

#SoAatHome AGM Week | Industry Insider – The big conversation: Author Care
Monday 17 November 2025



1

00:00:00,813--> 00:00:01,853

-Hello and a warm welcome

2

00:00:01,877--> 00:00:04,976

to the start of our AGM
week of events and activities.

3

00:00:05,000--> 00:00:07,218

We'll be doing audio
descriptions today.

4

00:00:07,242--> 00:00:08,268

So, to start with,

5

00:00:08,292--> 00:00:10,188

I'm a white woman
with long brown hair

6

00:00:10,212--> 00:00:11,588

and, this week, a blonde streak,

7

00:00:11,612--> 00:00:15,000

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black glasses, and a
brown stripey jumper.

8

00:00:15,000--> 00:00:16,388

Today, we're kicking off

9

00:00:16,412--> 00:00:20,000

with an Industry Insider- The
Big Conversation on Author Care.

10

00:00:20,000--> 00:00:21,508

The event is part of our

11

00:00:21,532--> 00:00:25,413

#SoAatHome Autumn/Winter
2025 Events Programme.

12

00:00:25,437--> 00:00:27,127

My name is Anna Ganley

13

00:00:27,151--> 00:00:30,000

and I'm the Chief Executive
here at the Society of Authors.

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14

00:00:30,000--> 00:00:32,388

I'm also chair of the
Creators' Rights Alliance,

15

00:00:32,412--> 00:00:34,828

Board member of the
International Authors Forum,

16

00:00:34,852--> 00:00:38,000

and on the advisory panel
of the London Book Fair.

17

00:00:38,000--> 00:00:40,908

Our moderator today
is Lilly Brend-Fish,

18

00:00:40,932--> 00:00:42,828

who will post the links
into the chat for us.

19

00:00:42,852--> 00:00:44,388

Thank you very much, Lilly.

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20

00:00:44,412--> 00:00:46,188

And, uh, over the
course of the session,

21

00:00:46,212--> 00:00:48,708

we'll be discussing
transparency, support,

22

00:00:48,732--> 00:00:52,000

inclusion, communication,
and self-care.

23

00:00:52,000--> 00:00:54,828

We'll be considering how
authors and industry professionals

24

00:00:54,852--> 00:00:57,538

can work better together in
their professional relationships,

25

00:00:57,562--> 00:00:59,908

and how and where

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authors can find support

26

00:00:59,932--> 00:01:02,000

if and when they need it.

27

00:01:02,000--> 00:01:03,325

For the Society of Authors,

28

00:01:03,349--> 00:01:07,000

2025 has been the year we
chose to promote better author care.

29

00:01:07,000--> 00:01:10,788

And this AGM Week, we're promoting
our new digital resource, Author Care,

30

00:01:10,812--> 00:01:12,095

a toolkit for authors,

31

00:01:12,119--> 00:01:14,548

which you can download
from our website.

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32

00:01:14,572--> 00:01:17,828

Now, before we start, a
few housekeeping notices.

33

00:01:17,852--> 00:01:20,468

The SoA at Home
event is open to all.

34

00:01:20,492--> 00:01:22,708

And in line with the
industry professional values,

35

00:01:22,732--> 00:01:26,588

we work so that all SoA
events feel welcoming to all,

36

00:01:26,612--> 00:01:29,308

respectful of all,
and supportive of all.

37

00:01:29,332--> 00:01:32,508

Although this is a free event,
for those who are in a position to,

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38

00:01:32,532--> 00:01:35,576

we also welcome any
donations to our Access Fund.

39

00:01:35,600--> 00:01:38,108

This provides grants to authors

40

00:01:38,132--> 00:01:41,508

so that travel, subsistence,
childcare costs and access needs

41

00:01:41,532--> 00:01:43,491

aren't barriers to
authors taking part

42

00:01:43,515--> 00:01:46,976

in events, residencies
and retreats.

43

00:01:47,000--> 00:01:48,908

You can also support
our Access Fund

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44

00:01:48,932--> 00:01:51,188

by making a purchase

on our virtual bookstore

45

00:01:51,212--> 00:01:53,000

at Bookshop.org,

46

00:01:53,000--> 00:01:54,988

where you can find books

by authors taking part

47

00:01:55,012--> 00:01:57,018

in our SoA at Home programme.

48

00:01:58,000--> 00:02:00,588

Today's session will

last for 60 minutes

49

00:02:00,612--> 00:02:02,788

and there'll be time at

the end for your questions.

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50

00:02:02,812--> 00:02:05,628

You can turn on the live captions
by clicking on the captions option

51

00:02:05,652--> 00:02:07,000

at the bottom of the screen.

52

00:02:07,000--> 00:02:08,228

And a recording of the event

53

00:02:08,252--> 00:02:10,548

will be available on
the website for members

54

00:02:10,572--> 00:02:13,628

when you log in to the members
area and go to our resources section,

55

00:02:13,652--> 00:02:17,000

and also for non-members on
the SoA's public Vimeo channel.

56

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00:02:17,000--> 00:02:19,748

So do check that out
after today's event.

57

00:02:19,772--> 00:02:21,548

If you have questions
for our panel,

58

00:02:21,572--> 00:02:24,388

please do post them
in the Q&A function.

59

00:02:24,412--> 00:02:25,908

And before we get into our chat,

60

00:02:25,932--> 00:02:28,285

it is now my pleasure to
introduce our guests today.

61

00:02:28,309--> 00:02:32,508

So, you may have noticed that, very sadly,
Maame Blue is not with us as programmed.

62

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00:02:32,532--> 00:02:34,628

She was originally
scheduled to be on this panel,

63

00:02:34,652--> 00:02:36,308

but she can no longer join us,

64

00:02:36,332--> 00:02:38,188

and so we have the
wonderful Vaseem Khan

65

00:02:38,212--> 00:02:41,348

who has stepped into the
breach as our author on the panel.

66

00:02:41,372--> 00:02:43,000

Thank you very much, Vaseem.

67

00:02:43,000--> 00:02:45,268

And so, without
further ado, our panel.

68

00:02:45,292--> 00:02:49,108

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The crime writer who is fast on his way to becoming a literary treasure,

69

00:02:49,132--> 00:02:51,708

It's Khan, it's Vaseem Khan.

70

00:02:51,732--> 00:02:54,076

And his latest book is

The Quantum of Menace,

71

00:02:54,103--> 00:02:58,000

which was published last month and features Q from the James Bond franchise.

72

00:02:58,000--> 00:03:00,118

See what I did there now with your name, Vaseem?

73

00:03:00,142--> 00:03:01,348

-Very good, Anna.

74

00:03:01,372--> 00:03:03,268

-It's James Bond themed.

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Sorry, it's Monday.

75

00:03:03,292--> 00:03:06,348

Um, in 2021, his book

Midnight at Malabar House,

76

00:03:06,372--> 00:03:07,951

set in 1950s India,

77

00:03:07,975--> 00:03:11,000

won the Crime Writers'

Association Historical Dagger.

78

00:03:11,000--> 00:03:14,028

Vas went on to become the Chair
of the Crime Writers Association,

79

00:03:14,052--> 00:03:17,000

recently handing over the
baton to Nadine Matheson.

80

00:03:17,000--> 00:03:20,228

The Girl in Cell A, which

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came out in May of this year,

81

00:03:20,252--> 00:03:22,108

is his first

psychological thriller,

82

00:03:22,132--> 00:03:25,000

which is set in

small-town America.

83

00:03:25,000--> 00:03:26,468

So, thank you for

being with us, Vas.

84

00:03:26,492--> 00:03:29,188

I'll just give you a wave

over the internet there.

85

00:03:29,212--> 00:03:32,643

And I'll move on to Anna

Frame, who's with us today.

86

00:03:32,667--> 00:03:35,000

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Anna is Communications

Director at Canongate Books.

87

00:03:35,000--> 00:03:38,308

She's an award-winning publicist
with over 15 years experience

88

00:03:38,332--> 00:03:41,308

and has run campaigns
across almost every genre,

89

00:03:41,332--> 00:03:42,428

with over...

90

00:03:42,452--> 00:03:45,508

for authors, sorry, including
Amy Liptrot, Travis Alabanza,

91

00:03:45,532--> 00:03:48,000

Nick Cave, Ruth

Ozeki and Miranda July.

92

00:03:48,000--> 00:03:50,588

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She's former chair of the
Publishers' Publicity Circle

93

00:03:50,612--> 00:03:53,576

and a trustee of the Edinburgh
International Book Festival.

94

00:03:53,601--> 00:03:55,708

Anna regularly speaks on issues

95

00:03:55,732--> 00:03:58,434

around author support and
transparency in publishing.

96

00:03:58,459--> 00:03:59,708

Big hello to Anna.

97

00:03:59,732--> 00:04:01,479

Thank you for joining us today.

98

00:04:01,504--> 00:04:04,345

And finally, our agent
on the panel is Caro Clark,

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99

00:04:04,369--> 00:04:07,481

founder and literary

agent at Portobello Literary.

100

00:04:07,506--> 00:04:09,828

They founded the agency in 2022

101

00:04:09,852--> 00:04:12,148

after 12 years working

in publishing houses,

102

00:04:12,172--> 00:04:16,068

Transworld, PRH and Canongate

Books, as a Senior Rights Manager.

103

00:04:16,092--> 00:04:21,279

They were named Rights Professional of

the Year at the British Book Awards in 2021

104

00:04:21,304--> 00:04:24,348

and a Bookseller

Rising Star in 2024.

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105

00:04:24,372--> 00:04:27,000

Belated congratulations
to you, Caro.

106

00:04:27,000--> 00:04:28,868

In 2019,

107

00:04:28,892--> 00:04:30,628

Caro co-founded the
Nan Shepard Prize

108

00:04:30,652--> 00:04:32,228

for under represented
nature writers.

109

00:04:32,252--> 00:04:33,683

Again, thank you, Caro!

110

00:04:33,708--> 00:04:36,108

And they also recently
started a Substack

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111

00:04:36,132--> 00:04:39,188

to help demystify the
industry and give craft advice.

112

00:04:39,212--> 00:04:40,388

And that's our panel.

113

00:04:40,412--> 00:04:42,628

Welcome to you all,
thank you for joining us,

114

00:04:42,652--> 00:04:45,988

and to everyone online who's
choosing to spend the next hour with us

115

00:04:46,012--> 00:04:47,828

to discuss what good
author care looks like

116

00:04:47,852--> 00:04:50,000

in practice.

117

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00:04:50,000--> 00:04:51,445

To set this
discussion in context,

118

00:04:51,469--> 00:04:55,000

a few words about why
our AGM Week this year is

119

00:04:55,000--> 00:04:56,388

Author Care.

120

00:04:56,412--> 00:04:58,748

Every year, um, we have a theme,

121

00:04:58,772--> 00:05:02,228

and this year, as I said, we decided
to make Author Care our theme.

122

00:05:02,252--> 00:05:05,268

Um, in early 2025,
we produced this toolkit

123

00:05:05,292--> 00:05:06,748

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after doing research with

124

00:05:06,772--> 00:05:09,708

authors, agents, publishers,
and other industry professionals,

125

00:05:09,732--> 00:05:13,028

and its aim is to help empower
authors in the publishing industry

126

00:05:13,052--> 00:05:15,108

and to help everyone understand

127

00:05:15,132--> 00:05:18,000

what good looks like in terms
of our professional relationships

128

00:05:18,000--> 00:05:21,000

in the different parts of the
industry in which we work.

129

00:05:21,000--> 00:05:22,148

In recent years,

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130

00:05:22,172--> 00:05:24,105

we'll have all experienced
or witnessed the need

131

00:05:24,129--> 00:05:26,828

for respectful conversation,
communication,

132

00:05:26,852--> 00:05:30,000

and this is a key
pillar of this toolkit.

133

00:05:30,000--> 00:05:32,908

This toolkit, just to
underline, it's for everybody.

134

00:05:32,932--> 00:05:34,348

Publishers, agents, authors,

135

00:05:34,372--> 00:05:37,000

everyone in our community

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136

00:05:37,000--> 00:05:38,788

in publishing, as we
speak with each other

137

00:05:38,812--> 00:05:42,148

in our professional
dealings, human to human.

138

00:05:42,172--> 00:05:44,548

Our toolkit builds on
the industry statement

139

00:05:44,572--> 00:05:46,148

of professional
values and behaviours,

140

00:05:46,172--> 00:05:48,468

and this, as I
said earlier, aims

141

00:05:48,492--> 00:05:51,308

for us to be an industry
that is welcoming to all,

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142

00:05:51,332--> 00:05:53,108

respectful of all,
and supportive of all,

143

00:05:53,132--> 00:05:56,188

and that's what we're working
to achieve here at the SoA.

144

00:05:56,212--> 00:05:58,748

If you haven't read it, it's on
our website, do check it out.

145

00:05:58,772--> 00:06:00,491

We'll post a link in the chat.

146

00:06:00,515--> 00:06:04,028

That statement offers clear,
updated, and robust values

147

00:06:04,052--> 00:06:06,028

which are aimed at
uniting the industry

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148

00:06:06,052--> 00:06:07,308

and taking us all forward.

149

00:06:07,332--> 00:06:08,332

It builds...

150

00:06:08,356--> 00:06:10,588

Well, the Author Care

Toolkit aims to build on this,

151

00:06:10,612--> 00:06:12,348

so it's a practical

guidance piece

152

00:06:12,372--> 00:06:14,000

that helps to equip us with

153

00:06:14,000--> 00:06:15,715

good pieces of tips and advice

154

00:06:15,739--> 00:06:18,388

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on how we can hold ourselves to

155

00:06:18,412--> 00:06:21,268

when things might not
always go so smoothly.

156

00:06:21,292--> 00:06:24,308

So it's there when you
need it on the SoA website.

157

00:06:24,332--> 00:06:26,000

Do download your copy.

158

00:06:26,000--> 00:06:28,268

Um, and to set
this into context,

159

00:06:28,292--> 00:06:31,228

you're professional authors,

160

00:06:31,252--> 00:06:33,948

you all work in the industry, you
know it's tough at the moment.

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161

00:06:33,972--> 00:06:35,668

Statistics to bear in mind,

162

00:06:35,692--> 00:06:38,432

in 2024, Nielsen Book

Data reported that almost

163

00:06:38,457--> 00:06:40,588

500 books per day

are published in the UK.

164

00:06:40,612--> 00:06:42,692

So, there's a lot of books

out there being published.

165

00:06:42,716--> 00:06:45,068

So, while there are more

routes to market than ever before,

166

00:06:45,092--> 00:06:47,271

there's a huge volume

of books being published

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167

00:06:47,295--> 00:06:51,000

and so it's harder for authors to
stand out in that crowded market.

168

00:06:51,000--> 00:06:53,628

There were also external
threats in the form of AI,

169

00:06:53,652--> 00:06:55,428

as we're all very
well versed with now,

170

00:06:55,452--> 00:06:57,388

competing demands
in entertainment choices

171

00:06:57,412--> 00:06:59,911

with on-demand TV,
films, streaming services,

172

00:06:59,935--> 00:07:02,508

as well as our attention

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span's reducing

173

00:07:02,532--> 00:07:06,000

because of all the time we
spend on screens doom scrolling.

174

00:07:06,000--> 00:07:11,348

So, there are lots of
challenges out there for authors

175

00:07:11,372--> 00:07:13,868

and so, although book
sales are holding steady,

176

00:07:13,892--> 00:07:17,348

it can be a precarious
place and industry to work in.

177

00:07:17,372--> 00:07:19,148

Publishing professionals
themselves report

178

00:07:19,172--> 00:07:21,268

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under-resourcing
and high staff turnover.

