

January 2025

JDLA

Newsletter

The Jennifer De Chiara Literary Agency Celebrates 24 Years!

Welcome to our Winter issue! I'm so happy to share that this is our 24th year! Heartfelt thanks to all of our supporters – your encouragement has meant the world to us. Now for a few deals and a few interviews we hope you'll enjoy. Thanks for reading!

Recent Highlights

Picture Book Sold

THE BONE WARS author Jane Kurtz's MARY MORLAND IN THE TIME OF DINOSAUR DISCOVERIES, a picture book biography about the unconventional woman who made some of the earliest paleontological discoveries, illustrated by Giselle Potter, to Andrea Welch at Beach Lane Books, for publication in Spring 2026, by Marie Lamba at The Jennifer De Chiara Literary Agency for the author, and by Jennifer Laughran at Andrea Brown Literary Agency for the illustrator (world).



Middle-Grade Book Sold

Newbery Honor-winning and New York Times' bestselling author of HEART OF A SAMURAI Margi Preus's MOLLIE AND THE WOLVES, a middle-grade portrait of environmental activist Mollie Beattie, who worked to repopulate Yellowstone National Park with wolves, to Simon Boughton at Norton Young Readers. The deal for world English rights was handled by Stephen Fraser at The

Jennifer De Chiara Literary Agency. Publication is slated for Summer 2026.



Short Story Collection Sold

LIVING IN CEMETERIES author and librarian Corey Farrenkopf's HAUNTED ECOLOGIES, a short story collection with tales of ravaged landscapes and altered existences that confront monstrous beings, sentient woodlands, lost species, and the terrifying outcomes of our environmental abuses, to Christopher

Payne at JournalStone, at auction, for publication in February 2025, by Marie Lamba at The Jennifer De Chiara Literary Agency (world).

Agent Spotlight: Marie Lamba

Marie Lamba is a Senior Literary Agent at JDLA, where she represents works of fiction and non-fiction in both the adult and children's genres. Marie is also the author of young adult novels and picture books.



Q: You have been an agent for a number of years. Other than the moving of editors from house to house and the appearance and disappearance of some imprints, what are some industry changes you have witnessed over the years?

A: We agents now spend a lot less time on the phone! When I started out, we used to pick up the phone and pitch works directly to editors. But now, most editors don't have a spare minute, so they prefer you to just email them the pitch and submission. It's more efficient, of course. Also, offers from publishers for book contracts and the back and forth negotiations for deal points aren't being done over the phone anymore. It's all via email. When it comes to my clients, while we do much of our work together via email, we still connect on the phone whenever needed. Plus, I always pick up the phone to share the good news of an offer coming in. Those calls are a thrill to make!

Q: You handle graphic novels. Do you still see this as a growing market? Or has it peaked? Are there any special challenges for creators of graphic novels?

A: This is definitely a growing market! We're seeing graphic novels for the very young. We're seeing iconic book series being rebooted as graphic novels, like The Bailey School Kids series deal, which we worked on with Graphix. Graphic novels are growing in popularity for the middle-grade market, and in the adult realm they are surging in fantasy, as well as in memoir and non-fiction. We're also seeing a good number of graphic novel imprints being newly formed at various publishers. That's definitely a sign of a healthy market.

Among the challenges, a big one is just how labor intensive these projects are for the illustrator. An illustrator really wants to be sure they are being compensated for how much time they will need to illustrate such a long work. For writers, if they're working on a fictional graphic novel, it can be a difficult sell unless they are pitching in conjunction with a talented graphic novel illustrator.

This is one genre where you are pretty much expected to come to the table with the illustrator on board.

Q: Can you describe the "ideal client"? Any red flags?

A: It starts out with being extremely talented, of course, and professional in all dealings. Beyond that, I look for clients who are all-around wonderful to work with: kind and thoughtful and respectful. These are the people I'm so honored to work hard for.

As for red flags? When someone is rude or unappreciative. That's a deal breaker for me.

Q: As both an author and an agent, do you take time regularly for your own writing?

A: I try! With agenting, your work is never done. There is always more and more and more to do. And I love it. With my writing, it's hard to carve out time when I'm not yet in the thick of a work. Getting started on a project can be tough. But once I really get into a novel or a picture book text, I'm hooked. Then I grab my writing time in chunks when I can, and often set aside Fridays for the deepest dive into my work. Fridays are often a bit sleepy in publishing land, so it's a great time to don my writer's hat and get lost in my own words for a while.



