anything. And, uh, it was actually at the last York conference that we had.

[00:07:42] I kind of sat down, haven't had a pretty depressing agent one-to-one. Uh, you know, basically the agent has said, uh, you know, this is, I'm sorry, but this is Unpublishable now, you know, the, the industry's changed you, you can't

get this through. And uh, I sat down and don't even bother. And she just have one more spin.

[00:07:58] She said, just have one more spin. [00:08:00] So I sent it out to five or six more people and I got two offers of publication from small presses. And I went with lightning because they were. They were the, um, they were the most established one. You know, they, they've been around in one form or another for nearly 30 years.

[00:08:17] So I think it's 30 years next year. So, uh, they hadn't been publishing fiction as long as that, but, uh, I books their, their nonfiction imprints been around since 96, so they felt like they were fairly solid and, um, you know, I, they, they were really, you know, they were, for a small press, they were really good actually.

[00:08:35] Some of the horror stories you hear about small presses, they, you know, they were professional, they were prompt, they, you know, they, uh, they did what they could. And, uh, you know, the whole publishing experience for me, uh, you know, was, was really positive with that.

[00:08:49] **Becca:** Well, I think that's probably really, really lovely to hear for anyone who's watching this who has faced rejection and has been told maybe that their novel is unpublishable, like [00:09:00] that is just one person's opinion and there will be someone's opinion who differs from that.

[00:09:04] And I think it also highlights the value of having a mentor or, or being on a course like this. 'cause you, you said to Helen, you know, what should I do? And she said, give it one more crack. And, you know, having that person to back you up is really valuable. Jack, what's your, I I love to take claim for this.

[00:09:20] **Helen:** I'm sorry to interrupt you. Yeah, no, absolutely. Do take claim. The one thing I'll say also, just as another point is, um, I was reminded recently about the story around Lord of the Flies, where, um, Charles Monti, who was the editor at Faber. Had, um, opinions on Lord of the Flies from all of his colleagues saying, unpublishable kind of non, um, et cetera.

[00:09:42] And actually it was just that there, there was a kind of opening chapter that was a bit dodgy, and when he got beyond the opening chapter, he was like, this is a work of genius. So, you know, um, again just hopeful.

[00:09:54] **Becca:** Yeah. Very good point. Thank you. Jack, what was your publication journey like?[00:10:00]

[00:10:00] **Jackie:** Uh, even longer and Rockier, I started writing in my early teens. I think round 12 I started writing this book actually. I ended up self-publishing three books after years and years of trying with agents and getting nowhere. Before I came across Jerich writers, I had no idea what I was doing. The books went out into the world to a resounding silence.

[00:10:25] Nothing sold. Everything was rubbish. And then I found Jericho and I learned a lot more about my craft and about the publishing industry and what I was doing wrong and what I needed to do. And I went back to trying for agents and publishers and still got nowhere. And I realized I, I had several epiphanies.

[00:10:48] Sophie Flynn told me that you have to want self-publishing. It's not a second choice. It is an actual choice. You choose to self-publish if that's what you want to do. Don't think that you're gonna sell polish just because [00:11:00] you can't get an agent. And then I read something from Harry Bingham where he said that he had to buy back the rights to his book and it cost him 10,000.

[00:11:08] I dunno if that was dollars or pounds, but he, he had sold them and the book hadn't done well, and it hadn't been well packaged, it hadn't been well presented, and he ended up buying the rights back. And I didn't like that story. And I, so I learned what it was that I meant to do. I invested in the program, I wanna say the course, I'm sorry.

[00:11:33] Me too. Me too. Another writing program. And I decided I was gonna take it seriously. I was, I was gonna actually devote time to this, and it wasn't gonna be the lowest priority I had in my life anymore. And so I learned an awful lot. And the very last month of that, which was genius, was Harry's homework on how to self publish.

[00:11:52] And it, it was just a month's worth of homework in one go, and it was really comprehensive. And I took a lot of time over it. [00:12:00] And then Nikki got her publishing deal and it opened my eyes to what the industry was like if you wanted to get a publisher. And I, I wasn't very happy with it. And I decided I do like control.

[00:12:14] I must admit, I wanted to be able to choose my cover. I wanted to be able to choose my editor. I wanted to be able to choose what keywords went in and to be able to do adverts if I wanted to. And so I did the self-edit course with the wonderful Debbie Alper as well. And I'm learning from David Goran and

Mark Dawson and I self-published this time with a little bit of knowledge, willing to experiment, and so far it's gone.

[00:12:40] Okay.

[00:12:41] **Becca:** It's been a joy watching your journey because, uh, Jack is also a very keen premium member. And, uh, so we quite often will, you know, I think we voted on your cover at one point, or your title or something along those lines. We were all taking votes and it's just been wonderful to see that journey.

[00:12:57] It comes to fruition. Thank you. Um, [00:13:00] okay. Becky, what was your journey like?

[00:13:03] **Becky:** So, I hadn't written anything until about a year before I did the course. In January, 2020, I decided it was time to fulfill what I always told myself, which I wanted to be a writer and started writing just to see if I actually could.

[00:13:17] So I wrote a few short stories, um, and then I started writing a novel. Hadn't got a clue what I was doing. Got really stuck. Um, got an email from Jericho saying. Are you writing a novel? Are you stuck? I said oh's mind reading. So I applied for the program, uh, and got a place. And then I was with these guys and I had massive imposter syndrome 'cause like everyone else had written a book or written a draft or written loads of books.

[00:13:45] And I was like, oh my God, I haven't written anything. So, uh, the first few weeks of posting homework was a bit intimidating. But it was great. I mean, the support of the peer group was fantastic. So I did the same as really, I, I had written about 20,000 words, but [00:14:00] I've mainly wrote the book in the course of the program hopefully.

[00:14:04] Uh, and got my manuscript assessment done by Helen and everybody in the group read each other's stuff. And then I did start like, I'm just laughing at what Jackie just said about Sophie's advice. 'cause that was the opposite of me. I was like, I'm not even doing Harry's self-publishing homework because I'm never self-publishing.

[00:14:23] Because I don't wanna do that. Can't be bothered. I want to do a traditional publishing route, blah, blah, blah. So obviously that didn't work out. Um, I, I

[00:14:31] **Jackie:** made up for it. I gave him reams and reams of homework to mark. Yeah.