179

00:07:21,292--> 00:07:23,665

And this can affect
authors in many ways,

180

00:07:23,689--> 00:07:28,068

from a lack of investment in
editing and promotional materials

181

00:07:28,092--> 00:07:31,228

to long waits for replies
to inquiries at all stages

182

00:07:31,252--> 00:07:33,000

through the publishing process.

183

00:07:33,000--> 00:07:34,148

Um...

184

00:07:34,172--> 00:07:36,468

Some authors might not have

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a dedicated contact in-house

185

00:07:36,492--> 00:07:40,000

and others find that

contract negotiations can be...

186

00:07:40,000--> 00:07:42,311

can take a long time

and can be inefficient.

187

00:07:42,335--> 00:07:46,000

So, we're all trying to work in

the same direction to make this

188

00:07:46,000--> 00:07:47,948

a better industry for

everybody involved,

189

00:07:47,972--> 00:07:49,748

whatever part you're working at.

190

00:07:49,772--> 00:07:52,228

So there is progress

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being made by, um...

191

00:07:52,252--> 00:07:54,205

I won't spend too long
going through some stats,

192

00:07:54,229--> 00:07:56,468

but I do have a few more,
just to set this in context,

193

00:07:56,492--> 00:07:58,228

is that

194

00:07:58,252--> 00:08:01,068

we are working towards a more
diverse and inclusive industry,

195

00:08:01,092--> 00:08:03,548

and yes, some progress
has and is being made,

196

00:08:03,572--> 00:08:05,268

but there's still

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a long way to go

197

00:08:05,292--> 00:08:08,428

and it's increasingly precarious
for authors in this industry.

198

00:08:08,452--> 00:08:10,000

So, some context for you...

199

00:08:10,000--> 00:08:12,548

The Publishers
Association published their

200

00:08:12,572--> 00:08:15,908

UK Publishing Workforce
Survey back in 2024

201

00:08:15,932--> 00:08:19,731

and they found that the industry today
is less diverse than it was back in 2022.

202

00:08:19,755--> 00:08:21,708

So although progress

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is being made,

203

00:08:21,732--> 00:08:24,588

we need to sustain that progress

204

00:08:24,612--> 00:08:27,468

and we need to make sure that

we keep pushing in a direction

205

00:08:27,492--> 00:08:30,908

where everyone feels that

they can be part of this industry.

206

00:08:30,932--> 00:08:33,908

Within the books that are

being published in 2023,

207

00:08:33,932--> 00:08:36,151

the Centre for Literacy

in Primary Education

208

00:08:36,175--> 00:08:39,228

highlighted significant reductions

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in the number of children with books

209

00:08:39,252--> 00:08:41,828

with racially
minoritized characters,

210

00:08:41,852--> 00:08:45,228

which was again in contrast
to previous years' surveys.

211

00:08:45,252--> 00:08:49,068

And, although there have been
increases in the number of people

212

00:08:49,092--> 00:08:50,685

working with
disabilities in publishing,

213

00:08:50,709--> 00:08:53,868

there are still... they are still
under represented in the workforce.

214

00:08:53,892--> 00:08:56,000

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Again, this is according to

215

00:08:56,000--> 00:08:58,308

the Publishers Association survey.

216

00:08:58,332--> 00:08:59,758

So not to be too gloomy,

217

00:08:59,782--> 00:09:02,708

but there are disparities
out there between authors

218

00:09:02,732--> 00:09:05,668

that we're working to address.

219

00:09:05,692--> 00:09:08,028

I think everybody
is very well versed

220

00:09:08,052--> 00:09:10,931

with the UK Authors' Earnings
and Contracts survey data,

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221

00:09:10,955--> 00:09:13,028

which the latest one was in 2022

222

00:09:13,052--> 00:09:16,000

and showed that authors'
median earnings from

223

00:09:16,000--> 00:09:20,000

their book sales have
nearly halved since 2006

224

00:09:20,000--> 00:09:23,188

from £12,330 down
to £7,000 per annum.

225

00:09:23,212--> 00:09:25,000

So that's from their book sales.

226

00:09:25,000--> 00:09:29,268

That's why authors
have profile careers

227

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00:09:29,292--> 00:09:31,788

and they have to do lots of
different things to earn their wage

228

00:09:31,812--> 00:09:33,000

and pay the bills.

229

00:09:33,000--> 00:09:34,908

So, there is a broader
picture of pay decline

230

00:09:34,932--> 00:09:37,708

and there is a pay gap between
men and women that's widening,

231

00:09:37,732--> 00:09:41,000

and also Black and
multi-heritage authors

232

00:09:41,000--> 00:09:43,348

report lower incomes to
their white counterparts.

233

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00:09:43,372--> 00:09:47,588

And although there is less data
available for disabled and deaf authors...

234

00:09:47,612--> 00:09:48,868

Get my teeth in.

235

00:09:48,892--> 00:09:51,588

They are also likely to
face similar challenges.

236

00:09:51,612--> 00:09:55,711

And the 2019 report from the Royal
Society of Literature: A Room of My Own

237

00:09:55,735--> 00:09:58,308

stated that authors with
disabilities are more likely to report

238

00:09:58,332--> 00:10:02,000

lower incomes than their
non-disabled counterparts.

239

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00:10:02,000--> 00:10:04,748

And that's without even
talking about the impact of AI,

240

00:10:04,772--> 00:10:08,548

which is having a massive
impact on the profession.

241

00:10:08,572--> 00:10:12,068

And the full economic and ethical
implications of this on authors

242

00:10:12,092--> 00:10:14,670

are unfolding for us every day.

243

00:10:14,695--> 00:10:16,158

So, against that backdrop,

244

00:10:16,182--> 00:10:18,668

we're here to talk about what
good author care might look like

245

00:10:18,692--> 00:10:22,736

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and why authors need to
have those portfolio careers.

246

00:10:22,761--> 00:10:25,748

So, I shall take
on a little bit.

247

00:10:25,772--> 00:10:28,068

Um, and just to say that, 2025,

248

00:10:28,092--> 00:10:29,908

a little anniversary
for us at the SoA

249

00:10:29,932--> 00:10:33,348

was the 10-year anniversary
for our CREATOR campaign for

250

00:10:33,372--> 00:10:35,410

fair contract terms and,

251

00:10:35,435--> 00:10:38,428

going into 2026, we

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need renewed energy

252

00:10:38,452--> 00:10:40,588

to address this issue,
because conditions

253

00:10:40,612--> 00:10:42,988

have never been harder
for professional authors.

254

00:10:43,012--> 00:10:45,348

And so, for the SoA's part,

255

00:10:45,372--> 00:10:48,468

we'll continue to advocate for
fair terms and working conditions,

256

00:10:48,492--> 00:10:51,508

and we'll continue to
fight for... to improve

257

00:10:51,532--> 00:10:54,308

author incomes into

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2026 and beyond.

258

00:10:54,332--> 00:10:57,468

So, coming to our
esteemed panel,

259

00:10:57,492--> 00:11:00,668

what does author care
mean to each of you?

260

00:11:00,692--> 00:11:03,548

Now, if I may, Caro,
I'll come to you first.

261

00:11:03,572--> 00:11:06,676

And just to talk from your
experience and some reflections

262

00:11:06,701--> 00:11:08,148

of what good
author care looks like

263

00:11:08,172--> 00:11:10,000

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in relation to the
work of agents

264

00:11:10,000--> 00:11:12,588

from your vantage
point in the industry.

265

00:11:12,612--> 00:11:14,148

-Hi everyone,

266

00:11:14,172--> 00:11:17,148

I love that all the doomy-gloomy
comes just before I talk,

267

00:11:17,172--> 00:11:19,228

so this is... it's gonna
be a tough one,

268

00:11:19,252--> 00:11:20,828

but I'll make it work.

269

00:11:20,852--> 00:11:22,308

And so to start first,

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270

00:11:22,332--> 00:11:25,388

I'm a white person with
short hair, big glasses,

271

00:11:25,412--> 00:11:27,388

and a very green background.

272

00:11:27,412--> 00:11:28,428

Um...

273

00:11:28,452--> 00:11:32,468

And, what does good
author care look like?

274

00:11:32,492--> 00:11:36,000

I mean, essentially, with
everything that Anna mentioned,

275

00:11:36,000--> 00:11:40,748

I think it's an
author who is, um...

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276

00:11:40,772--> 00:11:43,000

who feels empowered

277

00:11:43,000--> 00:11:45,308

and who feels well-informed,

278

00:11:45,332--> 00:11:47,668

and who feels happy.

279

00:11:47,692--> 00:11:49,508

I don't mean happy

about

280

00:11:49,532--> 00:11:51,428

how well sales are going

281

00:11:51,452--> 00:11:53,188

and how much

money they're getting,

282

00:11:53,212--> 00:11:55,428

because I think

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we all know this is

283

00:11:55,452--> 00:11:56,948

a very difficult industry,

284

00:11:56,972--> 00:12:00,948

but that they feel

as part of a team

285

00:12:00,972--> 00:12:04,000

with their agent,

with their publisher.

286

00:12:04,000--> 00:12:06,428

And they feel everyone's

working with them.

287

00:12:06,452--> 00:12:10,548

And part of that is

really good transparency

288

00:12:10,572--> 00:12:14,388

and good

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communication, of course.

289

00:12:14,412--> 00:12:16,868

And then it's also

290

00:12:16,892--> 00:12:20,228

sort of in terms of the
people they work with,

291

00:12:20,252--> 00:12:23,000

you know, feeling they
can trust them in terms of...

292

00:12:23,000--> 00:12:24,788

You know, you
talk about contracts.

293

00:12:24,812--> 00:12:29,828

I mean, um, agents, as part of
the Authors' Agents Association,

294

00:12:29,852--> 00:12:32,000

are always working very hard

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295

00:12:32,000--> 00:12:35,188

to make sure we stay on

top of industry standards

296

00:12:35,212--> 00:12:37,228

and we foresee any issues.

297

00:12:37,252--> 00:12:39,000

So, obviously, AI is a big

298

00:12:39,000--> 00:12:42,148

issue on our end,

as well as authors,

299

00:12:42,172--> 00:12:44,948

and to really be at the

heart of any campaign

300

00:12:44,972--> 00:12:47,908

to make our voices heard

301

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00:12:47,932--> 00:12:51,988

and the voice of authors
heard as well, and...

302

00:12:52,012--> 00:12:58,000

and yes, I think, um, I have been
working a lot with the ADCI group,

303

00:12:58,000--> 00:12:59,725

part of the SoA.

304

00:12:59,749--> 00:13:04,000

So, for authors with
disabilities and chronic illnesses.

305

00:13:04,000--> 00:13:07,748

And I do feel a lot of
conversations I've had with authors,

306

00:13:07,772--> 00:13:11,000

both from the ADCI group
and a bit more widely,

307

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00:13:11,000--> 00:13:13,148

is this power imbalance

308

00:13:13,172--> 00:13:18,148

and that a lot of the time

they feel they aren't able

309

00:13:18,172--> 00:13:21,308

to share their fears

and frustration.

310

00:13:21,332--> 00:13:24,108

And I think this is part of

the work we all need to do

311

00:13:24,132--> 00:13:27,000

to be more transparent and

to communicate a lot more.

312

00:13:27,000--> 00:13:33,108

I think, sometimes, it's really

hard to share bad news, etcetera,

313

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00:13:33,132--> 00:13:34,228

obviously,

314

00:13:34,252--> 00:13:37,588

but, it is really

important for people

315

00:13:37,612--> 00:13:40,000

to understand how

the publishing industry

316

00:13:40,000--> 00:13:42,828

works and what is actually

possible and feasible.

317

00:13:42,852--> 00:13:48,578

Um, and also, you know, what we

can all do to work together for this.

318

00:13:48,602--> 00:13:52,388

So I think authors

feeling empowered to...

319

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00:13:52,412--> 00:13:55,388

Um, you know, do the
writing they want to do

320

00:13:55,412--> 00:13:58,468

and do the publishing in the
way that they want to do it.

321

00:13:58,492--> 00:14:02,000

But also that if things
go wrong or if this...

322

00:14:02,000--> 00:14:03,348

if things don't
go quite to plan,

323

00:14:03,372--> 00:14:06,068

to know exactly what
to do and who to talk to,

324

00:14:06,092--> 00:14:08,548

as opposed to
feeling quite lost and...

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325

00:14:08,572--> 00:14:12,348

Um, alone, in many ways.

326

00:14:12,372--> 00:14:13,868

Um...

327

00:14:13,892--> 00:14:15,988

when they encounter
these issues.

328

00:14:17,307--> 00:14:18,531

-Yeah, thank you.

329

00:14:18,555--> 00:14:21,148

It can feel quite an
isolating profession at times

330

00:14:21,172--> 00:14:23,548

and knowing where to go is key

331

00:14:23,572--> 00:14:25,108

when you have any questions.

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332

00:14:25,132--> 00:14:27,068

And, so if any doubt, authors,

333

00:14:27,092--> 00:14:28,428

talk to us at

Society of Authors.

334

00:14:28,452--> 00:14:30,828

We can signpost you in the
right direction if you don't know

335

00:14:30,852--> 00:14:34,298

where to go, either speaking
to your agent or publisher.

336

00:14:34,322--> 00:14:37,000

And so, Anna, I wonder,
from your perspective,

337

00:14:37,000--> 00:14:41,108

is that similar to Caro's or
how does it differ from your

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338

00:14:41,132--> 00:14:42,308

point of view?

339

00:14:42,332--> 00:14:45,028

Yeah, I mean, I think... I think
it's very, very similar, honestly.

340

00:14:45,052--> 00:14:46,588

I mean, I think,
you know, to me,

341

00:14:46,612--> 00:14:49,000

it's about strong
communication, it's alongside,

342

00:14:49,000--> 00:14:50,845

you know, alongside
mutual trust and respect.

343

00:14:50,869--> 00:14:53,028

I think there can
be a huge tendency

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344

00:14:53,052--> 00:14:55,905

in publishing to assume both everyone
has the same access to information

345

00:14:55,929--> 00:14:57,200

about the publishing process

346

00:14:57,224--> 00:14:59,685

and the same
understanding of it,

347

00:14:59,709--> 00:15:02,389

which I think, in publishing, can
lead to a huge amount of, kind of,

348

00:15:02,413--> 00:15:07,000

jargon and shorthand, which is
confusing and deeply exclusionary.

349

00:15:07,000--> 00:15:09,788

Um, and I think alongside
that, there's also then this kind of

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350

00:15:09,812--> 00:15:13,785

slightly odd tendency in publishing to
wrap authors up in cotton wool in a way

351

00:15:13,809--> 00:15:16,438

that's quite infantilizing
and a bit patronizing,

352

00:15:16,462--> 00:15:18,345

as well as being
deeply frustrating.

353

00:15:18,369--> 00:15:19,369

I think part of

354

00:15:19,393--> 00:15:22,788

author care to me is about this idea
of treating authors as adults, right?

355

00:15:22,812--> 00:15:23,988

You know, that...

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356

00:15:24,012--> 00:15:26,348

that publishing

is a business, it's...

357

00:15:26,372--> 00:15:28,738

You know, it's one that can

be inspiring and beautiful,

358

00:15:28,762--> 00:15:31,508

but can also be

brutal at times as well.

359

00:15:31,532--> 00:15:34,138

And I think there's this real

kind of tendency that, you know,

360

00:15:34,162--> 00:15:37,208

you have an acquisitions meeting,

you know, an author gets really hyped up,

361

00:15:37,232--> 00:15:39,128

you have a pitch meeting,

it gets very exciting,

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362

00:15:39,152--> 00:15:42,100

it's all the good news, all the excitement, and then things can go a bit

363

00:15:42,124--> 00:15:44,068

quiet when it goes wrong.

