

July 2022

JDLA

Newsletter

The Jennifer De Chiara Literary Agency Celebrates 21 Years!

Welcome to the summer issue of our JDLA newsletter! We continue to represent a wide variety of projects for both adult and children's/teen audiences, and things are really heating up for our terrific authors and illustrators. We're happy to share some hot deals and highlights with you. Thanks for reading!

Recent Highlights



A New York Times Bestseller

Debut novel *HELL FOLLOWED WITH US* by Andrew Joseph White appeared at #6 on the New York Times Bestseller list. The book, about a trans boy who teams up with an LGBTQ+ youth center to take down the fundamentalist cult who turned him into a monster, has also received starred reviews from Kirkus, Booklist, and Publisher's Weekly. Zabé Ellor at The Jennifer De Chiara Literary

Agency brokered the deal for World rights to Ashley Hearn at Peachtree Teen.

Adult Fantasy Sold to Orbit

S.T. Gibson's *A DOWRY OF BLOOD*, pitched as a reimagining of Dracula's brides, a story of desire, obsession, abuse, and emancipation, previously published by Nyx Publishing, to Angeline Rodriguez at Orbit and Nadia Saward at Orbit UK, in a six-figure deal, in an exclusive submission, in a two-book deal, for publication in fall 2022, by Tara Gilbert at The Jennifer De Chiara Literary Agency (world English). Translation rights were sold to Mondadori (Italy), Planeta (Spain), SQN (Poland), and Fantastikos Kosmos (Greece).



Lewis.

A New Picture Book by Stacy Wells and Nikki Grimes

Choctaw Nation member Stacy Wells's and NYT bestselling author Nikki Grimes's *STRONGER THAN*, about a Black Choctaw boy who lives in Tulsa, Oklahoma and struggles with nightmares, but finds strength in the example and history of his ancestors, illustrated by E.B. Lewis, to Rosemary Brosnan at Heartdrum, with Cynthia Leitich Smith editing, for publication in summer 2025, by Elizabeth Harding at Curtis Brown for Grimes and Savannah Brooks at The Jennifer De Chiara Literary Agency for Wells, and by Jeff Dwyer at Dwyer & O'Grady for

Agent Spotlight: Tori Sharp

Tori Sharp is an Associate Literary Agent who represents all manner of children's literature. She has a BFA in Sequential Art from the Savannah College of Art and Design, and her bestselling graphic memoir, *JUST PRETEND*, was released in 2021 from Little, Brown. She spends her evenings swing and blues dancing, playing tabletop games, and admiring her tiny poodle in beautiful Seattle, WA. Find her

online at www.noveltori.com or on Twitter and Instagram @noveltori.

Q: What led you to pursue a career as a literary agent?

A: I am one of the happy few for whom “literary agent” has been a dream career ever since I was small. When I was in middle school, I read a gorgeous book called *THE SCHOOL STORY* by Andrew Clements. It is about a girl who writes a novel, and her best friend insists on acting as her literary agent to sell it. I was amazed to learn of the different ways I could spend my life working with books, and I wished I could do all of them! That story gave me the gift of making those goals feel within reach. It also gave me an endless curiosity and love for the intricacies of publishing. Now, I am incredibly grateful to both write my own books and champion my clients’.



Q: Do you have any hidden talents as an agent?

A: I’ve always somewhat compulsively taken apart stories, like how some people take apart computers or cars. I never tire of it. I’m fascinated with how my clients can take the careful little questions I ask and return with breathtaking new writing—it’s like having a front row seat while someone is perfecting a painting.

Additionally, my seven years working in digital marketing have given me lots of practice pitching and selling, and I find few things more fun than selling books. I absolutely love the challenge of crafting loglines that bottle and cork all the ziest features of a story, and I’m delighted whenever the language I’ve concocted is then used to position books internally or promote them online.

Q: What have been the highlights of your agenting career so far?

