

July 2021

# **JDLA**

## *Newsletter*

### **The Jennifer De Chiara Literary Agency Celebrates 20 Years!**

Welcome to the third issue of our agency newsletter. We are thrilled and grateful for all of the amazing things that have happened at our agency since our last newsletter. It would be impossible to list all of them, so here are just a few. Thanks for reading!

#### **New Agent at JDLA**



##### **Bre Stephens**

We are delighted to announce the promotion of former intern Bre Stephens to Associate Literary Agent. Bre has thirteen years of experience as a writer, publisher, educator, literary judge, and editor. She has worked as an Editor-in-Chief of a literary magazine and has taught university composition, technical writing, and creative writing. Bre holds an MA in English and Creative Writing, an M.Ed. in ESL, and a BA in Art History. Welcome to JDLA, Bre!

#### **Recent Awards**

Jackie Azúa Kramer has won SCBWI's Crystal Kite Award for her picture book, *THE BOY AND THE GORILLA* (Candlewick Press), which has been praised by Kirkus as "luminous" and received three starred reviews.

Rina Heisel's middle-grade novel, *JOURNEY BEYOND THE BURROW*, which comes out on July 13, 2021 from HarperCollins, has just been honored as a Junior Library Guild Selection.

Benjamin Klas's middle-grade debut novel, *SECOND DAD SUMMER* (One Elm, 2020), has made ALA's 2021 Rainbow Book List by the LGTB Round Table and has also won the 2020 Nautilus Book Award's Silver Award for Middle-Grade Fiction.

Eva Jurczyk's adult novel, *THE DEPARTMENT OF RARE BOOKS AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS* (Sourcebooks, 2022), has been chosen a Publishers Lunch Fall/Winter Buzz Book.

Claudia Mill's chapter book, *BOOGIE BASS, SIGN LANGUAGE STAR*, book #4 in the After-School Superstar Series, to be released by Margaret Ferguson Books/Holiday House on August 3, 2021, has been honored as a Junior Library Guild Selection.

Jackie Azúa Kramer's latest picture book, *I WISH YOU KNEW* (Roaring Brook), about a girl whose father is being deported, was featured in the June issue of Parent's Magazine as the "Raising the Future" book club selection.

Maurice Benard's memoir, *NOTHING GENERAL ABOUT IT: How Love (and Lithium) Saved Me On and Off General Hospital* (HarperCollins, 2020), an instant New York Times bestseller and winner of the Mental Health America Award, has now won the Christopher Award. By the way, Maurice just won his third Daytime Emmy for Outstanding Lead Actor!

## Recent Highlights

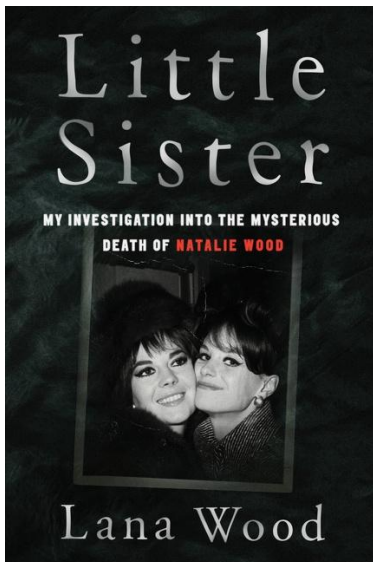


### Two-Book Illustration Deal At Auction

Joanna Cacao's illustration deal for two-time Newbery Honoree Christina Soontornvat's *THE TRYOUT* and *THE SQUAD*, a memoir about being the only Asian-American kid in her small Texas town to try out for the cheerleading squad, was a two-book deal sold at auction to Tracy Mack at Scholastic by Stephanie Fretwell-Hill at Red Fox Literary for the author, and agent Tara Gilbert at The Jennifer De Chiara Literary Agency for the illustrator. Publication is slated for 2022.