364

00:15:44,092--> 00:15:46,148

And I think it's exactly what Caro was saying,

365

00:15:46,172--> 00:15:49,988

that I think part of author care also comes down to this idea of

366

00:15:50,012--> 00:15:54,348

being willing to be true collaborators, true partners, you know, which means

367

00:15:54,372--> 00:15:56,131

sharing the bad news as well as the good,

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368

00:15:56,155--> 00:15:58,268

and actually being really
clear in communication,

369

00:15:58,292--> 00:16:00,228

being really honest
and transparent.

370

00:16:00,252--> 00:16:03,108

Um, and making sure that you
are all part of the same team,

371

00:16:03,132--> 00:16:05,000

which hopefully also leads to

372

00:16:05,000--> 00:16:06,108

trust

373

00:16:06,132--> 00:16:09,000

and means that authors
also feel more able

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374

00:16:09,000--> 00:16:11,508

to share those vulnerabilities,
to share those concerns,

375

00:16:11,532--> 00:16:15,028

to ask the questions that
they might feel are stupid, or...

376

00:16:15,052--> 00:16:19,000

you know, they might get judged for, or,
you know, to kind of share their worries.

377

00:16:19,000--> 00:16:21,800

And I think if you don't have that
trust and that clear communication,

378

00:16:21,824--> 00:16:23,668

then you're... you're
off to a pretty bad start,

379

00:16:23,692--> 00:16:26,268

but unfortunately, it's all
too common in publishing.

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380

00:16:26,292--> 00:16:29,028

You know, and I guess for
me, you know, I see my role both

381

00:16:29,052--> 00:16:31,000

as a publisher and as publicist

382

00:16:31,000--> 00:16:34,668

to make sure that the writers I
work with are as fully informed

383

00:16:34,692--> 00:16:37,148

with every step of the process
as they possibly can be, which,

384

00:16:37,172--> 00:16:40,048

you know, and that I'm there to
support them through both the good times

385

00:16:40,072--> 00:16:41,072

and the bad.

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386

00:16:41,096--> 00:16:43,908

And that doesn't mean that I'm
going to fill every role in their lives.

387

00:16:43,932--> 00:16:45,000

You know, I think

388

00:16:45,000--> 00:16:46,970

sometimes when you talk
about author care, it can...

389

00:16:46,994--> 00:16:49,948

There's a risk of it kind of
tipping over into this kind of idea

390

00:16:49,972--> 00:16:52,468

of publishers filling the
role of, kind of, therapists or

391

00:16:52,492--> 00:16:53,988

family members, which...

392

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00:16:54,012--> 00:16:55,345

which isn't appropriate either,

393

00:16:55,369--> 00:16:57,708

and I think we need to be
a little bit careful about that.

394

00:16:57,732--> 00:17:00,548

But I think there's so much

395

00:17:00,572--> 00:17:04,388

opacity in publishing
that is just so damaging.

396

00:17:04,412--> 00:17:06,268

Again, it can come
from a very human place,

397

00:17:06,292--> 00:17:08,528

but I think the clearer we
are, the more trust there is,

398

00:17:08,552--> 00:17:10,000

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the stronger the communication,

399

00:17:10,000--> 00:17:13,000

the better off we'll be, and I
think that's what it means for me.

400

00:17:13,000--> 00:17:15,548

The only other thing I want to
mention really briefly was just,

401

00:17:15,572--> 00:17:18,942

and this I realise throws a slight spanner
into the works of the entire conversation,

402

00:17:18,966--> 00:17:22,607

but there was a [inaudible] of a
brilliant publicist called Alison Barrow,

403

00:17:22,631--> 00:17:25,000

who works over at
Transworld, made recently

404

00:17:25,000--> 00:17:26,000

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which I really loved,

405

00:17:26,024--> 00:17:27,665

which is she's sort
of gently suggested

406

00:17:27,689--> 00:17:30,068

that perhaps we should be
talking more about author support

407

00:17:30,092--> 00:17:31,348

rather than author care.

408

00:17:31,372--> 00:17:33,092

And that's not to say
that we have to change

409

00:17:33,116--> 00:17:34,692

the entire premise
of the conversation,

410

00:17:34,716--> 00:17:35,908

to be clear, but I just...

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411

00:17:35,932--> 00:17:38,828

I really like that as a...

as a point that she made,

412

00:17:38,852--> 00:17:40,628

because I think it

413

00:17:40,652--> 00:17:42,708

better articulates that

sense of partnership.

414

00:17:42,732--> 00:17:46,428

I think, you know, publishers,

agents are not authors' caretakers.

415

00:17:46,452--> 00:17:47,708

They don't need that.

416

00:17:47,732--> 00:17:49,588

They are adults who can

advocate for themselves

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417

00:17:49,612--> 00:17:51,000

if they are given the right

418

00:17:51,000--> 00:17:53,948

support and structure

in which to do that.

419

00:17:53,972--> 00:17:55,908

-Absolutely, I would...

420

00:17:55,932--> 00:17:57,908

My counter to that is that

421

00:17:57,932--> 00:18:00,012

publishers do have a duty

of care over their authors.

422

00:18:00,036--> 00:18:01,036

-Of course. Yeah.

423

00:18:01,060--> 00:18:03,347

-So that's where that kind

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of phrasing comes from,

424

00:18:03,371--> 00:18:06,628

in that, like, the duty of care, because
you've got a contractual relationship.

425

00:18:06,652--> 00:18:09,831

But yes, absolutely, that's one of
our key pillars of supporting authors

426

00:18:09,855--> 00:18:10,855

-Absolutely.

427

00:18:10,879--> 00:18:15,656

And, Anna, would you do your audio
description for us, just so that we can...

428

00:18:15,680--> 00:18:17,508

-Oh, I'm so sorry,
yes, absolutely.

429

00:18:17,532--> 00:18:18,988

I got overexcited, absolutely.

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430

00:18:19,012--> 00:18:23,308

So yeah, I am a white woman
with mid-length curly hair,

431

00:18:23,332--> 00:18:27,068

wearing a dark blue wool jumper
against a generally bookish background.

432

00:18:28,000--> 00:18:30,628

-Thank you so much. A
wonderful bookish background.

433

00:18:30,652--> 00:18:33,748

It is a lovely bookshelf
that you have behind you.

434

00:18:33,772--> 00:18:36,868

Vas, over to you as
our author on the panel.

435

00:18:36,892--> 00:18:38,311

Hearing Caro and Anna,

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436

00:18:38,335--> 00:18:41,253

how does this reflect your
personal experience to date?

437

00:18:41,278--> 00:18:44,428

Have you had a positive
experience, and uh...

438

00:18:44,452--> 00:18:45,948

Do you feel yourself as...

439

00:18:45,972--> 00:18:48,588

I mean, just to summarize
the two contributions so far.

440

00:18:48,612--> 00:18:50,588

We've talked about
trust, transparency,

441

00:18:50,612--> 00:18:52,068

about every voice being heard.

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442

00:18:52,092--> 00:18:55,628

Mutual trust is key, but
being business partners.

443

00:18:55,652--> 00:18:59,548

Do you feel like a business partner
in your negotiations and relationships?

444

00:18:59,572--> 00:19:01,188

-I mean, there's two... two, two...

445

00:19:01,212--> 00:19:02,908

two parts of my life,

446

00:19:02,932--> 00:19:06,000

author life, which
would reflect differently

447

00:19:06,000--> 00:19:08,525

in terms of answering
that question.

448

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00:19:08,549--> 00:19:12,398

I suppose before I get told off, I better
give an audio description of myself.

449

00:19:12,423--> 00:19:14,148

So I'm a British-Asian.

450

00:19:14,172--> 00:19:17,028

I'm about 52. I've got black
hair with some grey in it.

451

00:19:17,052--> 00:19:21,000

I'm wearing glasses, a shirt
that's sort of some sort of genie.

452

00:19:21,000--> 00:19:23,348

style fabric, um...

453

00:19:23,372--> 00:19:27,000

That's it, that's it... Really bookish
background, again, behind me.

454

00:19:27,000--> 00:19:28,548

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Um, okay, so...

455

00:19:28,572--> 00:19:31,548

The first stage of my...

my sort of writing journey

456

00:19:31,572--> 00:19:33,188

will be very familiar

to many people,

457

00:19:33,212--> 00:19:36,551

because it took about 20-odd years. I

wrote 7 novels trying to get published.

458

00:19:36,575--> 00:19:39,000

I wrote the first one,

age 17, sent it in.

459

00:19:39,000--> 00:19:42,000

And, you know, I wrote to

dozens and dozens of agents.

460

00:19:42,000--> 00:19:45,508

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So, I've probably collected
about 150 rejection letters.

461

00:19:45,532--> 00:19:47,308

And my experience

462

00:19:47,332--> 00:19:51,000

during that phase, of course,
it's generally quite negative.

463

00:19:51,000--> 00:19:55,450

But, you know, some agents make
it slightly easier than others because

464

00:19:55,475--> 00:19:58,265

we understand, we're completely...
agents are overwhelmed.

465

00:19:58,289--> 00:20:00,748

Now I know this, I didn't
know this at the time, obviously.

466

00:20:00,772--> 00:20:04,000

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And we understand why
standard rejection letters go out,

467

00:20:04,000--> 00:20:07,000

because there's just not enough
hours in the day to give everybody

468

00:20:07,000--> 00:20:08,588

detailed feedback.

469

00:20:08,612--> 00:20:09,612

Um...

470

00:20:09,636--> 00:20:13,588

Early on, I got a few that were
quite... quite negative, you know?

471

00:20:13,612--> 00:20:15,718

Somebody said, don't
write another word,

472

00:20:15,742--> 00:20:18,308

which I thought was quite

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cruel to say to a 17-year-old.

473

00:20:18,332--> 00:20:20,908

Uh, maybe they
just had a bad day.

474

00:20:20,932--> 00:20:23,428

But I think the point
I make here is that

475

00:20:23,452--> 00:20:26,508

over the course of those
seven novels over 20 years,

476

00:20:26,532--> 00:20:28,388

obviously I got
slightly better at writing.

477

00:20:28,412--> 00:20:31,411

And just the odd
agent wrote back to say,

478

00:20:31,435--> 00:20:35,000

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look, we don't want... we don't
want what you've submitted.

479

00:20:35,000--> 00:20:37,108

But, we like your
writing, carry on,

480

00:20:37,132--> 00:20:39,468

or perhaps send
us the next thing.

481

00:20:39,492--> 00:20:42,148

And I think it's
hard for me to...

482

00:20:42,172--> 00:20:45,308

tell you how important that is,

483

00:20:45,332--> 00:20:48,051

just that little bright
spark amongst

484

00:20:48,075--> 00:20:51,468

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the dire negativity of getting
25 rejection letters back

485

00:20:51,492--> 00:20:54,000

for a book that you've
just slaved 3 years to write,

486

00:20:54,000--> 00:20:56,228

just to get one...
somebody saying,

487

00:20:56,252--> 00:20:57,868

you know what,
don't give up yet.

488

00:20:57,892--> 00:21:00,228

Uh, so I think that
if agents were to re...

489

00:21:00,252--> 00:21:03,000

realize that when they reject,

490

00:21:03,000--> 00:21:04,668

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if they actually like something,

491

00:21:04,692--> 00:21:07,000

if they can just

spend another, sort of,

492

00:21:07,000--> 00:21:08,988

two minutes just

scribbling something nice

493

00:21:09,012--> 00:21:11,105

along with the

standard rejection letter,

494

00:21:11,129--> 00:21:13,588

it can make a huge

difference and impact

495

00:21:13,612--> 00:21:16,668

to somebody's momentum

to want to keep going on.

496

00:21:16,692--> 00:21:18,028

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So that was that part.

497

00:21:18,052--> 00:21:19,831

I was finally
published at age 40.

498

00:21:19,855--> 00:21:22,828

I've been with the same
agent for 11 years, um...

499

00:21:22,852--> 00:21:25,828

And it's quite a big
agency, A.M.Heath.

500

00:21:25,852--> 00:21:28,000

A very experienced agent.

501

00:21:28,000--> 00:21:29,911

His name's Euan Thorneycroft.

502

00:21:29,935--> 00:21:31,068

And...

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503

00:21:31,092--> 00:21:34,708

I think what's important
here to understand is that

504

00:21:34,732--> 00:21:40,148

it's not just agents being honest
or publishers being honest,

505

00:21:40,172--> 00:21:41,588

it's also

506

00:21:41,612--> 00:21:43,868

who you're being honest with.

507

00:21:43,892--> 00:21:45,828

Because...

508

00:21:45,852--> 00:21:47,588

people have
different personalities.

509

00:21:47,612--> 00:21:50,428

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That's... that's one thing
that goes into this mix.

510

00:21:50,452--> 00:21:52,000

And different people react to

511

00:21:52,000--> 00:21:54,028

different types of information

512

00:21:54,052--> 00:21:56,000

being given to them
in different ways.

513

00:21:56,000--> 00:21:58,108

And also at different
stages of their life.

514

00:21:58,132--> 00:22:00,748

I'm not the same person
I was when I was 17,

515

00:22:00,772--> 00:22:03,000

so if I had been

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published at age 17

516

00:22:03,000--> 00:22:04,748

and things had gone pear-shaped,

517

00:22:04,772--> 00:22:07,228

I would have reacted

completely differently

518

00:22:07,252--> 00:22:11,000

to a person who's had a

proper career for a long time.

519

00:22:11,000--> 00:22:14,191

Um, you know, seeing

the world, travelled the world

520

00:22:14,215--> 00:22:16,388

and then was

published at age 40,

521

00:22:16,412--> 00:22:18,108

after a lot of rejection.

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522

00:22:18,132--> 00:22:20,945

I didn't know much about the
industry coming in at age 40,

523

00:22:20,969--> 00:22:23,000

but I was better able to handle

524

00:22:23,000--> 00:22:26,428

and have honest dialogues,
and be able to ask questions,

525

00:22:26,452--> 00:22:28,908

which a lot of authors,
they're so dazzled

526

00:22:28,932--> 00:22:30,828

by the idea of being published,

527

00:22:30,852--> 00:22:33,000

especially if it's taken
a long time to get there.

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528

00:22:33,000--> 00:22:35,268

They will not ask any questions.

529

00:22:35,292--> 00:22:38,000

In fact, they feel

afraid of asking

530

00:22:38,000--> 00:22:39,780

questions, because

they feel, well, you know,

531

00:22:39,804--> 00:22:43,000

what if I say this doesn't sound

like a very good marketing plan?

532

00:22:43,000--> 00:22:44,988

Um, you know, will they hate me?

533

00:22:45,012--> 00:22:47,252

And, you know, they won't

want to publish my second book,

534

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00:22:47,276--> 00:22:50,000

or, you know, will there be a
black mark against my name?

535

00:22:50,000--> 00:22:52,068

And I think that's
a large part of...

536

00:22:52,092--> 00:22:54,188

of the whole...

537

00:22:54,212--> 00:22:56,788

Honesty is not always going
to be possible,

538

00:22:56,812--> 00:22:58,988

simply because of
the people involved.

539

00:22:59,012--> 00:23:01,000

So what we need is

540

00:23:01,000--> 00:23:02,628

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publishers, agents,

541

00:23:02,652--> 00:23:06,000

and the people that
they're taking on

542

00:23:06,000--> 00:23:07,908

being able to understand who

543

00:23:07,932--> 00:23:12,000

each is, and again, I don't
mean this in a negative way, but

544

00:23:12,000--> 00:23:13,188

you often have a...