Author Spotlight: Corey Farrenkopf

Corey Farrenkopf (coreyfarrenkopf.com) is a Cape Cod-based writer and librarian. His debut novel *LIVING IN CEMETERIES* came out through JournalStone in 2024. Corey's short stories have been nominated for multiple Pushcart Prizes, a Best of the Net Award, the

Year's Best Horror Anthology, and the Year's Best Horror and Dark Fantasy Anthology. He is the Fiction Editor for The Cape Cod Poetry Review, and an active member of the Horror Writers Association. His story collection *HAUNTED ECOLOGIES* will be published by JournalStone in February 2025.

Q: In 2024, your debut novel *LIVING IN CEMETERIES* hit the shelves. Can you tell us a bit about this novel and its path to publication?

A: Sure, so right after undergrad I wrote the first draft of this novel while I was working as a cemetery landscaper in the town I grew up in. The novel is about a guy who does the same job...but encounters many more ghosts while he's out mowing (I only ran into one). Across the next two years, I rewrote the book a dozen times with input from friends and beta readers (big thank you to Gabrielle!). Then I went on a quest to get an agent. After close to a year and a

half of querying, Marie Lamba expressed interest and we signed on together (big thank you to Marie!). Then we did another handful of edits before she sent the manuscript off to editors. During this time, right before Horror hit the boom it's now in, editors were a bit skeptical of acquiring darker weird stuff that didn't fit the mold of what was selling at the time (hint: thrillers). We got a lot of nice passes, but they were still passes. So we shelved the project for three years after gathering a number of rejections (we sent another novel out during those in-between years). But after those three years, Marie sent me an email saying she wanted to put *LIVING IN CEMETERIES* back out on submission given the change in the genre landscape...and then three publishing houses expressed interest and JournalStone ended up winning the auction. *LIVING IN CEMETERIES* had a long, strange road to publication, which hopefully shows you that you should never give up on a project you believe in. It just might take years and years for it to find the right home.

Q: Your dark fantasy story collection *HAUNTED ECOLOGIES*, which is out next month, features tales that weave together ecological threats and horror. What draws you to this subject matter?

A: So many things! The first thing that comes to mind is the fact that I live on Cape Cod. I was raised here and my family stretches back generations on the peninsula. Since I was in high school, people have always talked about when the sea is going to swallow our spit of sand, and as the years go by, that date gets closer and closer. So I'm always thinking about how environmental collapse and climate change haunt the land I live on...and that ends up haunting my stories.

Beyond that, I spent large chunks of my childhood roaming the woods around my home with my buddies Cashel and Mark (who show up in various forms in my stories). During these wanderings, we'd often stumble over abandoned cabins, sometimes little more than a brick chimney cropping up out of the leaf litter. We'd find old bottle dumps and trash heaps and abandoned cars and all sorts of bits of civilization rusting where you would never think to find them. So part of that plays into nature reclaiming what we've taken from it...part of it's just spooky on an aesthetics level. Then the last bit of why I write this stuff comes from the fact that I love nature and am really bummed out by how despeciation and habitat loss affects the flora and fauna of the region. Mix that all together with a love of the ethereal and atmospheric and you get my short story collection.

Q: Horror has gone through a lot of changes over the past ten years, and it is often a misunderstood genre. What would you like folks to know about horror? And what are some interesting trends you are seeing?

A: The main thing I want people to know is that horror comes in all sorts of shades of spooky. Not all of it is gore-drenched and transgressive. There's something for everyone. Plenty of writers are mixing sci-fi and horror these days, or fantasy and horror...or dare I say cozy fiction and horror (some people

might get angry at me for saying that). What I write is often quiet horror or weird horror...and my intention is never really to scare the reader...just to drape everything in the uncanny, to make readers feel off kilter, like somehow the world isn't quite what they know it to be. I'm all about atmosphere. I'm all about the surreal. I'm all about dark awe. If you like the extreme and the transgressive, horror has a place for you. But if you enjoy quieter slow burns devoid of entrails and buckets of blood, horror can also be your home.

Q: Between crafting short stories, flash fiction, and novels, you are always busy writing. Plus, you are a full-time librarian. What is your writing process? Are there any tips you'd like to share for writers who are starting out?

A: The main thing that simplifies it all for me is that I have a set writing time each day that I never miss. I take an extra unpaid half hour break at work so I can get at least that much writing done every day. Knowing that time is set aside, I don't have to fret over if/when I'll get to do it. I know the time is there, and I know I'll use it wisely (otherwise I'd just be hanging out at work for an extra unpaid half hour and who wants that?). Beyond those thirty-minute intervals, I snatch time when I can. Some weeknights I can do another hour or so. Some weekends I can get three or four in, but having that repetitive secure time...that really saves me and makes sure I get the words down.