## Author/Illustrator Picture Book Deal

Two-time Christopher Award-winning illustrator and New York Times–bestselling author/illustrator of *TEN TIMID GHOSTS* Jennifer O'Connell's *ELEPHANTS REMEMBER: THE STORY OF LAWRENCE ANTHONY AND NANA THE MATRIARCH*, based on the true story of Anthony saving Nana the elephant and her herd and forming a bond so deep that the elephants knew of his death and returned to his house to mourn, to Jonathan Eaton at Tilbury House, by agent Marie Lamba at The Jennifer De Chiara Literary Agency. Publication is slated for September 2022.



## True-crime Memoir Deal At Auction

Actress and film producer Lana Wood's true-crime memoir, *LITTLE SISTER: My Investigation into the Mysterious Death of Natalie Wood*, was sold at auction by agent Jennifer De Chiara to Lisa Sharkey, SVP, Director of Creative Development at HarperCollins. In it, Lana offers up a raw account of the life and death of her sister, details new information from those directly involved in the investigation of Wood's 1981 death, and shares secrets she's held onto for forty years. Publication is slated for November 9, 2021, to coincide with the 40th anniversary of Natalie Wood's death.

## Agent Spotlight: Marie Lamba

Marie Lamba is a Literary Agent at The Jennifer De Chiara Literary Agency, and she is the author of the picture books *GREEN GREEN: A Community Gardening Story* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux) and *A DAY SO GRAY* (Clarion), and of the young adult novels *WHAT I*

*MEANT . . .* (Random House), *OVER MY HEAD*, and *DRAWN*. Her articles are in more than 100 publications, and she's a frequent contributor to *Writer's Digest*. She has worked as an editor, an award-winning public relations writer, and a book publicist, and has taught classes on novel writing and author promotion. You



can follow her blog at her website ([marielamba.com](http://marielamba.com)), follow her on Twitter @marielamba, and like her Facebook page: Marie Lamba, Author.

**Q: You've been a Literary Agent at The Jennifer De Chiara Literary Agency for 10 years now. Before that, you were an author of young adult novels, and now you write picture books as well. So what got you interested in being an agent?**

**A:** As an author, I'm represented by Jennifer De Chiara. Becoming an agent was actually Jennifer's idea. When my debut novel *WHAT I MEANT...* came out during the recession, I faced some really big challenges. Through it all, Jennifer saw me promoting my novel, working well with others, and staying as positive as possible. Because of this, she felt agenting would be a good fit for me. I wasn't so sure at first. From age 10, all I ever wanted to do was to be an author. Would I really want to be an agent, too? "Try it out," Jennifer said, and started sending some of her queries my way. I was a "Secret Agent" for a few months, and then I found some authors I just had to represent. I've been agenting not-so-secretly ever since.

**Q: How has being an author influenced you as an agent?**

**A:** I'm definitely very editorial. It's not unusual for me to line edit a client's draft before we go out on submission, or to help them with plotting or structure issues if they feel stuck.

Also, I well remember just how intimidating it felt to talk with even the very nicest of agents (and Jennifer is indeed the very nicest!). So now I always make sure my own clients feel super comfortable asking me anything. And because I also remember how mysterious publishing felt to me, I work really hard to demystify things for my authors, explaining the submission and contract process every step of the way.

**Q: Are there some recent deal highlights you'd like to share?**

**A:** It may sound cheesy, but I really feel that every deal is a highlight, and every client a superstar. I'm so grateful to represent a list of writers who are not only talented, but absolutely wonderful to work with. I just love this job. Can you tell?

Like many agents, I've got a number of exciting deals I can't talk about yet, but I can share that I recently sold TV rights to the iconic BAILEY SCHOOL KIDS series by Debbie Dadey and Marcia Thornton Jones, audio rights to the first 10 titles in that series, and Graphix is publishing graphic novels based on the series, illustrated by Pearl Low, with the first one coming out this summer. There are so many great projects in the works, including Christopher Award-winner Carmella Van Vleet's newest touching middle-grade *NOTHING IS LITTLE*, and *New York Times*' bestselling and multiple Christopher Award-winning author/illustrator

Jennifer O'Connell's gorgeous picture book *ELEPHANT'S REMEMBER*. I also have a few graphic novel deals wrapping up, including one for *New York Times* bestseller Franco Aureliani that I can't share the details about...yet!