[00:14:37] **Becky:** I was on holiday and I, I just thought, oh, you know, I don't think that's the route I'm gonna try.

[00:14:40] So I tried submitting to agents, somebody's asked in the chat about like, how many agents you should try. I think I tried about 30. And like everyone tells you, oh, you're gonna get rejections. And you think, oh, that's okay. I'm gonna get rejected. I'm fine about that. But it, it does not give confidence after a bit.

[00:14:57] And you do start to think maybe this is crap. [00:15:00] Um, anyway, then I got one full manuscript request, which I got really overexcited about. And she had it for ages. It was like, great, what Nikki said about Storm getting back to you within two weeks. 'cause you feel like you wanna like say you read it yet, you know, what are you doing?

[00:15:15] And I didn't hear from her for a while. And then when she got back to me, she said that she didn't wanna take it on, but she gave me some like quite comprehensive feedback, which I think is maybe a bit unusual for a agent that isn't gonna take your book. And it was like, I'd done a few edits by then and it was a bit like there's quite a significant change that I needed to make and I was a bit like, I don't think I can face this.

[00:15:37] So I left it for a few weeks and then I thought it sort of sat with me and I thought, actually I agree with what she's saying, I think it will make it a better book. So I did the edit and then I didn't do anything with it for ages 'cause I just couldn't face like every submission's, a bit time consuming, every rejection, all destroying.

[00:15:56] And I just left it for ages. I got a new job. I was [00:16:00] really busy, and then after a while I thought, this is mad. I've got a book sitting on my laptop that no one's reading. I think it's quite good. I'm just gonna publish it and if no one reads it and no one likes it, at least it's a book and it's not just a manuscript on my documents folder.

[00:16:15] Um, so I did, so yeah, it was, it was not what I thought was gonna do. Uh, and actually I quite enjoyed the process and I'm quite enjoying the process as it continues. So, yeah, so I wouldn't say like anyone who's on the call, like if you don't think self publishing for you, you know, you might change your mind.

[00:16:36] And it isn't as kind of daunting as you might think. Yeah.

[00:16:40] **Helen:** Yeah. And also, you know, another thing to sort of say is that I'm working with a couple of writers at the moment who've said to me very definitively that they have no intention ever of going down the traditional route, which is quite an unusual thing to hear, you know, they just said, absolutely, I'm self-publishing, and that is the only way I will ever be published.

[00:16:56] And, so yeah just to reaffirm that sort of sense [00:17:00] that it's, they're more, you never know.

[00:17:01] **Becca:** Yeah.

[00:17:02] **Helen:** Lots of ways of doing it.

[00:17:04] **Becca:** So Helen, how did when you were working with these guys, did you kind of have, uh, an inkling that they would get published? What was the experience like working with these guys?

[00:17:15] See seeing these books coming out there, you're,

[00:17:21] I'm making you go

[00:17:22] **Helen:** right back now. Oh my God. You know, I, I, one of the things that I take away every year, and I know that this sounds disingenuous, but genuinely every year from the course, is working with people who are really good at what they do, who are really interesting to be around, who I enjoy having conversations with.

[00:17:40] However, I will say that this year in particular, and I promise I'm not trying to, um, compliment you, was one of those years where I, I genuinely felt like I had sort of, I think I had 10 writers and I felt like I had 10 writers in my hands who were all doing really interesting things and who I really hoped I [00:18:00] hoped would get published.

[00:18:00] Of course, I couldn't know for, for certain, but yeah I definitely had a sort of sense that, you know, that this was a bit of a stellar year. And I think that in term, in particularly in terms of the way in which you engaged with each other and where each other's sort of peers and read each other's works, that was also, you know, and again, I've had that most years, every year really.

[00:18:23] I've had people that have been very supportive of one another, but it was a particularly prime year for that. Yeah.

[00:18:31] **Becca:** Amazing. I do have some other questions, but I can see lots and lots of questions coming in. So I'm gonna start going to the, uh, audience questions so that we've got time for them. So we've answered Janna's already.

[00:18:42] So Susan wants to know, what do you know now about publishing that you wish you knew before publishing? Okay. So does anyone particular want to answer that or should I pick random people? I'll do picking. Alan, you're looking very thoughtful. Let's go [00:19:00] to you.

[00:19:01] **Alan:** I, I suppose I, I had quite naive expectations 'cause when I started writing that you'd write something, you'd send it off and someone would go, God, you're talented and write straight back and say so.

[00:19:13] So I think the, you know, I say I, I got two office of publication across the two books that I'd written that was submission, I think number 104 and 108. You know of it, you know, it was. It was to, to agents and publishers. It was a long process. So it does, it, it does require quite a bit of emotional resilience as Becky has, has alluded to to keep going.

[00:19:42] When you know it, it feels like, you know, you're never gonna get there. And, um, you do need a peer group, I think to keep you going. So I, when I started the program I said. You know, I'm gonna do my book and obviously there'll be other people doing it with me, [00:20:00] but I didn't really quite understand, I think how much the group, and obviously we are, we are in touch still now, you know, we still, um, uh, we still made up and keep each other going and all the rest of it.

[00:20:10] Mm-hmm. Um, you know, we I think that it does help actually to be part of a, to be part of a group, which I, I, when I started the course, I didn't really. Understand that at all, that actually being part of a community and having a tribe is hugely helpful. Even if you don't end up getting published or getting published in the way that you wanna get published or having the success that you imagine you're gonna have, it's just good to be part of a group of people trying to do the same thing.

[00:20:41] **Becca:** Yeah. Actually, I think Nikki, that's exactly what your talk was at the festival wasn't, it was talking about finding your group of people and, and all of that kind of thing. Oh,

[00:20:51] **Nicky:** absolutely. Yeah, because I think that was the biggest surprise for me when I actually, was published in just how supportive the communities are.[00:21:00]

[00:21:00] I mean, I'm a crime writer and, but it's not just that those that write crime, it's everybody will get, will support you if you're ever stuck for anything, if you're feeling a bit down because I, I have to say the market at the moment, the industry is really tough. And everybody's saying that, you know, even the most successful authors are still finding things quite tough.