545

00:23:13,212--> 00:23:16,000

as I've seen over
the last 11 years,

546

00:23:16,000--> 00:23:18,668

generally, younger
and younger people

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547

00:23:18,692--> 00:23:20,308

in the publishing industry,

548

00:23:20,332--> 00:23:23,000

especially on the

marketing and publicity side.

549

00:23:23,000--> 00:23:25,868

So they're... it's not a

criticism of them, but

550

00:23:25,892--> 00:23:27,508

they haven't had

the chance, perhaps,

551

00:23:27,532--> 00:23:31,000

to build up a lot of experience

about how to deal with...

552

00:23:31,000--> 00:23:33,988

with people when they

come into the industry at first.

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553

00:23:34,012--> 00:23:35,511

So on both sides, there's...

554

00:23:35,535--> 00:23:37,628

there needs to be

an assessment of

555

00:23:37,652--> 00:23:40,068

personalities, stage

of life and experience,

556

00:23:40,092--> 00:23:43,588

so that a more honest

discussion can take place.

557

00:23:45,529--> 00:23:48,228

-Thanks, Vas, and I

think training is key there,

558

00:23:48,252--> 00:23:49,792

because when you

come into an industry,

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559

00:23:49,816--> 00:23:52,000

you need to equip people

560

00:23:52,000--> 00:23:55,388

with the words or

the conversations,

561

00:23:55,412--> 00:23:58,652

to have those difficult conversations,

because it can be hard and we're all human,

562

00:23:58,676--> 00:24:01,396

and if you're coming into an industry

and you're working with authors

563

00:24:01,420--> 00:24:04,108

and it's new, then

you also need support

564

00:24:04,132--> 00:24:07,588

as a... as a publishing

professional in the industry,

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565

00:24:07,612--> 00:24:11,348

often having to have quite
challenging conversations

566

00:24:11,372--> 00:24:13,948

under time pressure,
under budgetary pressure,

567

00:24:13,972--> 00:24:16,548

under lots of pressures,
and so it's... yeah.

568

00:24:16,572--> 00:24:19,028

[sighs] Being aware,
I think, as well,

569

00:24:19,052--> 00:24:21,178

of our position and
influence within an industry

570

00:24:21,202--> 00:24:22,800

and how...

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571

00:24:22,824--> 00:24:24,828

the impact that we have
in our communications

572

00:24:24,852--> 00:24:27,028

and how those might land.

573

00:24:27,052--> 00:24:30,868

And it's always nice to be the
reason why someone might smile

574

00:24:30,892--> 00:24:32,748

when they receive an email, so

575

00:24:32,772--> 00:24:35,628

always keep that in the
back of your mind, but um...

576

00:24:35,652--> 00:24:38,428

In terms of
transparency and trust,

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577

00:24:38,452--> 00:24:39,668

which is key,

578

00:24:39,692--> 00:24:41,228

we have had a question

579

00:24:41,252--> 00:24:44,000

and I hope you don't mind if I
go to it at this point, but it just...

580

00:24:44,000--> 00:24:47,268

Relating to the publisher's, um...

581

00:24:47,292--> 00:24:50,000

perspective, how
can authors find out

582

00:24:50,000--> 00:24:51,868

a publisher's vision
for their book?

583

00:24:51,892--> 00:24:54,000

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How... we're treating...

584

00:24:54,000--> 00:24:56,028

Given that we want
to be treating our

585

00:24:56,052--> 00:24:59,508

authors as business partners and we
don't want to wrap them up in cotton wool,

586

00:24:59,532--> 00:25:01,828

what's the author's best
approach to finding out

587

00:25:01,852--> 00:25:04,217

what the true vision is? How
many book sales are going to...

588

00:25:04,241--> 00:25:06,988

I mean... That's kind
of looking into the, um...

589

00:25:07,012--> 00:25:11,000

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the crystal ball, but Anna,
from your perspective,

590

00:25:11,000--> 00:25:13,028

any tips about how authors

591

00:25:13,052--> 00:25:16,468

can raise these things
other than directly asking?

592

00:25:16,492--> 00:25:17,776

It's... What's the best approach?

593

00:25:17,800--> 00:25:19,508

-I mean, I think...

594

00:25:19,532--> 00:25:22,551

I mean, I think that is partly
where, sort of, the idea of mutual trust

595

00:25:22,575--> 00:25:24,263

from the very start
feels very important,

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596

00:25:24,287--> 00:25:26,007

and I think also where
the role of the agent

597

00:25:26,031--> 00:25:27,308

is absolutely key, that

598

00:25:27,332--> 00:25:30,188

even before you sign a
contract with a publisher,

599

00:25:30,212--> 00:25:32,288

you should be able to be
having those conversations,

600

00:25:32,312--> 00:25:33,588

you know, in those kind of...

601

00:25:33,612--> 00:25:35,772

You know, if you're going
into a pitch meeting scenario

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602

00:25:35,796--> 00:25:38,316

where you're meeting lots of
publishers or whether your agent is

603

00:25:38,340--> 00:25:39,868

speaking only to one, I think

604

00:25:39,892--> 00:25:41,838

being really clear
with your agent what

605

00:25:41,862--> 00:25:45,000

your vision of success looks like, I
guess, as much as anything else, I think.

606

00:25:45,000--> 00:25:46,748

Publishing is such
a strange industry

607

00:25:46,772--> 00:25:50,308

and the fact there are so many
different markers of what success can be.

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608

00:25:50,332--> 00:25:53,638

You know, whether that is
high sales, a massive advance,

609

00:25:53,662--> 00:25:55,828

prize, acclaim, great reviews,

610

00:25:55,852--> 00:25:58,518

one reader kind of grabbing
your hand and telling them...

611

00:25:58,542--> 00:26:00,325

telling you how much
their book meant to you.

612

00:26:00,349--> 00:26:03,168

You know, there are so many different
ways that we can measure success,

613

00:26:03,192--> 00:26:04,588

which also makes it

614

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00:26:04,612--> 00:26:06,508

incredibly hard, because

615

00:26:06,532--> 00:26:09,228

as individual writers, you
may all be always looking at

616

00:26:09,252--> 00:26:11,828

another writer and seeing
what they have that you don't,

617

00:26:11,852--> 00:26:13,628

and you kind of miss
what you do have.

618

00:26:13,652--> 00:26:15,660

But also, it means that
you and your publisher,

619

00:26:15,684--> 00:26:18,000

or even you and your
agent, I think, can maybe

620

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00:26:18,000--> 00:26:22,068

misinterpret one another in terms of
what your end goals are, and I think being

621

00:26:22,092--> 00:26:24,188

clear with yourself
as a starting point

622

00:26:24,212--> 00:26:26,788

of understanding what really,
really, really matters to you,

623

00:26:26,812--> 00:26:29,000

and then slowly building
a team around you

624

00:26:29,000--> 00:26:31,368

that matches that vision and
will help support that vision,

625

00:26:31,392--> 00:26:32,586

I think is really impor--

626

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00:26:32,610--> 00:26:34,428

Excuse me, really important.

627

00:26:34,452--> 00:26:37,428

Um, and again, I would sort of
argue that if you're in a scenario where

628

00:26:37,452--> 00:26:39,428

you don't feel you
can ask directly...

629

00:26:39,452--> 00:26:41,548

And again, I completely
hear the point of it.

630

00:26:41,572--> 00:26:44,268

It can be incredibly
intimidating

631

00:26:44,292--> 00:26:47,492

and it's one of the reasons why I think
conversations like this are so important,

632

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00:26:47,516--> 00:26:50,516

why I think resources like the toolkit
are so important to empower authors,

633

00:26:50,540--> 00:26:51,540

as Caro was saying,

634

00:26:51,564--> 00:26:54,188

to know what kind of
questions are okay to ask,

635

00:26:54,212--> 00:26:55,305

because the answer is

636

00:26:55,329--> 00:26:57,748

all questions should
be alright to ask.

637

00:26:57,772--> 00:27:02,000

But you should be able to feel confident
going in and asking those questions,

638

00:27:02,000--> 00:27:04,228

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and having enough
trust on both sides that,

639

00:27:04,252--> 00:27:06,948

you know, that the publisher
doesn't respond offensively to that.

640

00:27:06,972--> 00:27:08,425

You know, if they don't feel

641

00:27:08,449--> 00:27:10,548

confident to share their
marketing plans with you

642

00:27:10,572--> 00:27:12,628

or take some feedback on that

643

00:27:12,652--> 00:27:14,148

as a conversation,

644

00:27:14,172--> 00:27:17,348

then I... I think there's a
problem there, and again,

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645

00:27:17,372--> 00:27:19,108

unfortunately, it is
common in publishing,

646

00:27:19,132--> 00:27:21,300

but I think if you've built
the right team around you,

647

00:27:21,324--> 00:27:23,221

starting with your agent
and working from there,

648

00:27:23,245--> 00:27:26,245

then hopefully you should feel empowered
to be able to ask those questions.

649

00:27:26,269--> 00:27:28,308

-Thank you, Anna.

And Caro, do you...

650

00:27:28,332--> 00:27:32,748

provide almost an induction

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onboarding package for new authors,

651

00:27:32,772--> 00:27:36,000

which will help set some
of this in context and give

652

00:27:36,000--> 00:27:37,911

these pointers to new authors

653

00:27:37,935--> 00:27:40,748

who might be totally unfamiliar
with the publishing industry

654

00:27:40,772--> 00:27:43,000

and they're coming
into it and wondering

655

00:27:43,000--> 00:27:45,508

what their part looks like
and how they should behave?

656

00:27:45,532--> 00:27:47,988

Yes, if we've got trust

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and if they feel confident

657

00:27:48,012--> 00:27:51,000

with those relationships, they
might ask more questions, but

658

00:27:51,000--> 00:27:53,908

is the... so the author
toolkit is one resource that,

659

00:27:53,932--> 00:27:56,308

um, authors who know
about it can access,

660

00:27:56,332--> 00:27:58,628

but when you're
contracting an author,

661

00:27:58,652--> 00:28:03,000

what form of onboarding
information do you find is useful?

662

00:28:03,000--> 00:28:06,588

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Yeah, I mean, I will always, um,

663

00:28:06,612--> 00:28:08,908

have a meeting on Zoom, usually,

664

00:28:08,932--> 00:28:12,228

if they're not in Edinburgh,

um, with an author.

665

00:28:12,252--> 00:28:15,828

And I will talk about both

666

00:28:15,852--> 00:28:18,468

the book and my

vision for it, and,

667

00:28:18,492--> 00:28:20,708

you know, what

kind of publishers

668

00:28:20,732--> 00:28:23,908

I'd be looking at, what kind

of edits I would be doing,

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669

00:28:23,932--> 00:28:25,598

and then talking
about future books,

670

00:28:25,622--> 00:28:28,388

and sort of asking what...

671

00:28:28,412--> 00:28:30,988

Um, that person's,

672

00:28:31,012--> 00:28:32,908

you know, hopes and dreams are.

673

00:28:32,932--> 00:28:34,068

Um...

674

00:28:34,092--> 00:28:36,428

And, um...

675

00:28:36,452--> 00:28:38,988

And then I would

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talk about how I work.

676

00:28:39,012--> 00:28:43,748

So, you know, as a French
person, I can be quite blunt.

677

00:28:43,772--> 00:28:47,731

And, you know,
and I'm also quite,

678

00:28:47,755--> 00:28:51,000

I would say, more
familiar than I am

679

00:28:51,000--> 00:28:52,708

corporate.

680

00:28:52,732--> 00:28:55,108

And some people like,

681

00:28:55,132--> 00:28:59,467

you know, to have the type of
investment banker type of agent.

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682

00:28:59,491--> 00:29:01,268

And I am not that person,

683

00:29:01,292--> 00:29:03,308

so I think it's really
good for me to explain,

684

00:29:03,332--> 00:29:06,000

okay, here's how I do things.

685

00:29:06,000--> 00:29:08,428

You know, does it actually
align with what you want?

686

00:29:08,452--> 00:29:12,000

Because if you somehow

687

00:29:12,000--> 00:29:15,468

don't feel safe in
the way that I work,

688

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00:29:15,492--> 00:29:17,908

we're probably not going
to be a great partnership.

689

00:29:17,932--> 00:29:20,308

And I think it's being
that level of honest

690

00:29:20,332--> 00:29:21,628

of being, like,

691

00:29:21,652--> 00:29:23,708

look, this is how I work.

692

00:29:23,732--> 00:29:27,000

And I know it's really hard
when you have an agent,

693

00:29:27,000--> 00:29:28,468

um...

694

00:29:28,492--> 00:29:32,868

you know, who's not quite as you

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would want, and there's no one else.

695

00:29:32,892--> 00:29:36,908

Like, I really get that, but a bad agent is worse than no agent.

696

00:29:36,932--> 00:29:38,708

I can tell you that right now.

697

00:29:38,732--> 00:29:41,348

You need to feel valued,

698

00:29:41,372--> 00:29:43,748

you need to feel supported.

699

00:29:43,772--> 00:29:46,628

And a lot of the time, I have to say,

700

00:29:46,652--> 00:29:50,628

I stay friends with people who have turned me down.

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701

00:29:50,652--> 00:29:52,700

I think people
think that it's, like,

702

00:29:52,724--> 00:29:55,000

you're gonna get an enemy
for life, and I'm like, no!

703

00:29:55,000--> 00:29:56,628

I'm very good friends
with all of them.

704

00:29:56,652--> 00:29:58,308

I wish them well.

705

00:29:58,332--> 00:30:02,000

Um, it's literally... I will
be rooting from them...

706

00:30:02,000--> 00:30:05,428

for them from the
sidelines, absolutely.

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707

00:30:05,452--> 00:30:08,188

Like, it's like,
publishing is a business.

708

00:30:08,212--> 00:30:11,000

While I may love a
book with all my heart,

709

00:30:11,000--> 00:30:14,108

if the author feels we're not
the right business partnership,

710

00:30:14,132--> 00:30:17,508

that's absolutely fine. There's
really no issues whatsoever.

711

00:30:17,532--> 00:30:20,548

And I think it is the
same both ways,

712

00:30:20,572--> 00:30:23,000

where I feel
actually I don't think

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713

00:30:23,000--> 00:30:25,868

I'm the best champion
for your goals,

714

00:30:25,892--> 00:30:28,000

so I'm gonna tell you that

715

00:30:28,000--> 00:30:31,708

because I find that
really important to say.

716

00:30:31,732--> 00:30:35,788

Um, and then it's a case of
really communicating throughout.

717

00:30:35,812--> 00:30:39,000

You know, I work with a
lot of non-fiction authors,

718

00:30:39,000--> 00:30:41,348

especially who write memoirs,

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719

00:30:41,372--> 00:30:43,625

uh, things that tend
to be quite personal.

720

00:30:43,649--> 00:30:46,000

I am very focused on

721

00:30:46,000--> 00:30:49,308

privacy and author care
when it comes to this.

722

00:30:49,332--> 00:30:52,000

I think, um, you know,
this is something that

723

00:30:52,000--> 00:30:55,308

Anna and I discuss all the time, you
know, when it comes to memoir writing

724

00:30:55,332--> 00:30:58,000

and what to disclose,
what not to disclose,

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725

00:30:58,000--> 00:31:00,148

how it's used in publicity.

726

00:31:00,172--> 00:31:02,268

Like, I think some...

727

00:31:02,292--> 00:31:05,508

the... the sort of the
publishing window

728

00:31:05,532--> 00:31:09,148

means that probably 3
months post-publication,

729

00:31:09,172--> 00:31:12,108

your support system
kind of drops off.