A: Is anything so special as being able to call a client with news of an offer? I remember how dramatically my life changed three years ago when my agent called me to tell me that an editor wanted to acquire my book, and it has been just as thrilling to be on the other end of that phone call. The highlights are endless, though—I feel so lucky to work with each of my clients and to watch their stories grow and bloom. And, as a relatively new agent, I am happily chasing many stars on the horizon.

Q: What are you looking forward to doing more of as an agent?

A: I have recently leaned into cultivating my list of illustrators, and I couldn't be more excited! As a graphic novelist myself, I live and breathe narrative illustration. Naturally, several of my first clients have been author/illustrators of original comics. Now I am branching out into representing more illustrators who I hope to connect with picture book projects and cover, interior, and graphic novel illustration work on existing manuscripts or licensed projects. Collaborative storytelling is a remarkable process, and seeing how one artist's pictures can play with another person's words feels arcane and magical every time. I can't wait to have more conversations with art directors and editors about forging those connections.



Author Spotlight: Barbara Joosse

Popular author Barbara Joosse's picture book *MAMA, DO YOU LOVE ME?* (Chronicle, 1998) sold three million copies. The companion book, *PAPA, DO YOU LOVE ME?* (Chronicle, 2005) sold one million copies, as did her book *I LOVE YOU THE PURPLEST* (Chronicle, 1996). Author of 55 books, many are collaborations with prolific illustrator Renee Graef. Barbara lives in Wisconsin. Visit her at www.barbarajoosse.com

Q: You have published more than 50 books. Does writing get easier? Has your creative process evolved?

A: Writing isn't easier, but I write with far more confidence. After daily writing for so many years, along with daily reading of picture books, I'm able to flex considerable writing muscle. Of course, when I get stuck, I'm frustrated. The difference is that I KNOW I'll figure it out. And it's a big YAHOO when I do. That never gets old.

Here's my process: Research first (collecting facts, images, and books that inspire). These things swirl under my skin and feel very physical in their energy. Then comes a morning of clarity and magic. I wake up with a few lines that define the path I'll take. Now I clear the deck for very, very intensive writing. Friends and family are pathetically ignored, the dust in my house gathers for a huge convention, my refrigerator whines for new food. Also, I don't sleep because I'm buzzin' and can't hold still. I'm quite aware that a story can slip

away if I don't write through this exciting period, which lasts about a month, although there will be months of revision after that as I gain perspective.

Q: Your picture book MAMA, DO YOU LOVE ME? sold 3 million copies. Were you surprised at the response to that book?

A: I was gobsmacked. I kept thinking there was a mistake. There was a lot of pressure after that to write a sequel, but I stubbornly would not, not for many years, anyway. I was freaked out about having Expectations, about being known for this genre. I wanted to write in many voices and styles. I would have enjoyed a lot of financial success if I'd followed up with Mama sequels. But writing might have lost its fizz.

And here's a funny thing. I'm working on a new manuscript that's in the same trailblazing place that Mama was so many years ago. It's something very, very new and very, very compelling. Maybe lightning will strike twice.

Q: You have created many picture books with illustrator Renee Graef. Is there a benefit to working with the same illustrator?

A: Yes Yes Yes! Renee and I are co-creators and ridiculously silly friends! With Renee, I laugh so hard my face hurts. She makes me a better writer and I make her a better illustrator.

I do enjoy working with a variety of illustrators, though, like Giselle Potter, Jan Jutte, Barbara Lavalley, and Randy Cecil.

Q: What famous writers inspired you the most? Any new children's book writers you especially admire?

A: Favorite classics are Ruth Krauss for playful language, William Steig for plot, Maurice Sendak for grit, and Chris Van Allsburg for magic. I think my style reflects the influence of these masters. Current loves are the Fan Brothers, who thrill me to the bone, Beth Ferry, and Dave Eggers.

Q: Is there any advice you'd like to give aspiring children's book writers?

A: You mean, besides, "Don't quit your day job?"

Fill yourself up with only the best writing. Subscribe to the Horn Book and buy three books from each crop every quarter. Only fill your shelves with the very best. Don't write what's popular; write your personal passion.