[00:21:22] And one of the things I probably didn't expect so much is just how much you have to put in yourself now, particularly in relation to marketing and, and get, and, you know, getting your name across or getting your book out there. I wish I'd listened to Jackie 'cause she's like that. She's superb Bassett.

[00:21:43] Listen to what, what she's doing now. And I'm like, oh, I didn't, I think of that. But this, you know, this is how we learn. We learn from each other and I really, you know, if you can be part of a writer's group or be involved obviously in, in Jericho and, and use all of the things that [00:22:00] Jericho provide, like townhouse to, to have those discussions because you do need support.

[00:22:06] Yeah, and sometimes you can, it can be very difficult and you do need to talk that through as well. Yeah, for

[00:22:11] **Becca:** sure. Really good advice. Um, okay, so, uh, Dimitri's asking, do you recommend any craft books? If so, which ones? Helen, I'm gonna go to you first for this. Yeah. And the rest of you wave your hand at me if you've got a suggestion.

[00:22:24] **Helen:** Yeah. So, um, the, the book that I tend to refer to the most is Alice Laplant. I think it's called, uh, I forget what it's called. It's the the making of a story it's called. Um, and the reason I like it is that she's very intelligent and she writes very articulately about, you know, in, in, in lots of detail about about the various different elements of crafting a novel.

[00:22:48] But she also constantly refers to and quotes at length from the. Writers. And I think that that's the thing that I really get a lot from that book. Because, you know, it is all very well [00:23:00] sort of talking in theory about the craft of writing, but when you're sort of saying, and here's what I mean, and crafting and, and, you know, quoting from a really diverse range of writers that are writing completely different genres but showing off what they're doing.

[00:23:13] Yeah, I, I get, I get, you know, I, that's the one I dip into the most, I would say. But the also would mention, uh, will store whose, um, science of storytelling is, is extremely good, um, in a different way. But yeah, those are the two that I tend to sort of dip into.

[00:23:31] **Becca:** Brilliant. Has anyone else got any recommendations for craft books or any that they've particularly enjoyed?

[00:23:36] **Jackie:** I, I'd go with Save the Cat. I, I did actually get a lot out of Save the Cat. It really helped explain the structure to make. Yep.

[00:23:46] **Becca:** That's always a good, but I've read low.

[00:23:51] Um, okay, so question for the self-publishers in the group. When would you know when your book is ready for publication? [00:24:00] Becky, let's start with you.

[00:24:02] **Becky:** God, that's a really difficult question. I think, um, because I'd done a lot of I had like cript assessment from Helen and I'd had other people be to read it and then I'd done this kind of massive read draft.

[00:24:15] I probably didn't get it read after that, which I maybe should have done, but I think I'd left it quite a long time. And they always say like. Leave it for a while and come back to it. But I think when you, when you are in the middle of the, the program you kind of took vitally, you wanna get on with it.

[00:24:30] And actually having a bit of space from it was helpful for me because I came back to it and I actually reread the whole thing. Um, and I, I liked it and I, I kind of in my mind had gone off it a bit and I was a bit like, that book I wrote that no one wanted to publish, you know, and when reading it again, I was like, I actually think this is ready to go.

[00:24:49] So I did have it copy edited, someone's asked about editing and stuff. I had it copy edited. Um, and then, then I, I just thought it was ready to go. But I think definitely [00:25:00] like, use Beta readers, you know, maybe even someone who, you know, as, as Nikki was saying about having a a tribe is really helpful. So like we've read each other's books, you know, we've read other short stories and things that, that we've written.

[00:25:13] And I think it's, it's helpful to have someone else's input, but I guess, I don't know. No guys when is it ready? It's mine felt fine. I finished it and it was funny 'cause when after I'd finished my first draft, I wrote another chapter

and nobody told me it needed it, but I suddenly went, no, I've left a loose bed here.

[00:25:33] I need to tie something up, but I've just left hanging. And so I kind of added it in afterwards. But, um, yeah, I don't know. I just, I just felt it was final. I couldn't really do anything more to it. But then the other thing is like, every time you look at it, you want to tweak something. So

[00:25:49] **Becca:** Yeah. And you can't get into that vicious cycle of just constantly speaking

[00:25:54] **Becky:** No.

[00:25:55] **Helen:** And ask to ask a slightly controversial question. Did any of you find [00:26:00] the advice of loved ones slightly unhelpful in the sense that, you know, they're your loved ones and so therefore, you know, you might kind of think,

[00:26:09] **Becky:** Hmm, not sure. I didn't really get, like no one, no one gave me that in depth comment.

[00:26:17] Right. The people that I spoke to were people that were, if they were friends, they were also writers, or they were people whose reading I really trusted. You know, I didn't, like my mom did read it, but she just said there's a lot of swear words in it, and she found it quite disturbing. So I didn't really,

[00:26:34] yeah,

[00:26:36] **Jackie:** my mom read it and she wanted to know why I can't write nice things.

[00:26:41] I get that comment a lot. Alan, you've got thoughts? I can see you.

[00:26:45] **Alan:** Well, yes. I was gonna say, I, my, my wife who I think is in, in a different room doing yoga, so I'll say, I don't think she can hear me at the moment, but she, she will not say yeah, but it sag a bit in chapter three or something like that.

[00:26:59] [00:27:00] Yeah. That's the kind of stuff you want, just Yeah, it's really good and. And you think Yeah, but it, it, you know, is there anything you would change? You go? No, I think it's really good. I mean, it's lovely, but it's not helpful really. And I wouldn't, I mean, I wouldn't give any of my books to

my mother in any, I mean, I wouldn't tell my mother anything in any circumstances.

[00:27:18] But yeah it's, um, uh, when she did read the book afterwards, she was, again, she was a bit I think, upset and shocked that her child had written something, which I don't think my book is particularly outrageous, that this kind of criminality that's, that's sort the heart of the book really was, uh, was that her son had come through.

[00:27:40] I think it's much better actually to get feedback from people who are basically paid to to, to be horrible with you. You know, also,

[00:27:48] **Becky:** I think, I think I, just to add to that, like you can pay. Someone but you, it's also quite important that you find someone that you trust their opinion. Yeah, because I paid a copy editor who I think one of you guys [00:28:00] recommended, I can't remember who I went with, but, and like she was a really good copy editor, but she had some comments which I hadn't really asked for.