730

00:31:12,132--> 00:31:15,000

And... and so it's
explaining, like,

731

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00:31:15,000--> 00:31:17,188

that kind of thing

to authors that while,

732

00:31:17,212--> 00:31:20,308

you know, you're not going to be in

daily contact with your publicist any more,

733

00:31:20,332--> 00:31:23,268

people on the internet

will keep finding that article

734

00:31:23,292--> 00:31:25,000

that is quite revealing.

735

00:31:25,000--> 00:31:27,308

Um, and therefore

it's empowering them

736

00:31:27,332--> 00:31:31,588

to say, you know, there are

two ways to publish this memoir.

737

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00:31:31,612--> 00:31:36,668

One that may have big coverage,

738

00:31:36,692--> 00:31:39,268

but that may yield to...

739

00:31:39,292--> 00:31:43,988

people looking at, you know, for
you to feel a lot more perceived

740

00:31:44,012--> 00:31:46,708

than you want. And
then there's another way.

741

00:31:46,732--> 00:31:51,028

And it's like really
being clear that, um, I...

742

00:31:51,052--> 00:31:53,748

Yeah, to get a huge
amount of coverage,

743

00:31:53,772--> 00:31:57,468

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to get a huge amount
of success, it's not all...

744

00:31:57,492--> 00:32:00,000

You know, it's not for everyone.

745

00:32:00,000--> 00:32:03,451

That level of scrutiny
that you may experience,

746

00:32:03,475--> 00:32:06,000

that level of having your life

747

00:32:06,000--> 00:32:09,348

kind of out there
being the, you know...

748

00:32:09,372--> 00:32:12,348

If people Google you
five years from publication,

749

00:32:12,372--> 00:32:13,948

this is the first

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thing that comes up.

750

00:32:13,972--> 00:32:17,000

That kind of thing, and I think
you need to be honest with yourself.

751

00:32:17,000--> 00:32:19,588

Obviously, we all
want all of the money,

752

00:32:19,612--> 00:32:21,308

all of the success,
all of the praises,

753

00:32:21,332--> 00:32:23,428

at the same time, ideally.

754

00:32:23,452--> 00:32:27,091

But, this is not
going to happen.

755

00:32:27,115--> 00:32:28,748

There are, um...

756

00:32:28,772--> 00:32:31,000

some sacrifices to
make, and I think

757

00:32:31,000--> 00:32:34,108

for some people, just, you know,

758

00:32:34,132--> 00:32:36,348

having an extract of the book

759

00:32:36,372--> 00:32:38,628

or their actual diagnosis

760

00:32:38,652--> 00:32:41,218

revealed in newspaper
is not one of them,

761

00:32:41,242--> 00:32:45,000

and so I think it is talking
about, you know, the reality

762

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00:32:45,000--> 00:32:48,000

of being published and the
publishing process as well.

763

00:32:48,000--> 00:32:50,388

And a lot of the time,
these are discussions

764

00:32:50,412--> 00:32:53,188

with the agent and the
publicist to make sure

765

00:32:53,212--> 00:32:55,788

everyone aligns over

766

00:32:55,812--> 00:32:59,188

what an author
wants, or doesn't want.

767

00:32:59,212--> 00:33:00,908

Anna, did you want to...?

768

00:33:01,700--> 00:33:04,181

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Yeah, I was just gonna jump
in really quick to add to that,

769

00:33:04,205--> 00:33:07,375

but I think the point about memoir
is a really interesting one, and I...

770

00:33:07,399--> 00:33:10,700

And it's... it is something that Caro
and I have talked about extensively.

771

00:33:10,724--> 00:33:12,924

You know, I think memoirs
are a particularly tough area,

772

00:33:12,948--> 00:33:15,000

because often it is people who

773

00:33:15,000--> 00:33:17,508

maybe haven't come from
a kind of literary background

774

00:33:17,532--> 00:33:20,492

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or a kind of bookish background,
someone who's done something extraordinary

775

00:33:20,516--> 00:33:22,700

or had a very traumatic
experience, potentially,

776

00:33:22,724--> 00:33:24,374

and has either been
approached by an agent

777

00:33:24,398--> 00:33:28,000

or sort of has been approached
by a publisher to write this memoir.

778

00:33:28,000--> 00:33:30,680

Um, or at some point they've
decided they want to share their story,

779

00:33:30,704--> 00:33:33,000

but they don't really know
how to begin doing that.

780

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00:33:33,000--> 00:33:35,268

And so they're coming
with even less knowledge

781

00:33:35,292--> 00:33:39,100

of the publishing industry than the
average writer, I think, in some scenarios.

782

00:33:39,124--> 00:33:41,924

And it's something that we've been
doing a lot of work on at Canongate,

783

00:33:41,948--> 00:33:44,068

is sort of looking at the
process around legal reads,

784

00:33:44,092--> 00:33:48,000

because, you know, for
anyone who doesn't know,

785

00:33:48,000--> 00:33:49,628

any memoir that

786

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00:33:49,652--> 00:33:53,068

contains, kind of, I

guess, kind of, potentially

787

00:33:53,092--> 00:33:56,000

legally controversial material

goes through a legal read.

788

00:33:56,000--> 00:33:58,240

And, you know, a lawyer

looks through it and kind of says

789

00:33:58,264--> 00:34:01,344

what you can say and what you can't,

particularly where there are maybe people

790

00:34:01,368--> 00:34:03,168

that you're talking

about who are still alive

791

00:34:03,192--> 00:34:05,788

and who may disagree

with your version of events.

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792

00:34:05,812--> 00:34:08,000

You know, we obviously have

793

00:34:08,000--> 00:34:10,188

libels in this country.

794

00:34:10,212--> 00:34:13,068

Um, and uh...

795

00:34:13,092--> 00:34:14,708

And I think a lot of
writers get shocked,

796

00:34:14,732--> 00:34:17,452

because they get this legal read
back and suddenly they're being told

797

00:34:17,476--> 00:34:20,200

that they have to take certain
things out or re-frame certain things.

798

00:34:20,224--> 00:34:22,588

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And that can be really,
actually, pretty traumatizing,

799

00:34:22,612--> 00:34:25,800

because it's this point where suddenly
it's your moment to get your voice heard.

800

00:34:25,824--> 00:34:28,176

and you're being told you
can't do that in the way that.

801

00:34:28,200--> 00:34:29,415

You thought you could.

802

00:34:29,439--> 00:34:32,588

Or that you have to go away
and collect evidence, or collect,

803

00:34:32,612--> 00:34:35,976

you know, secondary testimony, or,
you know, whatever else it happens to be.

804

00:34:36,000--> 00:34:38,748

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And so, you know, we're
doing a lot of work in Canongate,

805

00:34:38,772--> 00:34:41,468

looking at how we can make
fairly simple tweaks to that process

806

00:34:41,492--> 00:34:45,800

that just involves being far clearer
before the writer ever starts writing.

807

00:34:45,824--> 00:34:47,548

about what those
expectations are

808

00:34:47,572--> 00:34:49,668

and what that legal
read might look like.

809

00:34:49,692--> 00:34:51,300

So they're going
in, again, it's about.

810

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00:34:51,324--> 00:34:53,748

information, and it's
about empowerment.

811

00:34:53,772--> 00:34:56,000

And again, every
single writer I work with,

812

00:34:56,024--> 00:34:57,748

when they're doing press,

813

00:34:57,772--> 00:35:01,108

particularly on memoirs
or kind of books that have a

814

00:35:01,132--> 00:35:04,068

particularly personal element,
but also actually any writer at all.

815

00:35:04,092--> 00:35:05,748

You know, I'm very,
very clear with them

816

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00:35:05,772--> 00:35:08,100

that if they have hard lines
that they don't want to cross

817

00:35:08,124--> 00:35:09,308

that is okay.

818

00:35:09,332--> 00:35:12,408

And that is also, you know, I think
kind of going back to the question about

819

00:35:12,432--> 00:35:14,588

how to make sure that writers

820

00:35:14,612--> 00:35:16,868

feel comfortable with the
process as it's going on,

821

00:35:16,892--> 00:35:19,528

even if they don't actually feel
comfortable asking the question.

822

00:35:19,552--> 00:35:22,668

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That's also on publishers, right?

Like, that's on us to proactively say

823

00:35:22,692--> 00:35:25,168

it's okay if there are things

here you disagree with.

824

00:35:25,192--> 00:35:26,508

It's okay if you have questions.

825

00:35:26,532--> 00:35:29,068

It's okay if you want to have

a conversation about this.

826

00:35:29,092--> 00:35:31,485

It is so important that you

feel comfortable with the way

827

00:35:31,509--> 00:35:32,800

that your work is

being presented

828

00:35:32,824--> 00:35:34,268

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and brought out into the world.

829

00:35:34,292--> 00:35:37,000

And so I'll fairly regularly
go to an author and say, look,

830

00:35:37,000--> 00:35:39,428

such and such newspapers,
such and such magazine

831

00:35:39,452--> 00:35:42,348

wants to run an extract,
wants to cover your book.

832

00:35:42,372--> 00:35:44,228

Here are the pros and cons.

833

00:35:44,252--> 00:35:47,000

You know, the pros are that it
will reach a huge number of people,

834

00:35:47,000--> 00:35:49,028

it may well sell

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a lot of copies.

835

00:35:49,052--> 00:35:50,348

I'm gonna be honest with you,

836

00:35:50,372--> 00:35:53,388

they're probably gonna slap a
hugely sensationalist headline on it

837

00:35:53,412--> 00:35:54,676

and do an edit that,

838

00:35:54,700--> 00:35:57,308

you know, we are not going to
have a huge amount of control over.

839

00:35:57,332--> 00:35:59,508

And we can talk through this.

840

00:35:59,532--> 00:36:01,492

And if, at the end of that,
you want to walk away,

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841

00:36:01,516--> 00:36:03,668

I will 100% support
your decision on that.

842

00:36:03,692--> 00:36:05,000

If you want to go ahead,

843

00:36:05,000--> 00:36:07,565

with certain caveats,
then we can move ahead.

844

00:36:07,589--> 00:36:10,208

And if you then want to walk away,
we can do that halfway through.

845

00:36:10,232--> 00:36:13,200

You know, we can have that conversation,
but it needs to be a conversation.

846

00:36:13,224--> 00:36:16,344

And again, I think it is... it comes back
to that question of trust, but it also...

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847

00:36:16,368--> 00:36:18,388

I think there's a really
fair point that publishers

848

00:36:18,412--> 00:36:20,668

should be being more
proactive about that as well.

849

00:36:20,692--> 00:36:21,908

-Thanks, Anna.

850

00:36:21,932--> 00:36:23,698

I mean, there's no
one way to be an author

851

00:36:23,722--> 00:36:26,128

and there's so many different
ways, and everyone has so many...

852

00:36:26,152--> 00:36:30,188

looking at different aspects of it,
and so that clarity from the outset is

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853

00:36:30,212--> 00:36:34,268

so key and having just open
and candid conversations

854

00:36:34,292--> 00:36:35,668

about what it's
going to look like

855

00:36:35,692--> 00:36:38,428

and what will happen during
the publishing process.

856

00:36:38,452--> 00:36:40,468

But if that is set up,

857

00:36:40,492--> 00:36:42,182

that foundation is set
up at the beginning,

858

00:36:42,206--> 00:36:44,188

it's easier to have
the conversations

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859

00:36:44,212--> 00:36:46,178

throughout the journey,
throughout the process

860

00:36:46,202--> 00:36:50,000

if things take a turn
unexpectedly. So, it's that...

861

00:36:51,000--> 00:36:54,188

Ensuring that the author has
the informed decision making

862

00:36:54,212--> 00:36:56,172

and so they... you're giving
them the pros and cons.

863

00:36:56,196--> 00:36:57,848

I think that's excellent,
Anna, and then...

864

00:36:57,872--> 00:37:00,628

because if you're new to all this,
you don't know what this will mean

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865

00:37:00,652--> 00:37:02,176

6, 12 months down

the line, you just...

866

00:37:02,200--> 00:37:03,200

-Yeah.

867

00:37:03,224--> 00:37:05,904

-You're going with the flow, and
so you're their agent and publisher

868

00:37:05,928--> 00:37:09,000

acting as advisors

to the author who

869

00:37:09,000--> 00:37:11,168

might be going through
this process for the first time.

870

00:37:11,192--> 00:37:12,788

Um, so...

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871

00:37:12,812--> 00:37:15,068

It's understanding that
there is no one way,

872

00:37:15,092--> 00:37:17,628

no one size fits all, and...

873

00:37:17,652--> 00:37:22,628

But the onus is on agent,
publisher to set that tone and that,

874

00:37:22,652--> 00:37:24,000

um, space for...

875

00:37:24,000--> 00:37:25,000

-Yeah.

876

00:37:25,000--> 00:37:27,148

-Honest, trusted conversation.

877

00:37:27,172--> 00:37:29,000

Vas, did you have

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anything you would

878

00:37:29,000--> 00:37:30,308

reflect on this?

879

00:37:30,332--> 00:37:32,748

-Well, I... I'm

gonna slightly, um...

880

00:37:32,772--> 00:37:34,908

So this is, this is my take.

881

00:37:34,932--> 00:37:37,000

I think that,

882

00:37:37,000--> 00:37:39,308

in spite of all of the positive

discussions we're having,

883

00:37:39,332--> 00:37:43,000

my personal feeling is that the

publishing industry as a whole

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884

00:37:43,000--> 00:37:46,188

does not always have the
right incentive or motivation

885

00:37:46,212--> 00:37:49,000

to want to be completely
transparent and honest

886

00:37:49,000--> 00:37:51,508

with authors, for two
reasons. One is because

887

00:37:51,532--> 00:37:55,228

there's a balance here, there's a
tension between wanting to inspire

888

00:37:55,252--> 00:37:57,788

authors and keep them
upbeat and optimistic,

889

00:37:57,812--> 00:38:01,348

and then also giving
them a hard dose of reality,

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890

00:38:01,372--> 00:38:03,548

because too much reality,
of course, can puncture

891

00:38:03,572--> 00:38:05,628

that balloon of good feeling

892

00:38:05,652--> 00:38:07,308

that an author
needs to do their best...

893

00:38:07,332--> 00:38:08,628

best work.

894

00:38:08,652--> 00:38:10,868

Um, and the second reason is

895

00:38:10,892--> 00:38:13,800

the publishing industry
doesn't necessarily want

896

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00:38:13,824--> 00:38:16,468

authors to completely
peer behind the curtain

897

00:38:16,492--> 00:38:19,348

and see how everything works
and how everything is worked out

898

00:38:19,372--> 00:38:20,388

for them.

899

00:38:20,412--> 00:38:23,000

Um, you know, I
trained as an economist

900

00:38:23,000--> 00:38:25,468

and, you know, one of the
things that we talked about

901

00:38:25,492--> 00:38:29,000

is asymmetric information
and how that can often lead to

902

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00:38:29,000--> 00:38:31,028

market failure and

all sorts of other...

903

00:38:31,052--> 00:38:34,000

other issues. And what

we have here is that

904

00:38:34,000--> 00:38:35,788

all of the power, all of the...

905

00:38:35,812--> 00:38:38,348

almost all of the power

and all of the information

906

00:38:38,372--> 00:38:40,588

is with the... on

the publishing side

907

00:38:40,612--> 00:38:41,908

of the house.

908

00:38:41,932--> 00:38:45,051

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Do publishers really want
to open up everything?

909

00:38:45,075--> 00:38:46,428

I don't believe so.

910

00:38:46,452--> 00:38:47,548

Um...