And this is very important to me: Our world needs citizens who are empathetic, and picture books are the finest way to get outside of your own skin and experience someone else's heart. If you write picture books, part of your job is to watch children. Know them. Then use your voice to help them understand themselves and others.

Illustrator Spotlight: Catherine and Sarah Satrun

Catherine and Sarah Satrun are twin artists who specialize in 2D animation and illustration. They've contributed animation to many projects, including Seth Meyer's *The Awesomes*; Mearra-Selkie from the Sea, a Celtic concert that aired on PBS; *Orchestrating Change*, a documentary that also aired on PBS; as well as commercials for Lucky Charms, Trix, and My Little Pony. They are also the illustrators of the graphic novel ***FAE AND THE MOON***, written by Franco Aureliani (Yellow Jacket, 2023).



Q: It's really unusual to have a team of twin illustrators. When did you both fall in love with art, and did you always know you would work together?

A: As far back as we can remember, we always loved art and drawing. We especially fell in love with the art of animation when we were in grade school examining animation frame by frame in an old Fisher-Price movie viewer. We loved sequential storytelling and saw illustration and animation as possible careers. Growing up, we would write and draw stories and poems, and even make little books out of them. We ended up in animation, which is a very collaborative field, so we naturally

ended up working together. Throughout our careers, we keep coming across other twin artists who work together, and we even got to collaborate on a few projects with two sets of twins!

Q: How would you describe your illustration style? What is your process when you team up on illustrating something?

A: Because of our background in commercial animation, we have been exposed to a variety of styles. We like to explore different looks, but we both tend to gravitate to a softer feel and more sentimental imagery. We lean toward a cartoony graphic style with flowing lines. When we work together on an illustration, we talk over our ideas from the rough layout stage to final tweaks. Oftentimes we like to swap an illustration back and forth doing a few

passes over it. For **FAE AND THE MOON**, we each started roughing out pencils going off Franco's well thought-out thumbnail script plusing the layouts where we could. As we fleshed out our drawings, we swapped pages back and forth as needed. By using this work method, we end up with stronger layouts and illustrations.

Q: Congratulations on your upcoming graphic novel *FAE AND THE MOON*! The story follows a girl who plucks the moon out of the sky, and is beset by monsters seeking the moon and its powers. What drew you to this project – and what are some of the joys and challenges of illustrating it?

A: Thank you! We've been wanting to work on a graphic novel for quite some time. The collaboration with Franco, author of **FAE AND THE MOON**, is a dream come true! We have admired his work for years, so when he approached us with this story idea, we connected to it right away. Fae is a captivating character for us, and we enjoyed exploring what we could do visually to tell this unique story. Our biggest challenge was balancing the visuals with the dialogue. In animation, the characters and environment take up the full frame, but in comics, artists need to be careful to leave enough space for the text and make sure it reads correctly and has a nice flow.

Q: Your illustrations are so expressive and full of action. Is this a result of your animation experience? Do you think having an animation background helps when it comes to illustrating a graphic novel?

A: Having an animation background is a huge plus when it comes to storytelling in comic form. In animation, we often do character designs and storyboards, which directly lends itself to comics. Storyboards are the blueprint of any animated project. It's important to clearly convey through poses, expressions, and staging what is happening and direct where the viewer's eye should look. In animation, we're used to having many drawings to express an action, but in illustration, we often only pick one pose to convey what's happening. In **FAE AND THE MOON**, we added in a few extra poses where we could as a nod to our background in animation.

Q: What's the best advice you can give a fellow illustrator?

A: A common problem among artists is constantly comparing their own art and "success" to other artists, especially in the world of social media. It's easy to be discouraged when doing this, but you must avoid falling into that trap. Each artist grows at their own pace and has a different path. Keep drawing, find your own voice, and don't give up!

You can find more of Catherine and Sarah's work at www.sketchyduo.squarespace.com.



To see the work of other illustrators represented by JDLA, please visit our website at www.jdlit.com/illustrators.

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