[00:28:06] And I like absolutely, fundamentally disagreed with all of them. And, but it sort of, it does at least reassure you that you feel really confident in what you've written and you know, and what your characters are doing and in what they're saying and everything. When someone challenges it. Yeah. And you go, yeah, but they wouldn't say that.

[00:28:24] You know. Yeah. You know, so I think it's maybe difficult. Certainly like, massively valuable if you find someone who's opinion you trust.

[00:28:32] Yeah.

[00:28:32] **Becky:** And you know, that person, someone you can continue to work with, I think that's really valuable and made through the program or you know, someone you pay or whatever.

[00:28:41] But I think that continuity's really important.

[00:28:44] **Nicky:** Yeah, I have to say that my editor at Storm is, is just wonderful and we'll, we'll sit and have a Zoom call and she'll should have picked up certain things that she thinks that that need filling out or explaining better or things that need [00:29:00] cutting. And I don't think we've ever completely disagreed on anything and we've got such a good working relationship together.

[00:29:07] And that's the one thing I think if anyone said to me, what's, what's been the best thing about being published by a publisher? I, I'd say the editing has been absolutely fantastic. So Kate Smith is my amazing, yeah, I, I thought that as a control. I do feel

[00:29:24] **Helen:** that, you know, just from my experience of, of editing for so many years, when it works at its best, it's a, it feels like a collaborative process.

[00:29:32] Now that's not to take anything away from you writers who produce the book in the first place, but when you are the editor and you feel like you're on the same page. That's a really nice feeling, you know, that you are kind of discussing something and pushing ideas backwards and forwards and, maybe the, maybe said right.

[00:29:49] And might say, Hey, I'm not sure I agree with that, but you kind of then think about it and then have a conversation about it and yeah, that's a nice feeling.

[00:29:58] **Becca:** Amazing. Um, we've got a [00:30:00] question about marketing and we've already established that Jack just knows everything there is to know about marketing.

[00:30:04] So I'm gonna go to you Course Yeah. For this one. Um, so the question is, uh, I've heard more and more about publishers wanting people to have a marketing social presence. How do you do your marketing as both tradition and publish and self-published authors? So Jack, tell us a little bit about your marketing strategy.

[00:30:23] **Jackie:** Okay. Um, I don't have. Really one. So I am not on social media and I don't think you need to be on social media. And this is another thing that Harry said, which I just, I'm so grateful to him when he said that I could have kissed him all over. I don't like social media. I am on Facebook because I know that I want to do Facebook ads at some point, but so far I haven't done any ads, not one.

[00:30:51] What I have done is I have asked for interviews. I have done promotions. So [00:31:00] if you get a promotion like BookBub, and there's an awful load out there that are similar to BookBub, although not anywhere near its league. If you go to Nicholas, Eric Nicholas, Eric has got a site of the promotion sites that you can trust.

[00:31:16] And if you go to Nicholas, Eric, I think it is nicholas eric.com, although I'm, I'm not sure about that, just Google, Nicholas, Eric, and he will tell you the promotion sites that are worth trying. And so what I did was I was really naughty. I took everybody in my contacts list and I put them on mailer light, which you're not meant to do.

[00:31:36] And if Mailer Light asked me or ask you, please tell them that I didn't do that. And I emailed everybody and I said to them what I was doing. And I said that, you know, just unsubscribe if you're not interested. And I asked everybody to be an ARC reader for me. That was about 240 people. And I sent my book out free to all of them and asked them if they would leave a [00:32:00] review for me when the launch came.

[00:32:02] And then I did a whole series of e emails just for them, just for that group. And then when it launched, I had set up 13 days of promotions. So with a promotion, uh, what you do is you give it to you, you tell a particular website that you are putting your book at 99 cents for that one day only, which is not true.

[00:32:28] And they will then advertise it to everybody on their newsletter distribution list saying This book is 99 cents for today only. And then people will buy it, and then people hopefully will review it. And I did 13 of those back to back. And just wanted to see what would happen. I, I wanted to see if I could train Amazon's algorithm.

[00:32:50] I wanted to see whether or not it would work. I didn't know. I have no experience in marketing. I don't know what I'm doing, but I am willing to experiment. But I haven't yet done any ads. I do [00:33:00] wanna do at some point Facebook ads and Amazon ads, but I strongly believe that you won't make any money from it until you have at least two books out there.

[00:33:09] Yeah. So this will come after the second book is released.

[00:33:14] **Becca:** I think there's a lot to say there, Jack, about the, um, the process of nurturing people as well. 'cause I'm on your email list and your emails thank you are very much, they're very much about, you know, nurturing your readers and fostering that relationship with readers.

[00:33:28] And I think there's a really, that's a big part of it. And, uh, you will be pleased to know that Harry has filmed a Facebook ad course. It's not up yet, but he's filmed it and it's all created. I just need to put it all together, so that is coming at some point in the upcoming months. Excellent.

[00:33:45] Um, okay, so we've got a question about small indie publishers. So I'm gonna go to Alan for this one. Traditional publishing contracts offer contract offers from small indie publishers. What are the red flags that I should be looking for? [00:34:00] I've just received an offer, congratulations and would like to respond to it.

[00:34:04] Alan, when you were submitting to indie publishers, what did that look like?

[00:34:07] **Alan:** Well, massive congratulations. Um, right, in terms of red flags. It depends what matters to you really. And so, and what you're looking to get out of it and all the rest of it about how. You know, whether something is really important to you thinking, no, I, if they're not doing that then I'm, I'm not gonna I'm not gonna take part in it.

[00:34:32] I think for me, one, one of the key things. Is making sure that you get a commitment to actually publishing the book because sometimes you can sign over. Books now have known this happen where people will sign over a book which will, will simply for whatever reason and not necessarily people acting maliciously.

[00:34:50] It just will never get published. So with my contracts and the other people I know have published were small. Smaller publishers, there's generally a 12 or an [00:35:00] 18 month clause, which is basically, once we sign off the edit then basically it will be published within that timescale. And if it isn't, the rights revert to you.

[00:35:10] So just make sure that you've got that. Because sometimes things can happen, you know, particularly with small publishers, if someone gets ill or they have a bereavement or what have you, you know, uh, but, but you need to make sure that the rights revert to you automatically after that point. Uh, because, because you don't wanna be stuck in a book which isn't being published and isn't going out.