911

00:38:47,572--> 00:38:49,148

So, and it's also...

912

00:38:49,172--> 00:38:51,668

always amazes me, even
now when I do workshops

913

00:38:51,692--> 00:38:55,000

for newer writers,
how little they know

914

00:38:55,000--> 00:38:58,068

in spite of much more of it
being online than when I was...

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915

00:38:58,092--> 00:38:59,988

when I was young,
you know, they...

916

00:39:00,012--> 00:39:02,000

Lots of authors come in

917

00:39:02,000--> 00:39:04,948

and they still don't
know exactly how

918

00:39:04,972--> 00:39:07,548

an advance might have been...

919

00:39:07,572--> 00:39:10,228

that number might
have been arrived at.

920

00:39:10,252--> 00:39:12,268

And they don't seem
to understand that

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921

00:39:12,292--> 00:39:17,000

the level of your advance very often
ties into the kind of marketing plan

922

00:39:17,000--> 00:39:18,708

and effort and push
that you might get.

923

00:39:18,732--> 00:39:22,348

And marketing, just being on lots
and lots of different author forums...

924

00:39:22,372--> 00:39:25,228

I was the chair of the Crime
Writers Association, etcetera,

925

00:39:25,252--> 00:39:26,948

that is the number one bugbear.

926

00:39:26,972--> 00:39:28,708

That's the number one thing that

927

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00:39:28,732--> 00:39:31,000

authors keep coming

back to in general

928

00:39:31,000--> 00:39:34,028

where there appears to

be a lot of disappointment,

929

00:39:34,052--> 00:39:36,828

a lot of expectations

930

00:39:36,852--> 00:39:39,228

that were not handled

very well at the beginning.

931

00:39:39,252--> 00:39:42,108

And on both sides, you know.

932

00:39:42,132--> 00:39:45,000

Sometimes authors build it into

their heads that I'm published

933

00:39:45,000--> 00:39:48,268

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and they forget that they
are very rarely the centre of

934

00:39:48,292--> 00:39:52,788

the universe, either at their
agency or at the publishing house,

935

00:39:52,812--> 00:39:56,228

and certainly not their publicist, who
probably has 20 other books to juggle

936

00:39:56,252--> 00:39:59,068

that month, all
requiring effort.

937

00:39:59,092--> 00:40:03,000

And the... lots of authors are
completely blind to this fact.

938

00:40:03,000--> 00:40:06,308

And so they feel very much
neglected, and that whole...

939

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00:40:06,332--> 00:40:09,032

that term that's come through over
the last few years being ghosted.

940

00:40:09,056--> 00:40:11,908

No one's replying to my
emails, which is not great, but...

941

00:40:11,932--> 00:40:14,828

you know, partly could just be a
function of the fact that your publicist

942

00:40:14,852--> 00:40:18,600

is running themselves ragged
trying to market 20 books.

943

00:40:18,624--> 00:40:20,148

that month alone,

944

00:40:20,172--> 00:40:22,428

but nobody's telling you
this, so you don't... you can't...

945

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00:40:22,452--> 00:40:23,948

you can't get that perspective.

946

00:40:23,972--> 00:40:26,708

Or it could just be that you've
got a very low advance, then I'm...

947

00:40:26,732--> 00:40:29,708

You know, sadly, that means
that they've got very little...

948

00:40:29,732--> 00:40:31,388

Sorry, I'm in a meeting!

949

00:40:31,412--> 00:40:33,308

So, they've got...
[laughs] my missus.

950

00:40:33,332--> 00:40:36,000

So that means that
they've literally got...

951

00:40:36,000--> 00:40:38,468

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not got the
resources to give you

952
00:40:38,492--> 00:40:40,348
everything that you
think you deserve.

953
00:40:40,372--> 00:40:43,000
You know, billboards
and TV and everything.

954
00:40:43,000--> 00:40:44,068
So...

955
00:40:44,092--> 00:40:45,228
[sighs]

956
00:40:45,252--> 00:40:48,308
I'm sort of... I'm... I'm hopeful,

957
00:40:48,332--> 00:40:51,258
because I can see more and
more people within the industry

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958

00:40:51,282--> 00:40:52,576

sort of speaking out and...

959

00:40:52,600--> 00:40:54,868

You know, Caro

mentioned one Substack.

960

00:40:54,892--> 00:40:58,428

There are others, there are videos

and podcasts and things about

961

00:40:58,452--> 00:41:01,748

the industry making

itself more transparent

962

00:41:01,772--> 00:41:04,268

and how they do

these kind of things.

963

00:41:04,292--> 00:41:07,908

But I'm not convinced that the industry

wants to be completely transparent,

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964

00:41:07,932--> 00:41:10,000

because it might lead to,

965

00:41:10,000--> 00:41:12,908

um, revealing things

that they don't wish

966

00:41:12,932--> 00:41:14,228

to be revealed.

967

00:41:15,000--> 00:41:16,268

-Thanks, Vas, and

968

00:41:16,292--> 00:41:17,789

as viewers, you

will have noticed,

969

00:41:17,813--> 00:41:20,108

I've been addressing some

of the questions as we go,

970

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00:41:20,132--> 00:41:21,411

just as they came up.

971

00:41:21,435--> 00:41:23,784

So there was one... I mean,
that's a beautiful segue, Vas,

972

00:41:23,808--> 00:41:27,388

because Sarah broadly asked a
question about marketing spend.

973

00:41:27,412--> 00:41:30,028

And marketing
spend is not equal.

974

00:41:30,052--> 00:41:33,548

And as you say, Vas, it's
one of the perennial questions

975

00:41:33,572--> 00:41:35,388

that authors come
to us to ask about

976

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00:41:35,412--> 00:41:38,668

and they might be

unhappy about because

977

00:41:38,692--> 00:41:40,828

they might be

expecting one thing,

978

00:41:40,852--> 00:41:42,988

but they get

something different.

979

00:41:43,012--> 00:41:46,068

So how do we manage

expectations in the space when,

980

00:41:46,092--> 00:41:48,668

if they haven't asked

the question early on,

981

00:41:48,692--> 00:41:50,988

to make sure that they're, um...

982

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00:41:51,012--> 00:41:54,748

They know what they're going to
get in terms of marketing spend.

983

00:41:54,772--> 00:41:56,668

Anna, can I come to you first?

984

00:41:56,692--> 00:41:57,778

Just to answer that one.

985

00:41:57,802--> 00:41:58,802

-Yeah, absolutely.

986

00:41:58,826--> 00:42:00,598

And I think, just to
say briefly as well,

987

00:42:00,622--> 00:42:02,742

I mean, I think, Vas, your points are
completely valid

988

00:42:02,766--> 00:42:05,406

and completely fair, and I... I

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think it's also important to say that

989

00:42:05,430--> 00:42:07,232

in the same way that

authors aren't a monolith

990

00:42:07,256--> 00:42:09,376

and different authors are

looking for different things

991

00:42:09,400--> 00:42:10,536

from the publishing process,

992

00:42:10,560--> 00:42:12,140

publishers aren't

either, and I think...

993

00:42:12,164--> 00:42:14,564

You're totally right, there are

always going to be publishers

994

00:42:14,588--> 00:42:18,308

for whom transparency is not an

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end goal or even a desirable one.

995

00:42:18,332--> 00:42:19,908

And there will always be...

996

00:42:19,932--> 00:42:22,628

I mean, you know, as we know,
overwork and burnout in publishing

997

00:42:22,652--> 00:42:24,000

is a huge, huge issue.

998

00:42:24,000--> 00:42:27,000

I will say briefly that kind of one
of the ways that Canongate is

999

00:42:27,000--> 00:42:29,768

handling a lot of the things
we're talking about right now

1000

00:42:29,792--> 00:42:31,788

is that we made a conscious
choice a few years ago

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1001

00:42:31,812--> 00:42:35,000

to cut the size of our list. We
now only publish 45 books a year

1002

00:42:35,000--> 00:42:38,668

which is a tiny number for the size
of a publishing house that we are,

1003

00:42:38,692--> 00:42:40,588

and that was done
explicitly with the idea

1004

00:42:40,612--> 00:42:42,308

that we want to
be able to offer

1005

00:42:42,332--> 00:42:44,108

every author that we publish

1006

00:42:44,132--> 00:42:46,948

the best experience they can have.
That does not mean that every author

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1007

00:42:46,972--> 00:42:48,508

is going to be a huge
breakout success

1008

00:42:48,532--> 00:42:50,228

and every book is
going to be a bestseller.

1009

00:42:50,252--> 00:42:52,000

We have a pretty
good hit rate, I will say.

1010

00:42:52,000--> 00:42:55,485

But what it does mean is
that we can have, again,

1011

00:42:55,509--> 00:42:58,676

those honest conversations,
real relationships.

1012

00:42:58,700--> 00:43:01,508

And I think that's... that, again,

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comes back to this conversation about

1013

00:43:01,532--> 00:43:03,828

the question of

marketing spend is that..

1014

00:43:03,852--> 00:43:05,391

I mean, of course, you know,

1015

00:43:05,415--> 00:43:09,000

whacking a huge marketing

budget onto a big splashy debut

1016

00:43:09,000--> 00:43:10,708

gives it a greater

chance of success.

1017

00:43:10,732--> 00:43:14,468

I would argue it doesn't give it a

guaranteed chance of success.

1018

00:43:14,492--> 00:43:16,262

You know, and again,

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we see this, and it's...

1019

00:43:16,286--> 00:43:20,000

When I talk about that idea of being
really clear with yourself what you want,

1020

00:43:20,000--> 00:43:25,000

you know, if you go to a corporate house
that gives you a massive, massive advance,

1021

00:43:25,000--> 00:43:27,088

you probably will get
the big marketing spend.

1022

00:43:27,112--> 00:43:30,352

But there will probably be another 4 or 5
books that are being published that year

1023

00:43:30,376--> 00:43:32,068

by the same publisher
with that same spend

1024

00:43:32,092--> 00:43:35,268

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and they are doing that on the basis
that one of those books might break out.

1025

00:43:35,292--> 00:43:37,508

You know, and so

1026

00:43:37,532--> 00:43:40,508

publishing is
gambling at its heart,

1027

00:43:40,532--> 00:43:42,000

you know, more
than anything else.

1028

00:43:42,000--> 00:43:43,711

And, you know, I know
that partly because

1029

00:43:43,735--> 00:43:47,000

there are books that I've worked
on that I absolutely love that I would

1030

00:43:47,000--> 00:43:49,628

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throw everything behind, all
of my energy, all of my time,

1031

00:43:49,652--> 00:43:52,000

all of my passion,
and they still don't

1032

00:43:52,000--> 00:43:53,366

get to where I think they'd be,

1033

00:43:53,390--> 00:43:56,000

despite the fact that everyone
at Canongate feels the same.

1034

00:43:56,000--> 00:43:57,108

And I think,

1035

00:43:57,132--> 00:43:59,052

again, I don't want to
sound like a stuck record,

1036

00:43:59,076--> 00:44:01,126

I think it is about this

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conversation about honesty.

1037

00:44:01,150--> 00:44:02,205

But, you know, I will...

1038

00:44:02,229--> 00:44:05,100

part of the reason why I've stayed
at Canongate for as long as I have...

1039

00:44:05,124--> 00:44:08,388

You know, I've been here for
almost 20 years now, is that...

1040

00:44:08,412--> 00:44:11,168

We will go into a pitch
meeting, and we will have...

1041

00:44:11,192--> 00:44:13,473

We will say what our ambition
is for the book, absolutely.

1042

00:44:13,497--> 00:44:16,577

We will talk about why we love it, we

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will talk about our vision for the book,

1043

00:44:16,601--> 00:44:18,561

what we hope we can

do with it, we will talk about

1044

00:44:18,585--> 00:44:20,705

our strategy when it comes

to marketing and publicity.

1045

00:44:20,729--> 00:44:23,529

We're not promise billboards if

we're not going to give you billboards.

1046

00:44:23,553--> 00:44:27,000

We also talk a lot about the idea, as

Caro was saying, of a career trajectory.

1047

00:44:27,000--> 00:44:29,776

We talk a lot about the idea that

we publish authors, not books.

1048

00:44:29,800--> 00:44:31,948

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We want to look at an
author in the longer term.

1049

00:44:31,972--> 00:44:35,100

So that maybe doesn't mean that for
your debut you're going to get billboards,

1050

00:44:35,124--> 00:44:37,228

but it does mean
that we have a vision

1051

00:44:37,252--> 00:44:39,348

for where we think we
can get to you, you know,

1052

00:44:39,372--> 00:44:40,800

where we can
take you as a writer

1053

00:44:40,824--> 00:44:42,999

and we hope that our
vision aligns with yours

1054

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00:44:43,023--> 00:44:45,000

and so we can have
those conversations.

1055

00:44:45,000--> 00:44:47,548

-What you've just said
is the thing that I think I...

1056

00:44:47,572--> 00:44:51,071

I, talking to lots and lots of
authors on different forums,

1057

00:44:51,095--> 00:44:54,000

that's the thing I
think that many feel

1058

00:44:54,000--> 00:44:57,428

is currently perhaps on the...
on the wane within the industry.

1059

00:44:57,452--> 00:45:00,400

The idea that publishers
will stick with you

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1060

00:45:00,424--> 00:45:02,000

through multiple books,

1061

00:45:02,000--> 00:45:03,908

because they

recognize your talent

1062

00:45:03,932--> 00:45:06,108

and they want to grow you. The--

1063

00:45:06,132--> 00:45:09,188

What's taken hold,

rightly or wrongly, now

1064

00:45:09,212--> 00:45:10,668

is the perception that

1065

00:45:10,692--> 00:45:12,908

if your first or second

book doesn't make it,

1066

00:45:12,932--> 00:45:14,188

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you're out the door.

1067

00:45:14,212--> 00:45:15,700

And I think that's
a shame that...

1068

00:45:15,724--> 00:45:17,268

-And I think...

1069

00:45:17,292--> 00:45:19,948

Yeah. And I think that's
a real problem, and again,

1070

00:45:19,972--> 00:45:21,588

you know, I think there's...

1071

00:45:21,612--> 00:45:24,508

there's hard conversations we had
around that kind of concept of, like,

1072

00:45:24,532--> 00:45:27,405

the big splashy advance, the ones
you see reported in The Bookseller,

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1073

00:45:27,429--> 00:45:29,268

you know, particularly
around LBF.

1074

00:45:29,292--> 00:45:31,828

You know, that someone's
got such and such.

1075

00:45:31,852--> 00:45:33,988

Someone's got a
six-figure deal, I...

1076

00:45:34,012--> 00:45:37,308

For some people, that can
absolutely be a valid end goal,

1077

00:45:37,332--> 00:45:40,668

but it can also be a bit of a
poison chalice, and I think...

1078

00:45:40,692--> 00:45:44,348

You know, agent... That, that's a

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conversation for an agent to have

1079

00:45:44,372--> 00:45:46,068

with their writer about

1080

00:45:46,092--> 00:45:48,148

the pros and cons of that,

1081

00:45:48,172--> 00:45:50,508

because, you know, if you've
got the big six-figure advance

1082

00:45:50,532--> 00:45:52,918

and you're one of the books
that doesn't take off that year,

1083

00:45:52,942--> 00:45:55,428

one of the two or three
debuts that's taken off,

1084

00:45:55,452--> 00:45:57,488

then that can be really
hard to sell a second book.

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1085

00:45:57,512--> 00:46:00,232

I would far rather work somewhere
where I have an honest conversation

1086

00:46:00,256--> 00:46:02,000

with an author in
a pitch meeting

1087

00:46:02,000--> 00:46:04,748

about where we
see that career going.

