

## PLAN B

By Craig Lancaster

It's a bit odd to occupy this space after the likes of Lisa Genova and Dan Suarez, who have found big-time, major-house success with *Still Alice* and *Daemon* after initially self-publishing the novels. On the contrary, my debut novel, *600 Hours of Edward* (its earliest fans knew it as *Six-Hundred Hours of a Life*), has just entered its second act under the auspices of Riverbend Publishing, a small but well-regarded publishing house in my home state of Montana. My book tour will be a series of day trips to Bozeman and Great Falls and Helena and, if I really play my cards right, Glendive. If Lisa and Dan's experiences are Plan B, then mine must be ...

Well, Plan B. For me.

My publishing story is the one that straddles the do-it-yourself ethos of self-publishing and print on demand and the world of trade publishing. I wrote *600 Hours* – the story of an obsessive-compulsive Aspergian and the rapid changes that overtake him in a 25-day slice of his life – in November 2008, spent a couple of months recasting and revising it and then released it through CreateSpace, for no better reason than I could. I was blissfully unaware of any stigma against such a thing or of the technological forces that were and are transforming the publishing world. I simply thought I had a good story, and I tried to share it with people. It was only after I waded out into the publishing waters to the depth of my neck that I began to accumulate a retrospective education. This is where luck loomed large for me.

Some people who are much more knowledgeable than I am read my book and gave me encouragement and direction. I tried placing it with agents and had several encouraging but ultimately unsuccessful interactions. (I remain, as yet, without representation, and while I have a full appreciation for how much my career would be aided by the right agent, I also know that it's

worth waiting for the proper fit. There are many book ideas in this head of mine, and the only certainty under my control is that I will keep writing them and submitting them. Really, that's all I can do.)

While the querying went on, I refined the book and tried to prepare it for bigger things, whether I remained its steward or another publisher stepped in. In fact, it was just as I was setting it up with Lightning Source and a run with IndieReader that Riverbend contacted me and expressed an interest.

I ultimately went with Riverbend for several reasons. First, the folks there were extremely enthusiastic about the book, and I appreciated that they would love it as much as I did. Second, where I live and where I'm trying to build a career, Riverbend means something and can help put my book in front of people I was never going to reach by doing fulfillment out of the trunk of my car. Finally, they have involved me heavily in bringing out the book, and because I raised it from a pup, I've appreciated that level of closeness and communication. It feels like the right next step for a book that's had an interesting journey, one it wouldn't have enjoyed had I not originally released it myself. I wouldn't trade that experience for anything.

It's an interesting time, for the book and for me. I'm really enjoying this second chance at introducing the story to folks, doing some traveling and meeting readers and potential readers (perhaps my favorite part of all, save the sweet solitude of writing). Meanwhile, I've finished my second novel and am well down the road on No. 3.

I can only imagine what those journeys will entail.