[00:35:29] I mean, I, I would say for me it was always about putting money in. I didn't want anybody to be asking me to pay for stuff. If you're going for really small publishers. Sometimes they, it's whether you want to go down that partnership publishing route. But you just need to be clear with them what, what it is they're offering and what that, you know, what, how that affects your, your payments back.

[00:35:52] And it's always good to try and retain subsidiary rights. They're publishing your book, but, whilst it's [00:36:00] unlikely that you're gonna get a Hollywood film deal or a Netflix deal or whatever. It's good to be able to retain subsidiary rights. I don't know, it's a red flag, but it's kind of one, it's worth having an argument with them about to see if you can retain that.

[00:36:13] **Nicky:** Yeah. Can I add something in there as well? Because I think it's really important to join Sight of Authors or the riots girl Great Britain because they offer a contractual, you know, they'll look at the contracts that you bought and they will literally go through it and highlight anything that really shouldn't be there.

[00:36:32] I've done that twice now and they've, they've been absolutely fantastic picking things up. Yeah. Um, but often contracts are written quite in legalese and, and if you don't understand it, it's, it's really worth getting that service from what is in effect trade union.

[00:36:49] **Becca:** Yeah, totally agree with that.

[00:36:51] Especially if you, if you don't have a literary agent. 'cause if you do, then obviously that's part of their role is to look over the contracts. But if you are going down the route of submitting directly to publishers, then you [00:37:00] really do need to make sure that you're getting someone like the Society of Authors to look over it.

[00:37:05] Um, great. Okay. So we have a question about the program and how many hours per week approximately one must dedicate to it. Helen, what would you say to that?

[00:37:17] **Alan:** All million hours.

[00:37:20] **Helen:** Well, I mean, I think one of the things that's, you know, at the risk of sitting on the fence, I think one of the things that's quite good about the program, one of the many things that I think is good about it is that is that up to a point you can.

[00:37:33] Pick and choose, you know, and, and something that I always say at the beginning of the course to, to writers is if you have months where just family life has intervened and, and you can't do do as much, that's fine. But then there'll be other months when you can do a lot. And I think, there's a huge amount of content and there's a huge amount that's provided in terms of reading, suggestions and so on.

[00:37:58] You could in, in a [00:38:00] way, how long's a piece of string, like there's so much content. So you could spend every day sort of doing lots and lots of contents reading and and, being in communication with your fellow writers, or you could have days where you just you know, you that for that day you can't afford the time.

[00:38:18] What would you say as an average, I'm, I'm gonna throw this question back at my, my, uh, previous

[00:38:25] **Becca:** cohorts. What did it look like for you guys? How many hours would you say you were working? I, I

[00:38:31] **Jackie:** think you get out of it, what you put in there was actually one class in our year who had voluntarily chosen not to partake in the, uh, homework and not to comment on each other's writing and not to do the group chats and things like that.

[00:38:49] I never understood that group. I thought that that was where the majority of the benefits lay. I would say probably about an hour a [00:39:00] day, maybe an hour and a half. You read through the materials and then you've gotta work on your own thing that you want to submit, and then everybody else submits.

[00:39:09] And I think it's only, is it 500 words or something that everybody submits? Yeah. So you've then got nine lots of 500 words to read through and comment on. So, yeah, I think maybe an hour, maybe an hour and a half a day.

[00:39:23] **Alan:** Yeah, I'm saying it's about seven to 10 hours a week, I would say, generally speaking, yeah.

[00:39:27] **Helen:** Yeah,

[00:39:27] **Jackie:** that's

[00:39:27] **Helen:** what we also, the other thing that I've noticed over the years is that definitely towards the end of the course when everyone's really trying to focus on their own works, it can sort of tail off a little bit in terms of feedback with others. Um, even with you lovely folk who are very supportive of one another, you know, but just at the end of the course, you sort of are a bit more like, do you mind, sorry, I'm, I just this week have to get on with my own book because, you know, I'm near, I'm near the end.

[00:39:54] So, yeah. So I think, I think there is a sort of a slight move away from. [00:40:00] How, from the number of hours towards the end of the 12 months.

[00:40:04] **Becca:** Yeah. I think the other thing to remember as well is on, unlike a lot of online courses, the students on the Osman novel writing program get access to the material forever.

[00:40:13] Yeah. So you, you don't lose access to it. A lot of courses they say like, you only get it for a year or whatever. So even if you don't finish the book, like we, obviously we've got like eight months focusing on drafting and then it goes on to editing and then publishing and all of that side of it. But even if you don't finish the book in the time that you're doing the course, you can revisit the material all the time.

[00:40:36] And you're still chatting to your cohort all the time. So it, you know, it can go on for as long as you need it to. Really. Okay, so editing, let's go to Nikki first. What was the editing process like with your publisher and how long did that process take?

[00:40:54] **Nicky:** It was very deadline, so right from the beginning I knew when the deadlines were gonna come [00:41:00] and I was also able to sort of say, oh, I'm going on holiday that week.

[00:41:04] Please don't put it at the end of that week, or whatever. So I literally had a list of when the copy edit would be done, when the proofread would be done, and when the final edits would be done, and all the way up to publication really. So I had those dates straight away and I think I had probably about a week, two weeks to actually complete it.

[00:41:26] So it was quite, quite quick. Although, I have to say, I, I normally hate editing and anyone who knows me knows I love the writing process, but hate the editing process. And I actually really enjoyed it because I think it was quite tight and I knew I had to do it. So I'd literally have to take myself off to a, a coffee shop or whatever, typical writer thing and go through those edits.

[00:41:50] And I think I was really lucky that I, there was never any sort of big things that came across that I thought, no, I'm not, that I disagree completely with that. [00:42:00] I'd never, there was not much to and throw it was, went through the, the list and if there was anything that I didn't agree with, I just didn't tick it off, if you like.

[00:42:09] Yeah. I do remember one thing which I thought was quite funny because I've got, in my book, I've got, a pathologist, a queer, very feisty pathologist. And when I sent my first copy off, she was, she swore not a lot, but she did swear and I got back. Oh, but you know, the Americans don't like swearing.