1088

00:46:04,772--> 00:46:07,988

And that we acknowledge that we're not
going to maybe pay as high in advance,

1089

00:46:08,012--> 00:46:09,908

but we also explain
why we're doing that,

1090

00:46:09,932--> 00:46:11,908

where our numbers come from.

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1091

00:46:11,932--> 00:46:15,268

And I, you know, and I think
that transparency is important.

1092

00:46:16,000--> 00:46:20,000

-Thank you, Anna. One of the questions
that's come in is about whether...

1093

00:46:20,024--> 00:46:22,548

And this was going to be one
of the questions later on about

1094

00:46:22,572--> 00:46:25,058

what we're seeing happening
in practice and whether

1095

00:46:25,082--> 00:46:28,000

these things are being
practised and implemented,

1096

00:46:28,000--> 00:46:33,000

but, um, is whether these

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elements of author care

1097

00:46:33,000--> 00:46:35,148

could, should be

put into contracts,

1098

00:46:35,172--> 00:46:37,188

certainly with relation to

1099

00:46:37,212--> 00:46:41,148

AI's analogy there, we're seeing
the importance of transparency.

1100

00:46:41,172--> 00:46:44,000

And if tech companies want

1101

00:46:44,000--> 00:46:48,291

authors and the creative industries to
get behind AI on one level or another,

1102

00:46:48,315--> 00:46:51,228

they need transparency because
they need to build trust, and so...

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1103

00:46:51,252--> 00:46:53,028

we're not seeing that
happen at the moment

1104

00:46:53,052--> 00:46:54,948

and so what we're
pushing for is regulation,

1105

00:46:54,972--> 00:46:57,588

because currently they're
acting above the law,

1106

00:46:57,612--> 00:46:59,668

and we're not, um...

1107

00:46:59,692--> 00:47:03,548

Authors don't have the transparency
about where their work is being used,

1108

00:47:03,572--> 00:47:06,268

so what do you think is the
solution within the publishing industry

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1109

00:47:06,292--> 00:47:08,465

to help ensure more
of this happens?

1110

00:47:08,489--> 00:47:11,000

Because obviously there's
some great examples of

1111

00:47:11,000--> 00:47:12,968

great practice out there,

1112

00:47:12,992--> 00:47:15,228

whether it's agents,
authors, or publishers.

1113

00:47:15,252--> 00:47:18,028

So what do you think
we can do as an industry

1114

00:47:18,052--> 00:47:20,548

to help make sure that
we continue to move

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1115

00:47:20,572--> 00:47:22,068

in a positive direction.

1116

00:47:24,090--> 00:47:26,588

And whoever wants

to take that one,

1117

00:47:26,612--> 00:47:28,668

if anyone has

any initial thoughts

1118

00:47:28,692--> 00:47:32,308

on whether Author Care and the elements

of it should be put into contracts.

1119

00:47:32,332--> 00:47:34,000

It's a question that's come in.

1120

00:47:34,000--> 00:47:36,628

And, um, or how

else do we ensure that

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1121

00:47:36,652--> 00:47:38,928

these conversations happen?

1122

00:47:38,952--> 00:47:39,952

Go on.

1123

00:47:39,976--> 00:47:41,821

-I don't think you can

put them into contracts,

1124

00:47:41,832--> 00:47:44,268

put some of the softer

stuff into contracts,

1125

00:47:44,292--> 00:47:45,428

because it's just...

1126

00:47:45,452--> 00:47:47,948

you're just going to go endlessly

round and round with lawyers,

1127

00:47:47,972--> 00:47:51,000

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and the only people getting rich
off that is going to be the lawyers.

1128

00:47:51,000--> 00:47:55,548

Um, I do... I think the industry is
generally moving in the right direction,

1129

00:47:55,572--> 00:47:57,338

with the caveat of
what I've said earlier,

1130

00:47:57,362--> 00:48:01,188

that I don't think complete
transparency is possible or even desirable

1131

00:48:01,212--> 00:48:04,148

from the point of view of
most publishers, not all.

1132

00:48:04,172--> 00:48:06,548

Um, and...

1133

00:48:06,572--> 00:48:09,188

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I think what it
also requires is

1134

00:48:09,212--> 00:48:12,028

this idea of taking
away the fear

1135

00:48:12,052--> 00:48:15,000

from people who are in...

1136

00:48:15,000--> 00:48:17,748

on the publishing
side of the house,

1137

00:48:17,772--> 00:48:19,948

that if they are...

1138

00:48:19,972--> 00:48:23,908

if they're too honest, perhaps somehow
they're shooting themselves in the foot,

1139

00:48:23,932--> 00:48:25,000

they're not.

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1140

00:48:25,000--> 00:48:26,788

Authors are, by and
large, grown-ups.

1141

00:48:26,812--> 00:48:29,348

And the only reason they
come in very, very naive

1142

00:48:29,372--> 00:48:31,388

is because the
industry is just this...

1143

00:48:31,412--> 00:48:34,700

You know, it's something that's
quite impenetrable from the outside.

1144

00:48:34,724--> 00:48:37,564

Other than if you go... and if you go
online and you have a look at stuff,

1145

00:48:37,588--> 00:48:39,000

you can find some things out.

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1146

00:48:39,000--> 00:48:43,228

But not a great deal, and often
the advice and information con...

1147

00:48:43,252--> 00:48:45,468

Uh, contradicts itself.

1148

00:48:45,492--> 00:48:47,948

So, I think, you know, people...

1149

00:48:47,972--> 00:48:51,348

training is a large part of it, getting
people in and saying to them, look,

1150

00:48:51,372--> 00:48:53,588

you can have slightly
more honest conversations

1151

00:48:53,612--> 00:48:55,788

with authors,
they're not going to,

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1152

00:48:55,812--> 00:48:58,348

you know, they're not going to
start screaming and shouting,

1153

00:48:58,372--> 00:49:02,000

because, you know, they would
prefer to have that information early on

1154

00:49:02,000--> 00:49:05,388

and know, honestly, what
the expectation for their book is

1155

00:49:05,412--> 00:49:07,000

without, you know,
as I said before,

1156

00:49:07,000--> 00:49:09,228

putting the dead
weight of reality on them

1157

00:49:09,252--> 00:49:12,100

so that they can barely function
any more and don't want to write again.

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1158

00:49:12,124--> 00:49:15,268

You know, that's the tension
that's always going to be there.

1159

00:49:15,292--> 00:49:21,000

How much reality is enough and
how much do we still want to be

1160

00:49:21,000--> 00:49:22,668

the reason that we're
all here, you know.

1161

00:49:22,692--> 00:49:24,668

We didn't all come
into this industry

1162

00:49:24,692--> 00:49:27,700

because we thought we were going to
become millionaires, we came in because

1163

00:49:27,724--> 00:49:30,392

we loved books from a

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young age, we loved the idea

1164

00:49:30,416--> 00:49:33,427

of stories and storytelling.

1165

00:49:33,451--> 00:49:35,268

And that has never gone away,

1166

00:49:35,292--> 00:49:36,868

no matter how successful you are

1167

00:49:36,892--> 00:49:39,000

in whichever role within

the industry you play.

1168

00:49:39,000--> 00:49:40,825

That never goes away, and it shouldn't.

1169

00:49:41,600--> 00:49:42,600

-I mean...

1170

00:49:42,624--> 00:49:44,108

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-But we still need
to pay the bills.

1171

00:49:44,132--> 00:49:45,748

So it's important
to be paid fairly.

1172

00:49:45,772--> 00:49:49,341

Everyone who... of whatever aspect
of the industry you're working in.

1173

00:49:49,365--> 00:49:51,068

Um, just to get that one in.

1174

00:49:51,092--> 00:49:52,200

Caro, sorry to cut off you.

1175

00:49:52,224--> 00:49:53,908

-Yeah, no, no, I think

1176

00:49:53,932--> 00:49:57,668

what is helping me a lot as an
agent is having worked in publishing

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1177

00:49:57,692--> 00:50:00,000

for 12 years at a
publishing house.

1178

00:50:00,000--> 00:50:02,188

And, I mean, essentially

1179

00:50:02,212--> 00:50:04,628

what publishers don't
really want you to know

1180

00:50:04,652--> 00:50:06,508

to a certain extent is that

1181

00:50:06,532--> 00:50:09,428

none of us really knows
what makes a bestseller.

1182

00:50:09,452--> 00:50:12,228

And some books...

1183

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00:50:12,252--> 00:50:14,468

everything is behind that book.

1184

00:50:14,492--> 00:50:18,188

Every marketing... everything,
it doesn't work, and then...

1185

00:50:18,212--> 00:50:20,548

You just get that book.

1186

00:50:20,572--> 00:50:23,508

Um, I love that I've seen
an entire article this week,

1187

00:50:23,532--> 00:50:26,828

so the big best... the big
unexpected bestseller,

1188

00:50:26,852--> 00:50:28,628

both in the US and UK,

1189

00:50:28,652--> 00:50:31,000

whether reflected on the list

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1190

00:50:31,000--> 00:50:35,028

or not is The Correspondent

by Virginia Evans,

1191

00:50:35,052--> 00:50:40,000

who... an American author,

but the Wall Street Journal

1192

00:50:40,000--> 00:50:43,148

actually went in

to do a deep dive

1193

00:50:43,172--> 00:50:46,000

into how on earth this book

1194

00:50:46,000--> 00:50:49,628

made it in, because, like,

no one can understand it.

1195

00:50:49,652--> 00:50:51,868

It's... it's just letters, it's...

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1196

00:50:51,892--> 00:50:54,868

You know what I mean,
and I think this is what...

1197

00:50:54,892--> 00:50:57,788

Ultimately, especially now,

1198

00:50:57,812--> 00:51:00,308

we are seeing that even

1199

00:51:00,332--> 00:51:03,000

great reviews in all newspapers

1200

00:51:03,000--> 00:51:07,348

don't automatically... don't
automatically mean sales.

1201

00:51:07,372--> 00:51:09,388

That a lot of the time,

1202

00:51:09,412--> 00:51:13,628

you know, now events and festivals

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don't necessarily lead to sales,

1203

00:51:13,652--> 00:51:15,468

and so they're...

1204

00:51:15,492--> 00:51:18,148

Advertising doesn't
necessarily lead to sales.

1205

00:51:18,172--> 00:51:21,588

There has been positives and
negatives with social media,

1206

00:51:21,612--> 00:51:23,000

so you can't say

1207

00:51:23,000--> 00:51:25,108

you put this amount
of money on TikTok,

1208

00:51:25,132--> 00:51:26,988

however you do
it, I'm too old for it,

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1209

00:51:27,012--> 00:51:29,788

but um... and you...

1210

00:51:29,812--> 00:51:31,428

you get this amount of sales.

1211

00:51:31,452--> 00:51:32,748

This is not a thing.

1212

00:51:32,772--> 00:51:35,628

We can't predict what will work.

1213

00:51:35,652--> 00:51:37,000

We can do

1214

00:51:37,000--> 00:51:38,468

what we've always done

1215

00:51:38,492--> 00:51:41,788

and hope for the best,

and this is essentially it.

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1216

00:51:41,812--> 00:51:45,788

And I think publishers as well
are not looking at individual authors,

1217

00:51:45,812--> 00:51:46,828

of course not.

1218

00:51:46,852--> 00:51:49,000

They're looking at
their list, their imprint,

1219

00:51:49,000--> 00:51:52,548

and they will make decisions
and choices based on this.

1220

00:51:52,572--> 00:51:56,000

And so, what I always
tell my authors is, like,

1221

00:51:56,000--> 00:51:58,108

literally, there's always
going to be a bigger fish

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1222

00:51:58,132--> 00:52:00,588

coming to steal
your marketing plan.

1223

00:52:00,612--> 00:52:04,388

Um, you know, all we can
do is do as much as we can

1224

00:52:04,412--> 00:52:06,988

and as much as we do, and,

1225

00:52:07,012--> 00:52:11,588

you know, like, I'm now involved
a lot more on the publicity side

1226

00:52:11,612--> 00:52:14,228

to help my authors,
because we have found

1227

00:52:14,252--> 00:52:17,000

that it's really hard
to get any coverage

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1228

00:52:17,000--> 00:52:19,108

at all for authors,

1229

00:52:19,132--> 00:52:22,388

and it's really hard

for debut authors,

1230

00:52:22,412--> 00:52:25,468

especially, to get even a

review in a broadsheet, or...

1231

00:52:25,492--> 00:52:30,000

You know, you see some

debuts do extremely well,

1232

00:52:30,000--> 00:52:34,268

but most debuts tend to fly

under the radar most of the time

1233

00:52:34,292--> 00:52:36,000

and so it takes a lot of work

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1234

00:52:36,000--> 00:52:37,708

to build an audience.

1235

00:52:37,732--> 00:52:40,508

Um, and I think, um...

1236

00:52:40,532--> 00:52:43,868

Yeah, publishing doesn't
really want to share bad news.

1237

00:52:43,892--> 00:52:45,428

They don't really want to...

1238

00:52:45,452--> 00:52:48,148

You know, publishers
don't really want to say that,

1239

00:52:48,172--> 00:52:52,348

yes, some... they cannot
guarantee a review in...

1240

00:52:52,372--> 00:52:53,868

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in a newspaper any more.

1241

00:52:53,892--> 00:52:55,000

They just can't do that.

1242

00:52:55,000--> 00:52:56,000

-No.

1243

00:52:57,000--> 00:53:00,868

-I think that the flip side of the
joy and serendipity of publishing

1244

00:53:00,892--> 00:53:04,748

is the uncertainty and having
to deal with that uncertainty

1245

00:53:04,772--> 00:53:07,000

as an author can be terrifying.

1246

00:53:07,000--> 00:53:09,268

Um, but we have 5 minutes left.

1247

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00:53:09,292--> 00:53:11,988

And there was a question
from Sue Morris in the chat,

1248

00:53:12,012--> 00:53:15,588

and she wanted to ask your
thoughts about whether age

1249

00:53:15,612--> 00:53:17,868

has a factor in the
publishing process,

1250

00:53:17,892--> 00:53:20,748

and do you feel it's harder to
be an older writer these days?

1251

00:53:20,772--> 00:53:22,228

Do you think that's
a disadvantage?

1252

00:53:22,252--> 00:53:23,588

What are your views?

1253

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00:53:23,612--> 00:53:28,000

And then, also, the next question
and last question for me is...

1254

00:53:28,000--> 00:53:29,348

With 5 minutes remaining,

1255

00:53:29,372--> 00:53:32,788

what is the one thing that you would want
authors to take away from this conversation

1256

00:53:32,812--> 00:53:35,748

that's going to help empower
them in their next conversation?

1257

00:53:35,772--> 00:53:38,628

So, age first,
then your top tip.

1258

00:53:38,652--> 00:53:40,607

Uh, who wants to go first?

1259

00:53:41,724--> 00:53:42,724

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Should I go--

1260

00:53:42,748--> 00:53:44,718

-I don't think so, certainly
not in crime fiction.

1261

00:53:44,742--> 00:53:48,228

Over the last decade, we've
seen many crime fiction writers

1262

00:53:48,252--> 00:53:50,000

come in at age 40.
I came in at age...

1263

00:53:50,000--> 00:53:55,000

Age 40, I know several friends
who've come in at 40, 45, a couple at 50.

1264

00:53:55,000--> 00:53:56,508

Um, wider...

1265

00:53:56,532--> 00:54:00,000

Lessons in Chemistry, Bonnie

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Garmus was 60-something.

1266

00:54:00,000--> 00:54:04,000

Uh, Where the Crawdads Sing, I think
she was... might even have been 70.