**Q: What are you looking forward to in the next 10 years as an agent?**

**A:** I'm definitely looking forward to continuing to build the careers of my clients and helping them to grow in every way possible. I'm also hoping to do many more graphic novel deals – those are so fun! And I'd like to add some adult memoir and non-fiction projects to my roster. I've put out the call for these already, but I haven't found the right ones to represent so far. But that's one of the great things about being an agent – it's a treasure hunt. And that next gem of a manuscript is out there, just waiting to be discovered.



**Author Spotlight: Carol Lynch Williams**

Carol Lynch Williams is the popular author of more than thirty outstanding young adult novels. Her “ripped from the headlines” thriller *THE CHOSEN ONE* (St. Martin's, 2009) was an ALA Best Book for Young Adults, recommended by the New England

Children's Booksellers Association, and sold in many foreign languages. Her novel *GLIMPSE* (Simon & Schuster, 2010), called “a page turner” by Kirkus, won the prestigious PEN Award. Both novels are still in print.

Her other novels include *MILES FROM ORDINARY* (St. Martin's, 2011); *WAITING* (Simon & Schuster, 2012), which garnered three starred reviews from Kirkus, Publishers Weekly, and School Library Journal; *THE HAVEN* (St. Martin's, 2014); *SIGNED, SKYE HARPER* (Simon & Schuster, 2015); *NEVER SAID* (Zondervan, 2015); *THE MESSENGER* (Simon & Schuster, 2016); and *NEVER THAT FAR* (Shadow Mountain, 2018).

Williams is also the winner of Nebraska's Golden Sower Award and multiple winner of the Utah Original Writing Competition.

Carol has an MFA in Writing for Children and Young Adults from Vermont College. She runs the popular annual conference on Writing and Illustrating for Young Readers (WIFYR) in Utah, where she loves spending time with her five daughters.

**Q: You have written more than 30 books for teenagers. What makes a successful book for teens?**

**A:** As the writer, I must be connected to the character I'm writing. I have to care. I have to show that my character cares about the world she is in. And then, I think the reader will care.

You also need the right voice. A true voice. One that sounds like the age of the character you're writing so a kid can connect. I can't be a thousand years old and sound like I'm a thousand years old and be writing a 12-year-old girl. The character has to sound twelve years old.

Putting your heart on the page and being true to voice, for me, makes a book worth reading. Someone sent me this comment many years ago: "I just read *THE CHOSEN ONE*. I will never be the same again." I hope that happens every time anyone reads any book of mine.

**Q: You have written many memorable books, including *THE CHOSEN ONE*, still in print after 12 years. Does it ever get easier to write a novel?**

**A:** For me, writing a book *never* gets easier. I know I want to have an exciting beginning. I know I want the climax to pay off. I want people to read the book and not be the same again. But as soon as I get to the beginning of the middle, I realize the amount of work that has to happen. The truth is, anybody can write a book. But not anybody can write a good book.

So I complain. I whine. I'm not pleasant to be around. Then comes the moment when I say, "Carol, you just gotta do it." And, finally, I sit down and write. I try to keep the goal of the climax in my head and that makes things a little bit easier. But writing a good book, writing a good story, writing a character who lives and breathes? That is hard.

**Q: When you won the prestigious PEN award for your novel *GLIMPSE* (Simon & Schuster, 2010), both Cormac McCarthy and Sam Shepard also received awards. What was it like to be part of that amazing event?**

**A:** Receiving the PEN was one of the highlights of my writing life. Lots of times you will hear that books are written in a vacuum. Mine are not. I have people who encourage me every day. I have an agent (Stephen Fraser) who believes in me. I have people I complain to during the icky middles. I have a daughter who writes and publishes whom I can read tricky parts to. In fact, I can read anything to my five daughters and they will always listen and offer suggestions. I wish all of the people who have supported me along the way could have been there that night, but there wouldn't have been a lot of room for the other winners' guests!