[00:42:26] You've got to remove all the swear words. I got

[00:42:28] **Becca:** that

[00:42:29] **Nicky:** as

[00:42:29] **Becca:** well. Book tour

[00:42:30] **Nicky:** said

[00:42:30] **Becca:** that they said, you need to

[00:42:31] **Nicky:** take all the swearing out, all copy editing. And we miss Americans the final bit. I hope. Put them back in.

[00:42:38] **Becca:** Yeah. Yeah. I got exactly the same thing. There's no way She wouldn't swear.

[00:42:43] **Nicky:** So weird, isn't it?

[00:42:44] Yeah. No, I actually really enjoyed it, even though it is quite technical and it's not, it's, yeah, I, I quite like the editing process all the way through.

[00:42:54] **Becca:** Great. Thank you. And Jack, when you were preparing your book for self publication, did you work with an editor?

[00:42:59] **Jackie:** [00:43:00] Yeah, I did. Um, have to say, uh, what the other guy said is really important.

[00:43:04] You find someone you, you, you work with very well. I have Debbie Alper now, and she is a goddess and I don't send it to her until I am certain it is ready to go. There is nothing left to do. I have tweaked it beyond its natural life and I send it to her and she sends it back to me with a whole load of red marks everywhere in it.

[00:43:27] And she's almost always right. I would say I'm, I'm currently going through my second book that she sent back to me two days ago. And I was certain that it was absolutely right and she sent me. Take a stiff drink before reading this. That was literally the first line of her email. And, um, she was absolutely right though.

[00:43:50] She's very good. She and I are very much on the same page and I value her comments incredibly. But yeah, I, I'll find about 95% of her
[00:44:00] comments that I agree with and she makes the book better.

[00:44:04] **Becca:** Amazing. And, um, everyone loves Debbie. For those of you who don't know, she runs our self edit your novel course.

[00:44:10] And everyone says the same thing about her. She's amazing. Yeah. Uh, on the topic of editing, someone's asked, is the manuscript assessment is included in the program or you pay to have it done separately? It's included. Okay. I'm just trying to look at some of the more recent questions as well. Ooh, this is an interesting question.

[00:44:30] How do we feel about the impact of AI with regards to self-publishing? Have either of you, Becky, or Jack had any experiences with that? Has it impacted you at all? Do you know?

[00:44:42] **Jackie:** Uh, yeah. So I, I have, I was selected by, uh, KDP, um, which is Amazon's Kindle uh, publishing program. I was selected by them to submit my book for an audio book, and it would've been [00:45:00] using AI voices, and I definitely don't want to do that.

[00:45:05] I decided that a long time ago and I didn't respond to the offers. It's very kind of them to think of me. But no I went to the Self-Publishing show in London just before Festival of Writing last year, and they had a stand, a CX had a stand with a set of headphones there. And I went back to the stand about five or six times and listened to AI voices, and I have to say it was really, really impressive.

[00:45:30] But once you get to about the fourth visit, I'm very thorough. Once you get to about the fourth visit you can hear it. There's something wrong. I couldn't tell you what it is, if it's lack of depth or I don't know what it is, intonation, but there's something wrong about it and I can't imagine reading a whole book of that.

[00:45:50] What I have done is I've used AI to do a German translation in my book, which will hopefully be out next month as well. But I chose, because [00:46:00] I live in Germany, we have access to German speakers really easily. Um, I have a native language speaker going through it to make sure that it is up to scratch and he's, he said that it's brilliant.

[00:46:12] It is actually a very good translation, but yeah, so I, I've had both positive and negative response to ai.

[00:46:21] **Becky:** Okay, brilliant. Thank you. Um, I just got an AI thing to say. Yeah. Um, so I used it for help with, um, hashtags and sort of marketing stuff, uh, for Instagram. Um, and I was asking it about, hashtags for a young adult novel and, and all this sort of stuff.

[00:46:39] And then it gets all chatty with you and it goes, oh, hey, that sounds so exciting. What's your novel called? So I put the title in and it came up with my blurb and I nearly died the hell. It got that, and it came up with my blurb and a link to the Barnes and Noble website. And I had no idea that it was on the Barnes and Noble website in first [00:47:00] place.

[00:47:00] I nearly fell out of bed. But then I also think that that is, because it's obviously the blurb was in the public domain rather than the content of the books. I'm hoping that the content book wasn't ingested into AI at all. Um, and I also, when I was trying to, before I decided to pay a designer, I was trying to do a cover with ai and it just didn't work out

[00:47:22] **Jackie:** well.

[00:47:22] I have, yeah, also I have used chat, GPT, I've started using chat GPT last week for the first time in my life, trying to understand why my website won't show up on Google. Um, and chat GPT, bless him. He's been very helpful.

[00:47:40] **Becca:** Yeah. I mean, there, there's definitely uses out there. I think it's also becoming a search engine, which is really interesting, um,

[00:47:48] because

[00:47:48] **Becca:** People are using it to search for things and like you, Becky, it will spit out a link to, to your book potentially.

[00:47:55] So it's, it is a interesting one to keep an eye on for sure.

[00:47:58] **Nicky:** Okay, we're gonna Sorry, [00:48:00] sorry, go on the side of it. Where with like, with meta, where they've scraped people's books and I think, you know, there's a lot of authors that are very angry about that, quite rightly. I know my books were taken by a pirate.

[00:48:12] The pirate website were probably scraped and yeah, it's, there's good, some bad about it isn't there? And I think we have to be really wary. It's very unknown territory, isn't it? Future.

[00:48:23] **Becca:** Yeah. Okay. We're gonna move on just because we are running out of time. Question for Nick and Alan. Would you consider looking for agent representation down the line?

[00:48:34] What is your plan looking like from here? Um,

[00:48:38] **Alan:** I definitely would. I mean, I, I I, I think you've gotta be realistic and, you know, agents are bombarded at the moment with loads of stuff. So I don't want to be reliant on agents, but I have sensed stuff to agents. I've generally, I mean, the current book that I, I've, I'm trying to flog, I've [00:49:00] had, I've had 4, 5, 4 manuscript requests for, but they've all come from publishers.

[00:49:04] I've had no interest from agents this time, which, that's

[00:49:07] interesting. Mm-hmm. Yeah.

[00:49:08] **Alan:** And, um, yeah, you know, I, I kind of, it's maybe it's I, you don't want to speculate. They're busy people. They're getting thousands of books a year. It's tough. So I would definitely, if an agent came up and said, I'd like to offer you representation, I wouldn't say, oh no, I don't want you.