As far as the actual process goes, I think I stole a lot of the structure from Kelly Link (I think she said something about her own process and I was like, yeah, that sounds like it will work for me). So whenever I begin to write each day, I edit what I wrote the day before and then move forward from there. That way the next round of edits will be easier because the story/novel is polished and it also allows me to slip back into my voice...which is often harder for me to do if I just start writing without looking back. This does mean it takes longer to finish a first draft, but I'm okay with that. Once the piece is edited, I do one to three rounds of beta reader feedback, then edits, then the manuscript is off to a magazine or to Marie. And then I start it all over again...and again...and again.

Another tip I'd suggest is if you're writing short stories, make sure you're reading the magazines you hope to submit to. Read broadly so you know what's out there and where you fit into the literary landscape. When I first started out, I only read a handful of magazines, so I didn't really know what sort of stuff magazine x,y, or z wanted. Now that I do, I'm able to tailor my stories for specific markets and my success rate is definitely higher because of that. But also write what you want! Short stories are fun. Let yourself enjoy where your mind takes you!

Illustrator Spotlight: Larry Day

Larry Day grew up in Gibson City, Illinois, a rural farming community. Despite flunking Art in high school, Day earned an associate's degree in commercial art,

became a staff artist for pinball and video games, and a senior storyboard artist in the advertising industry. Day is the award-winning illustrator of over thirty fiction and non-fiction picture books. He is the recipient of three Gold medals from the Society of Illustrators, the SCBWI Golden Kite Award, numerous state awards, four industry stars, the Golden Kite Honor Award, the Gold Standard JLG Award, and the Communication Arts Award of Excellence. More of Larry's works can be viewed at www.larrydayillustration.com.



Q: You have illustrated many children's books over the years, in different art styles. How do you decide what "look" to give each book?

A: Because of my versatility, I keep an open mind to styles that will help move the story along and work seamlessly with the text. I usually have an immediate feel for a style based on the main character in the story and whether the story is

realistic, as in *COLONIAL VOICES, HEAR THEM SPEAK* (Dial) to humorous, as in a story like *A FORT ON THE MOON* (Neal Porter Books). Sometimes that means using only spot color as in *FOUND* (Simon & Schuster) or a mix of spot-color and full-color spreads, as in *TROUBLE DOGS* (Eerdman's).

Q: You worked with your agent Stephen Fraser years ago when he was an editor at Simon & Schuster. How has publishing changed for you over the years?

A: Since those early days there's been one continuing thread: my favorite editors and creative directors have always trusted my illustration direction. I am forever grateful for that. Steve was one of the first with that level of faith. In that respect, publishing hasn't really changed for me. I'm still drawing by hand, working out thoughts on the margins of the printed script, thumbnailing out the storyboard, figuring out pacing and page turns, and illustrating the final art.

There are usually multiple rounds at each of those steps, always working closely with the editor and art director.

Q: Recently, you have worked with your wife, author Miriam Busch, on children's books. How is that process different from working with another writer – or is it?

A: Miriam has a long history of understanding story through words. I've had a long history of seeing stories through art. Our first books together were LION, LION (Balzer + Bray) and RAISIN, THE LITTLEST COW (Balzer + Bray).

Unlike other authors, working with Miriam is more of a side-by-side process. We work closely from the beginning germ of the idea on through the final art, making revisions together. During our process one of the crucial steps is when we spread out the thumbnail sketches, often at the kitchen table. We investigate the rhythm of the words and the visual rhythm together, reading and re-reading to one another, always asking how we can amp up the heart of what we are aiming for. In the kitchen is where we really dissect the story, feel out what works and what might need shifting. We have a deep understanding and respect for one another's individual process, but most importantly, we have a lot of fun together. At random times of the day, one or the other of us will say – "Wait, what if...?" And we're off to work on another revision...

Q: Who are some of your children's book illustrator heroes? Is there anyone in particular who inspires you?

A: I've been inspired by all types of art from an early age, like the early illustrators, fine artists, and cartoonists. I love picture book illustrators where the art and words give the feeling that you just read a novel. James Marshall is one of those heroes of mine. His stories and characters bring readers in, holding us all the way through. His characters are alive and in the room. Andre Francois is another one who inspires me. When I go back to look at his books and cartoons, I'm reminded of the importance of play and having respect for my own creativity. William Steig and the Scottish cartoonist John Glashan are two more personal heroes. Glashan never did a picture book, but I've always connected with his carefree style, characters, and biting humor.

Q: What advice would you give to someone who is an aspiring children's book creator?

A: Go to museums if you can. It's important to see original art. Look and copy. Most art museums have print and drawing rooms where you can spend time with originals up close. Study how artists use composition to guide our eyes. Mostly, keep your tools with you and fill up those sketchbooks. Check out armfuls of books from the library every week. Analyze them until you've narrowed down your list of your favorite authors and illustrators. Then with a

simple pencil line and copy paper, copy those books. Study the compositions, pacing, and page turns. Study how the art and text work together.



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