**Q: You have run the popular Writing and Illustrating for Young Readers (WIFYR) conference in Utah for many years. What does the event mean to you as a writer?**

**A:** I love this conference, which I created with a fellow writer, Dr. John Bennion. It's a ton of work. But every year, we find amazing people to come and spend a week with us to learn to be better, stronger writers.

There are classes on craft, publishing, finding a good editor or agent, voice, style, writing a strong query letter – forty or fifty of these kinds of classes. WIFYR is like a mini-MFA course. There's a pretty high success rate that comes from attending this conference, lots of award-winners and New York Times Bestsellers. If you have questions about this conference, feel free to email me at [carolloveswifyr@gmail.com](mailto:carolloveswifyr@gmail.com).

**Q: Do you have any advice for beginning writers who want to establish a writing career with longevity?**

**A:** My advice is to never give up. Listen to the advice of your agent, editor, or critique group. You have your own gut and heart: listen to what *you* have to say, as well. Write the best book you can, every single time. Make every word count. Care about what you put on the page.

Write every single day, even if it's just ten words. During the hard times, remind yourself that you're a writer by writing.

And, whatever you do, have an agent who listens. My agent has been with me during a divorce, two dry spells, when I wasn't sure I would have a home to live in, when I had a bad editor, when I didn't know which way to turn, when a book failed, when books succeeded. For me, my agent is a dear friend. I'm lucky. I'm blessed.

**To find out more about Carol and her books, visit [Carol Lynch Williams](#).**

## Illustrator Spotlight: Eric Lide

Eric Lide is an African-American cartoonist. He created the ongoing webcomics Station Square (2009) and Ozzie the Vampire (2013), and he worked as an inker on the upcoming THE ADVENTURE ZONE graphic novel (First Second, 2021). His work has also been featured in multiple comics and anthologies, and in 2018 he began

contributing comics to The New Yorker's "Daily Shouts" column. Eric graduated from the School of Visual Arts in 2008 and currently resides in New Jersey.



**Q: When did you discover your love for making comics?**



**A:** I honestly can't remember a time when I wasn't drawing comics. I can recall making up characters and stories as far back as first grade. But around fifth grade my classmates would actually read the stuff I was making. They'd always be excited to check out the next installment at lunchtime. So suddenly I had an

audience and that made things way more fun to consider when coming up with ideas. I see making comics and telling stories as a way to connect to people, so that was when I really started becoming passionate about them.

**Q: What's some of the best creative advice you've received?**

**A:** Get into the habit of writing things down. Sometimes when I'm out and about I'll randomly come up with a good line, or a funny gag, or a name for a character, and I used to assume I'd just remember it when it came time to write. That would frequently come back to bite me, and I've since taken to jotting things in my phone or even leaving voice memos for myself.

**Q: How have you been able to maintain multiple webcomics for so long? What's your secret?**

**A:** I get bored working on just one thing for too long, so I like having multiple worlds I can dive into when I need a change of pace. Sometimes I want to just draw characters hanging out in a contemporary setting, but the next day I might want to draw hot-blooded fight scenes! Then there are times when I want to draw something entirely nonsensical. So it's nice having different comics I can cycle between when the mood strikes me.

**Q: Were there any major turning points or obstacles for you when figuring out your voice as a storyteller?**

**A:** That was something I struggled with a lot, especially during my time at the School of Visual Arts. I was never the most proficient artist, but I quickly figured out that I could make people laugh, so that's what I focused on. I learned to play to my strengths instead of obsessing over my limitations. With that said, I'm always trying to get better at the aspects of comics I'm not so great with too! It's all a balancing act, I guess.

**Q: What helps you stay inspired and nurtures your creativity?**

**A:** Seeing other people's comics! Going to small press conventions is like being a kid in a candy store for me. Sometimes I get too lost in my own head, so I love

seeing how other artists approach cartooning. When I read a really good comic, I get fired up and want to make something right away!

You can find more of Eric's work at [www.ericlide.com](http://www.ericlide.com).



To see the work of other illustrators represented by JDLA, please visit our website at [www.jdlit.com/illustrators](http://www.jdlit.com/illustrators).

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