[00:49:26] But I'm not I wouldn't be, I wouldn't wait for that to happen before I tried to get published.

[00:49:34] **Becca:** Yeah. And what about you Nikki?

[00:49:36] **Nicky:** Yeah, probably I've, at the moment I've got an, a new book. So I went straight to independent publisher with, that I thought was a good fit and managed, to get them to, uh, take that on.

[00:49:48] But I'm writing something else now, which I don't think will suit storm and I don't think will suit them. So whether or not I look for an agent, it's

quite possible. I may well do that. And I know a lot of writers [00:50:00] to. Many different things. You know, they self-publish. I've self-published in the past and I probably will do again in the future.

[00:50:06] They have go to the digital first and then sometimes they go and look for an agent and go differently. And I think you have to do that now a lot more perhaps than you did before, because that's how things are going. It's, you're not sort of set in one place. You're not set with one agent, one publisher.

[00:50:24] A lot of people move around and, and try different things and I'm. More than willing to do that. I think if it's for right, if it's right for the book, that first, I think that's definitely,

[00:50:34] **Becca:** yeah, I think that's something that's, that's really coming out of this chat is that you can't set your sight on one particular route to publication.

[00:50:42] We're talking about route to publication today, and it really is a case of, diversifying sometimes and trying out different things and, and sort of seeing where the journey takes you, I guess. We've got a really interesting question from Demetria. How did you justify to yourself to pay for the ultimate level writing program?

[00:50:59] She said she feels like [00:51:00] she's not allowed to do it. So how, what, what was that like for you guys? 'cause it is an expensive program so what was that sort of mindset shift to allow yourself to invest in yourself like that? Let's go Alan.

[00:51:15] **Alan:** I, I, um. You know, we were coming outta COVID and everything, and I'd, I'd left my job and had I, I actually had a, like a, a, I, I got a payment when I left my job, so I kind of sat there and it, so it didn't feel like I was taking money out of anybody's mouths.

[00:51:33] I, I, you know, it felt like, well, I've got this money. It's not, it's a proportion of that, but it's not all of it. So that was fine. And I asked my wife and my wife who is not someone who spends money willy-nilly, but she said, no, no, no, I think you should do it. You know, you've got a bit of spare time now.

[00:51:52] I've been in quite a high pressure job for a long period of time, and, um, she said, you know, do something, do something for yourself. Having [00:52:00] spent at that point, like 20 years as a chief exec you know, she, she,

so she kind of gave me the. I do tend to find that, you know, I, I tend to look for my wife.

[00:52:10] If my wife's prepared to let spend the money, then it must be okay because she never spends money.

[00:52:16] **Becca:** That's a very good insight. Uh, Becky, what about you? What kind of gave you COVID So

[00:52:21] **Becky:** similar? So I, as I said, I started writing just at the beginning of 2020, and then obviously COVID hit. So I'm a freelancer and I lost my work, and so I was able to like, spend more time writing.

[00:52:35] I was lucky enough to be in a position where I could take a few months to write and see how it went. And then as the, when I saw the course again, talked to my husband and said, look, I'd really like to do this. It'll make me going part-time. And he said, you know, well go for it if you want to go for it.

[00:52:51] Like, let's see what we can do. So, so I did that. I went part-time. Having said that, like now I'm full-time again, I think I would've struggled to, [00:53:00] to write a book and do the course and everything and work full-time and have kids. So, um, I think you do need to carve out a bit of time for yourself, even if it's, even if it's something you can afford.

[00:53:12] I think you need to make sure you've got the time to commit to it as well. And like Jackie said earlier you put, you get out what you put in. So you know, if you're trying to do it and you haven't really got the time to do it properly, I think it's probably not the best time for you. Yeah.

[00:53:27] And say invest in it when you've got the time to really get the most out of it.

[00:53:31] **Becca:** Yeah, for sure. Have a chat to our team as well. If you, um, message into us or book a call with us. We really pride ourselves on the fact that we'll never try and sell you something that's not right for you. So we can talk it through with you and see if it is a good fit for you, um, before, before you make that investment.

[00:53:47] And do, would you guys say, I'm hoping the answer's yes. Would you say that the program was a good investment for you? Yes. Yeah, definitely.

[00:53:57] Yeah. And equi for me, hundred percent. Hundred percent.
[00:54:00]

[00:54:00] **Alan:** Amazing.

[00:54:01] What was

[00:54:03] **Becky:** about this particular program? I thought was, it was everything. It was like starting your manuscript, planning it out, writing, editing, and it was all for me.

[00:54:12] It was when I needed it. And then like even the self-publishing that I said I didn't wanna do, like, because those resources are there for us. I did go back to them when I changed my mind. So yeah, I think, I think it's that kind of circle of everything is what makes it so valuable.

[00:54:27] **Jackie:** Yeah. What I loved about it was that we weren't obliged to do a different story each week or do a poem or do a journal entry or something in order to fit in with the courses learnings You work on your work in progress, whether you've got one to work on and, and you're just editing or you're just starting fresh, whatever.

[00:54:51] It's really, really nice to just carve out time every week just to work on your book, that's what you want to do. I find that a lot of courses [00:55:00] take time away from your book because they want you to do something specific for the feedback and that is the case. That's exactly why I

[00:55:07] **Nicky:** chose this one, this course as well.

[00:55:09] 'cause I looked at MAs and I just thought they're very theoretical and I needed something that would get me, you know, get me publishable if you like. Where I could do the, the right thing, which is thing at the same time. It's brilliant, which is the

[00:55:19] **Jackie:** point of the course as well. I mean, the point of the course is to try and get you published at the end of it.

[00:55:24] Or at least get you to a position where you're ready to submit and aim to be published. It definitely, for me, it is definitely paid for itself. Already it, finding these guys was a gift that was fantastic. Easily, sorry, but the best part of the course for me, um, but you get the, sorry, you, you get the, we had a ticket for the festival of writing at the end.

[00:55:47] We had a dinner for all the UNW program alumni. I'm really gonna struggle with that. Um, but also I don't know [00:56:00] if they still offer this, but we get lifetime membership. So it really is just a matter of time before it pays for itself.