1267

00:54:04,000--> 00:54:06,548

You know, 10 million
sales and counting, so...

1268

00:54:06,572--> 00:54:08,068

My personal opinion is

1269

00:54:08,092--> 00:54:10,508

I don't think the industry
thinks that way any more.

1270

00:54:10,532--> 00:54:12,388

A great book is a great book.

1271

00:54:12,412--> 00:54:16,000

Whether or not it will sell
will be lots of other factors.

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1272

00:54:16,000--> 00:54:19,068

-Yeah, I don't, um...

I don't actually...

1273

00:54:19,092--> 00:54:21,668

Aside from knowing
when their birthday is,

1274

00:54:21,692--> 00:54:24,148

I don't actually know
how old anyone is.

1275

00:54:24,172--> 00:54:27,668

And I'm terrible with age,
so I wouldn't even know.

1276

00:54:27,692--> 00:54:30,188

Um, and I think it's...

1277

00:54:30,212--> 00:54:32,308

I...

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1278

00:54:32,332--> 00:54:35,000

Ultimately, very sadly,

1279

00:54:35,000--> 00:54:39,108

talent and hard work doesn't
always pay off in publishing

1280

00:54:39,132--> 00:54:42,000

and we always try to grasp at

1281

00:54:42,000--> 00:54:44,268

Is it that reason?

1282

00:54:44,292--> 00:54:46,428

Is it this one?

Or is it this way?

1283

00:54:46,452--> 00:54:47,951

Is it where I live? Is it my...?

1284

00:54:47,975--> 00:54:51,868

Actually, it's none of these

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and all of these things, is that it...

1285

00:54:51,892--> 00:54:57,000

You know, it's quite random, and sometimes
it's just good timing and good luck

1286

00:54:57,000--> 00:54:59,241

which sounds terrible
to being a professional

1287

00:54:59,265--> 00:55:01,148

in an industry that
is so uncertain,

1288

00:55:01,172--> 00:55:04,188

but it... That's basically it.

1289

00:55:04,212--> 00:55:06,828

Sometimes there's
no, uh, reason.

1290

00:55:06,852--> 00:55:10,108

I think Sue had a question about

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how hard it is to get an agent,

1291

00:55:10,132--> 00:55:14,000

and I would agree. I think
especially since the pandemic.

1292

00:55:14,000--> 00:55:16,428

I think everyone wrote a
book during the pandemic

1293

00:55:16,452--> 00:55:18,388

and definitely we're feeling it.

1294

00:55:18,412--> 00:55:19,628

Publishers are feeling it.

1295

00:55:19,652--> 00:55:21,268

There are a lot of books.

1296

00:55:21,292--> 00:55:24,228

And there's also a
lot of misinformation.

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1297

00:55:24,252--> 00:55:26,748

The sheer amount of
people who come to me

1298

00:55:26,772--> 00:55:29,228

querying a book
they've already published

1299

00:55:29,252--> 00:55:32,308

by what I would call
a vanity publisher,

1300

00:55:32,332--> 00:55:36,000

or a self-publisher, but that
they're calling indie publishing...

1301

00:55:36,000--> 00:55:39,628

Um, I think you have an
entire guide, Anna, at the SoA,

1302

00:55:39,652--> 00:55:42,708

in terms of, um, some
of these new publishers

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1303

00:55:42,732--> 00:55:45,948

that are coming in and are
telling people to pay £3,000

1304

00:55:45,972--> 00:55:48,000

to get their books published

1305

00:55:48,000--> 00:55:50,348

and pretend that this
is traditional publishing.

1306

00:55:50,372--> 00:55:53,028

I think there's a lot of
misinformation more than anything,

1307

00:55:53,052--> 00:55:56,000

and so I would always rely on

1308

00:55:56,000--> 00:55:57,748

the bodies like the SoA,

1309

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00:55:57,772--> 00:56:03,000

but also the AAA, the
Authors' Agents Association,

1310

00:56:03,000--> 00:56:06,588

to make sure that, um... And
also The Publishers Association,

1311

00:56:06,612--> 00:56:10,000

to make sure that you
are actually talking to

1312

00:56:10,000--> 00:56:12,458

the people in this
actual industry,

1313

00:56:12,482--> 00:56:15,268

because I think there's
nothing sadder than people who

1314

00:56:15,292--> 00:56:18,188

don't quite have the information,
don't know where to go

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1315

00:56:18,212--> 00:56:20,428

and end up

1316

00:56:20,452--> 00:56:23,000

not quite making decisions that,

1317

00:56:23,000--> 00:56:26,868

you know, that they don't

actually know what they are,

1318

00:56:26,892--> 00:56:29,000

necessarily, if that makes

sense. They're not...

1319

00:56:29,000--> 00:56:30,508

-Absolutely, and just this year,

1320

00:56:30,532--> 00:56:34,468

we've seen a huge uptick

in scams and misinformation,

1321

00:56:34,492--> 00:56:36,361

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and so whether you
have an agent or not,

1322

00:56:36,385--> 00:56:38,951

don't sign that contract
before getting advice.

1323

00:56:38,975--> 00:56:41,868

Don't part with any money
before getting advice,

1324

00:56:41,892--> 00:56:44,348

because there are
lots of scams out there

1325

00:56:44,372--> 00:56:46,108

and they're preying
on vulnerable people.

1326

00:56:46,132--> 00:56:49,108

So, please, wherever
you get your advice from,

1327

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00:56:49,132--> 00:56:51,588

whether it's the Society of
Authors, whether it's your agent,

1328

00:56:51,612--> 00:56:54,532

whether it's a Writers' Guild, whether
it's any of the trade associations,

1329

00:56:54,556--> 00:56:57,000

get advice before you
sign your rights away.

1330

00:56:57,000--> 00:56:58,468

Um, and we've got 2 minutes,

1331

00:56:58,492--> 00:57:01,268

so I'm afraid I'm gonna
come to each of you, if I may.

1332

00:57:01,292--> 00:57:04,308

Sorry to cut this so short,
but Anna, if I come to you first,

1333

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00:57:04,332--> 00:57:06,588

what would be the one
thing that you would want

1334

00:57:06,612--> 00:57:09,348

members on this call to
go away from and think,

1335

00:57:09,372--> 00:57:11,228

uh, I'm gonna... I'm
going to do that?

1336

00:57:12,492--> 00:57:16,108

-I think it's that publishing is an
industry that is made up of people.

1337

00:57:16,132--> 00:57:18,000

I mean, as I was saying,

1338

00:57:18,000--> 00:57:21,148

We are a whole group of
book nerds who love stories.

1339

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00:57:21,172--> 00:57:23,548

I think it's very, very,
very easy to forget that,

1340

00:57:23,572--> 00:57:24,572

and I think...

1341

00:57:24,596--> 00:57:27,068

You know, so I
would tell people to

1342

00:57:27,092--> 00:57:29,748

stop and think long
and hard about what it is...

1343

00:57:29,772--> 00:57:31,000

Why it is they write,

1344

00:57:31,000--> 00:57:32,450

what it is they're
hoping to achieve,

1345

00:57:32,474--> 00:57:34,996

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what it is they want from a
publisher, what it is from an agent,

1346

00:57:35,020--> 00:57:36,596

and then build your team based on that,

1347

00:57:36,620--> 00:57:38,420

because if you start
with those foundations...

1348

00:57:38,444--> 00:57:40,284

It doesn't mean
everything's going to go right,

1349

00:57:40,308--> 00:57:43,068

because that also rarely
happens in publishing,

1350

00:57:43,092--> 00:57:46,028

but it does mean that you've got a
better support network around you

1351

00:57:46,052--> 00:57:49,188

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when things get tough, and it means
you've got a great group of people

1352

00:57:49,212--> 00:57:51,028

to celebrate with you
when things do go right.

1353

00:57:52,000--> 00:57:53,748

-Perfect, thank you, Anna.

1354

00:57:53,772--> 00:57:57,188

Vas, do you have a top
tip you'd like to share?

1355

00:57:57,212--> 00:57:59,748

Well, it just goes back to

1356

00:57:59,772--> 00:58:02,068

the joy that you get
when you're a writer

1357

00:58:02,092--> 00:58:04,348

and you're sitting and

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you've got a great idea.

1358

00:58:04,372--> 00:58:05,972

Well, you think it's
a great idea anyway.

1359

00:58:05,996--> 00:58:08,971

And you're writing and
you're really immersed in that.

1360

00:58:08,995--> 00:58:10,428

That feeling never goes away,

1361

00:58:10,452--> 00:58:13,000

no matter the disappointment
of what might happen next.

1362

00:58:13,000--> 00:58:14,748

And I think you've
got to hold onto that,

1363

00:58:14,772--> 00:58:18,628

so that even if something

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doesn't go quite to plan with a book,

1364

00:58:18,652--> 00:58:22,228

the beauty of this industry is that
you can pick yourself up off the floor

1365

00:58:22,252--> 00:58:23,788

and you can come
up with a new idea,

1366

00:58:23,812--> 00:58:26,012

and you can write something
else which may just get you

1367

00:58:26,036--> 00:58:29,868

right to where you want to be,
however you define success.

1368

00:58:30,400--> 00:58:32,976

-Perfect, thank you.

And Caro, over to you.

1369

00:58:33,000--> 00:58:35,788

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-Um, I guess my
thing is to really...

1370

00:58:35,812--> 00:58:39,000

For people to realize that

1371

00:58:39,000--> 00:58:41,508

writing is an art,
publishing is a business,

1372

00:58:41,532--> 00:58:44,508

and that everyone's
decision within that

1373

00:58:44,532--> 00:58:46,388

are motivated by this.

1374

00:58:46,412--> 00:58:49,828

And that means that
when things go wrong

1375

00:58:49,852--> 00:58:52,268

or when your book doesn't sell,

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1376

00:58:52,292--> 00:58:54,468

don't think that it

has anything to do

1377

00:58:54,492--> 00:58:57,788

with the quality of your writing

or how good you are, etcetera.

1378

00:58:57,812--> 00:59:00,508

This is nothing to, essentially,

1379

00:59:00,532--> 00:59:01,748

do with that.

1380

00:59:01,772--> 00:59:05,468

Writing is what you do, and

so being satisfied in your writing,

1381

00:59:05,492--> 00:59:07,851

on the writing

side, is really all...

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1382

00:59:07,875--> 00:59:10,000

sometimes all you can control.

1383

00:59:10,000--> 00:59:13,068

And so focusing on
that is really good.

1384

00:59:13,092--> 00:59:17,000

And then feel it, you
know, having the information

1385

00:59:17,000--> 00:59:19,428

and the, sort of, team around
you to make good decisions

1386

00:59:19,452--> 00:59:22,000

on the business side of things.

1387

00:59:22,000--> 00:59:25,348

It's a good way
to split it, in a way.

1388

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00:59:25,372--> 00:59:28,378

-Sound advice there,

Caro. Thank you so much.

1389

00:59:28,402--> 00:59:29,788

And we have reached 12 o'clock,

1390

00:59:29,812--> 00:59:33,188

and so a massive big thank

you to Anna, Caro, and Vaseem

1391

00:59:33,212--> 00:59:34,988

for today's Big Conversation,

1392

00:59:35,012--> 00:59:36,668

and thank you all

for joining us today.

1393

00:59:36,692--> 00:59:37,908

It does take a team,

1394

00:59:37,932--> 00:59:39,308

and so thank you, Lilly,

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1395

00:59:39,332--> 00:59:42,108

for moderating today's event
beautifully behind the scenes.

1396

00:59:42,132--> 00:59:45,308

And the first iteration of
our toolkit is on the website.

1397

00:59:45,332--> 00:59:48,428

You can download it now and
we very much welcome feedback,

1398

00:59:48,452--> 00:59:50,288

because this is the
first one that we've done.

1399

00:59:50,312--> 00:59:53,668

There will be more, but we'd
love to know what you found useful

1400

00:59:53,692--> 00:59:56,000

and how we can improve

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it and take it forwards.

1401

00:59:56,000--> 00:59:57,508

And what else
needs to be included,

1402

00:59:57,532--> 00:59:58,928

because this is
just the first one.

1403

00:59:58,952--> 01:00:02,428

It's not exhaustive and, of course,
the industry is ever-changing.

1404

01:00:02,452--> 01:00:05,000

So, share your views
about the toolkit

1405

01:00:05,000--> 01:00:06,868

and help us keep it up to date.

1406

01:00:06,892--> 01:00:09,628

If you found

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today's event useful,

1407

01:00:09,652--> 01:00:10,948

but you're not yet a member,

1408

01:00:10,972--> 01:00:13,733

we'd love you to join the SoA and
get the advice and help and guidance

1409

01:00:13,757--> 01:00:15,148

that you might need,

1410

01:00:15,172--> 01:00:17,708

um, and from
being at this event,

1411

01:00:17,732--> 01:00:19,748

you get 20% off your
first year of membership

1412

01:00:19,772--> 01:00:23,268

if you quote SOAATHOME20,
so there's an incentive for you.

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1413

01:00:23,292--> 01:00:25,308

Um, if you want
to watch this again,

1414

01:00:25,332--> 01:00:27,268

do check it out on
our Vimeo channel

1415

01:00:27,292--> 01:00:30,000

and also on the
SoA Members area.

1416

01:00:30,000--> 01:00:33,028

Our next #SoAatHome event
takes place tomorrow at 6pm,

1417

01:00:33,052--> 01:00:35,468

where we'll be talking about
the Anthropocene settlement.

1418

01:00:35,492--> 01:00:36,625

Bring your questions.

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1419

01:00:36,649--> 01:00:38,468

It's free for
everybody to attend.

1420

01:00:38,492--> 01:00:40,268

There'll be plenty
of time for questions

1421

01:00:40,292--> 01:00:43,000

and we're talking to
the plaintiff's attorneys

1422

01:00:43,000--> 01:00:45,588

in America there, so
do tune in for that one.

1423

01:00:45,612--> 01:00:47,428

And then on Wednesday at 11am,

1424

01:00:47,452--> 01:00:50,588

we have our AGM Zoom
Social, so book your place.

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1425

01:00:50,612--> 01:00:51,628

And for either event,

1426

01:00:51,652--> 01:00:55,000

you can do that on

societyofauthors.org/events.

1427

01:00:55,000--> 01:00:58,068

And a final remember that all
of our events are free online,

1428

01:00:58,092--> 01:00:59,748

but if you can afford
to, please donate

1429

01:00:59,772--> 01:01:01,054

via our Access Fund,

1430

01:01:01,078--> 01:01:04,948

which is really important
to help more people access this industry,

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1431

01:01:04,972--> 01:01:07,948

so help by making a
purchase on bookshop.org too,

1432

01:01:07,972--> 01:01:10,718

where you can find books by the
authors taking part in our programme.

1433

01:01:10,742--> 01:01:15,188

So a final massive, big thank
you to Anna, Caro and Vas,

1434

01:01:15,212--> 01:01:16,908

and to all of you
for joining us today

1435

01:01:16,932--> 01:01:19,445

for our Big Conversation
about Author Care.

1436

01:01:19,469--> 01:01:21,708

And if you remember nothing
else about today's event,

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1437

01:01:21,732--> 01:01:23,708

please remember
to be kind to yourself.

1438

01:01:23,732--> 01:01:25,068

You're doing a great job,

1439

01:01:25,092--> 01:01:27,508

so have a lovely
afternoon of writing.

1440

01:01:27,532--> 01:01:28,828

Bye for now.

1441

01:01:28,852--> 01:01:30,952

[Vaseem] Thank you, all.

[Caro] Thank, you bye.