[00:56:07] **Becca:** Yeah. Amazing. It's good to hear that you found it worthwhile.

[00:56:11] Mm-hmm. Um, I've popped everyone's books into the chat, so please do go and check them out. I'm just gonna finish off with one more question that's gonna go to everyone, including Helen. Mm-hmm. And that is we've got a lot of aspiring writers listening to this chat. What is your one piece of advice that you would give that person?

[00:56:30] So we'll start with you, Helen.

[00:56:35] Your job is to give advice? Yeah.

[00:56:37] **Helen:** Okay. What's the one piece of advice? Um, well, you know, it's so lovely to see these faces of my previous um, um, writers that I've worked with. And I suppose the one thing that I think that, that the course gives, but also just in general in life is important is. Making connections, keeping [00:57:00] writing, but also if you're feeling like you are kind of in, in solid, you know, if you're doing it alone there are ways of not being alone, and that doesn't necessarily just mean Jericho.

[00:57:09] That also means you know, reaching out to other people that are writing and, and forming some kind of, some kind of conversation, some kind of community around your writing. Um, uh, so I think that's really important if that, you know, and I think for most writers, that's something that's, that is valuable.

[00:57:27] But otherwise I think we, we all write because we can't not write so keep doing it. Yeah. Very good advice.

[00:57:34] **Becca:** Thank you, Helen.

[00:57:35] **Becky:** Becky, let's go to you. Um, I. It's, if someone asked about, did you feel overwhelmed? I think if you knew what you were letting yourself in for and everything you're gonna have to do, you would feel overwhelmed.

[00:57:47] So my advice is just do the next thing. Like finish that little goals. Like you know, your first goal is you wanna write a full book, you wanna get to the end of your first draft. And that's like such a massive achievement. And then you [00:58:00] get to that and then you realize you've gotta start editing it.

[00:58:02] And then you realize you've gotta start submitting it to people. And it's like you cannot think about what you've got to do to get to the end. You've just gotta think about what the next thing is and like set yourself. Like with the self-publishing, I decided to set, um, like deadline, but quite a realistic one 'cause I knew I was busy and that was really motivating.

[00:58:22] So I think, find what, what motivates you, but always think about what your next thing is that you need to do. Don't get ahead of yourself. You can only eat an elephant one bite at a time, which is one of my favorites.

[00:58:34] **Becca:** Very good expression for sure. And you are right, the deadlines and goalposts are just constantly moving.

[00:58:39] Um, Alan, what about you? What's your one tip?

[00:58:43] **Alan:** I think be clear with yourself about what success looks like for you, and don't get distracted by, by what you are told you should be aiming for. Um, you'll often see a lot of stuff online and even, you know, even sometimes in Harry's emails, I'll, I'll see [00:59:00] stuff about this is what you need to do.

[00:59:01] Actually, I don't really wanna aim for that. That's not where I'm at. And this may sound mad to some of you, but I would always rather sell a hundred copies of a book that's been traditionally published than a thousand copies of a book that I've published myself, self-published. And that will sound mad to some of you.

[00:59:16] And it's fine that, that sounds mad to some of you, but that's what success is like for me. So I've gotta be clear about what's core to me and what isn't basically, you know, so you know, if you are right in a particular genre or you, what does success look like for you? Don't get distracted by thinking, oh, well they're telling me that I have to want this 'cause you don't.

[00:59:41] **Becca:** Yeah. That's really, really good advice. Thank you. Jack, what about you? What's your one piece of advice?

[00:59:47] **Jackie:** Don't be scared. I would say everyone is scared. Everyone is worried about the feedback. They're gonna get the mother that is gonna disown them, the friends who might cancel them and whatever. But do it anyway.

[00:59:59] Do it because you love [01:00:00] it. Do it because you want to do it This. Um, industry is incredibly hard. If you can choose not to do it, then don't do it. Save yourself. Get out now. Go do something else.

[01:00:12] If

[01:00:12] **Jackie:** you

[01:00:12] are, it's not an easy job.

[01:00:16] **Jackie:** Get a proper job. If you're like the rest of us where you really don't have a choice, you, you are gonna be miserable.

[01:00:21] If you don't write then do it and get your work out there and enjoy it. Revel in it.

[01:00:28] **Becca:** Amazing. I really love that. Thank you. And Nikki, let's go to you. What's your one piece of advice?

[01:00:34] **Nicky:** Oh, everyone's said everything already, but, um, I think one of the things that I talked about when I, when I did the festival was about finding your tribe and getting people around you that can be your support network.

[01:00:47] And if you write romance, join, you know, join the romance association. If you write crime, join crime writers, go to festivals, get to know other people that are doing the same thing as you, so you've got [01:01:00] that support network around you and just enjoy it. I think that's what we've all said, isn't it? It is hard and there are gonna be times when you're gonna, you're gonna get rejections.

[01:01:09] You, you're going to feel like you're not really a writer or you're gonna have to step back because life gets in the way. But the end of the day, writing is what? We're made to do, isn't it? It's, it's what we want to do and we what we love and don't feel guilty. If you have to take some time out, it's fine.

[01:01:28] **Jackie:** Yeah, it's the coolest job in the world. We get to sit in a room all day and just make stuff up. Brilliant.

[01:01:36] **Becca:** That is why we do it, because we certainly don't do it for the money.

[01:01:44] Thank you so much for such a wonderful evening. It's been an absolute pleasure to chat to you, all of you. Um, if anyone is interested in the ultimate novel writing program, as I mentioned, get in touch with us, book a call with us. We'd be happy to talk you through it and figure out if it is right for you.

[01:01:57] We've got other options if it's not. [01:02:00] But thank you so much for joining me. Congratulations to all of you for your amazing success. And um, please do go and check out their books. The links are in the chat. But yeah, I will catch up with

[01:02:11] **Becky:** you all very, very soon. Becca, can we access the chat afterwards to answer some of the questions we didn't get to?

[01:02:17] Oh, yeah.

[01:02:18] **Becca:** I am not sure if. I can, I will see if I can, I don't know if that's an optional webinar jam, but if it is, I will send you the transcript and then you can send me any answers and we'll pop in an email. We'll do my very best. Alright. Thanks a lot. Okay. Alright. Thank you so much everyone. Have a good

[01:02:39] Helen. Bye. Bye.

[01:02:41]