

QQQ 4.1 Rose Black

[00:00:00] **Sarah:**

[00:00:00] Welcome to Queries, Qualms, and Quirks, the bi weekly podcast that asks published authors to share their successful query letter and discuss their journey from first spark to day of publication. I am your host, author Sarah Nicolas and literary agent Sarah N. Fisk.

[00:00:14] Rose Black is a combination of anxiety and dyslexia in a hoodie, bi, a professional computer wrangler and mother to the world's wiggliest child. She's lucky enough to live in the historic city of Bath and is capable of eating her weight in sushi.

[00:00:29] So please welcome Rose to the show. Hello. Hi. So this is the first one I'm recording for the 2024 season. So it's going to be fun and interesting, and we'll see if I can remember everything. So we're going to start by going kind of all the way back in the beginning. When did you first start getting interested in writing and then how long did it take from there before you started getting serious about pursuing publication?

[00:00:53] **Rose:** I've written like, fanfic and little things for myself since I was like, In secondary school. So, 12, 13. A long time. But I didn't get really serious until I was in my mid 30s. I think it was about 2015. I started seriously looking into publication. so yeah, quite a while.

[00:01:22] **Sarah:** So how did you learn more about the publishing industry? Like how it works, how to query all those different things?

[00:01:27] **Rose:** I learnt most of it from, I set up a Twitter account and I started getting sort of more serious about it and was looking at what do I self publish, do I go down the traditional route? it was probably from there that I started learning most things. And then I think my first real, sort of, foot in the water was, Nest pitch, which, um, was a long time ago, never the mentoring query thing where you, you sent in your submission, they picked some, and then there was a web page and agents could request.

[00:01:59] And, uh, and I learned a lot about writing queries in that sort of time.

[00:02:05] **Sarah:** Nice.

[00:02:06] So then, what happened? Can you break down for us your journey from then to signing your first book contract?

[00:02:14] **Rose:** So it's not a short one. That, so Nesbitch, it did quite well, I got four requests, I got, you know, agent requests for that, and they liked it, but they didn't love it, didn't go anywhere with that book, so I wrote another book, and again, I got requests, and I got, you know, got an R& R on the second one, and okay, yeah, so we're getting somewhere.

[00:02:37] And then I wrote another one, and I entered that into Pitch Wars in 2016, and I was their runner up choice, so I didn't get into Pitch Wars, but You know, they were, yeah, this is, this is something we could have worked with. And then I had my son and I nearly died and I had postnatal depression and I stopped writing for about four years.

[00:02:59] and so that takes us up to about 2020, which was pandemic time. So. I was on furlough from my job, so I was kind of still employed, but sat in my son's room because it was quiet, doing studying, and I sat down and I wrote a book, and it was all about Grief and loss and dead gods. And, uh, it was, it was a thing.

[00:03:25] There were a lot of emotions in that book. I got into Pitch Wars with that one. And so I got, um, got into Pitch Wars, did three months of really intense revision. It was, you know, it was tough. It was hard work. This book was a lot of deep emotions and then it went out to the showcase and it got very little interest and I started querying it and it got.

[00:03:47] Very little interest and you had like three requests out of 80 or 90 agents and compared to querying five years previously, it was like, Oh, have I gone downhill? Am I doing it wrong? It was, it was a big jump between the first and the last time that I started querying. and that was, that was quite soul crushing because I've been making progress.

[00:04:10] I thought I was on the right path. I, you know, it was obviously there's timing and luck, but I thought I was going in the right direction, and that felt like slamming into a brick wall. and while I was doing this, I, uh, started writing another book. And I thought, I'm not gonna, I'm not gonna query this.

[00:04:25] I'm just gonna write something fun for me, to remind me I like writing. It's gonna be silly, it's gonna indulge my inner horse girl. It's gonna be, yeah, it's gonna be just for me. And I started writing this. So just as I was

finishing off the Pitch Wars edits, when I couldn't face looking at that book anymore, I'd started with this one.

[00:04:42] And I finished that sometime around midway through 2021, um, sent it to a few people and they went, no, we like this. You should try it with this one. I was like, do I, do I want to go into this? Do I, am I, am I good enough? And I sent it out to a few agents. None of them looked at it and I sent it out to a few more.

[00:05:03] I sent it out to Becca and she requested it. So I sent it to her and I didn't think anything would happen. Cause nobody else had even requested it. and then in so in February, 2022, I get this email from Becca and it says, I'm switching to email now. Watch out for that. And I went to my email, I went to my writing group and I said, what, what does this mean?

[00:05:25] why is she switching to email? Well, what's this on about? And then about 10 minutes later, I get another email going, okay, let's set up a phone call. Oh, that's why she, that's why she's switching to email. And that was, I genuinely took reading those emails several times to actually accept that this was happening.

[00:05:43] so that was, that was about February, 2022. We did a few more edits on it and we put it on sub in about March, 2022. And then every month we got some rejections, and they were nice rejections, and people had read it, and it wasn't for us, we don't think we can publish this, and that went on until December, and in December there were no rejections, so we thought, okay, well maybe we'll start the new year, and it'll be slightly better.

[00:06:14] And it must have been early January 2023. I was sat on the couch, I was waiting for, my partner was just about having me a plate of food for dinner, and I got an email. And oh, Becca's emailing me, that's unusual, I wonder what that's about. I pick up this email, and, oh, Tash at Hodderscape thinks this would be great for a list.

[00:06:33] And so I sat there with my phone in one hand and my plate of food in the other, and I just stared at that for about five minutes while I like worked out what had just happened at that point. So that was, yeah, I think it was January. We got the first message and then we had a, had a couple of video chats and I think things got finalized, in about February, 2023.

[00:06:56] and then it came out a couple of weeks ago on 21st of November, which is very quick.

[00:07:03] **Sarah:** Yeah, that's a very quick schedule.

[00:07:05] **Rose:** Yeah,

[00:07:05] **Sarah:** Awesome. it's time for the first Q of the podcast. Can you read your successful query letter for us?

[00:07:12] **Rose:** Dear Agent, A grumpy adventurer must come out of retirement to stop a civil war between magic and undead, even if doing so will lose him the sunshine of his heartTIL DEATH DO US BARD is a 95k word adult fantasy full of queer characters with the humour of Kings of the Wyld, and the adventure of the Witcher series.

[00:07:30] Content warning for an incident of domestic violence, not from the protagonist. Logan "the Barbarian" Theaker never expected to be domesticated. An adventurer by trade, he sees his role as the protector of the weak, and that doesn't leave much time for making friends. Until he meets Bard Pie the sunshine to his thundercloud.

[00:07:47] Logan's hung up his axe for pig farming and wants nothing more than to be a good husband. Until Pie lies to him, drugs him, and banishes into the night. As Logan struggles to come to terms with the idea that the last six months of his Life may have been a charade, the kingdom around him is in similar turmoil.

[00:08:02] A grieving king has banned magic and the country's spellcasters push back against the resolution. Desperate to learn if Pie is alive or dead, Logan turns to an old adversary, one of the last necromancers. Unfortunately, her help comes in the form of raising Logan's ex wife, and she holds Logan responsible for her death.

[00:08:18] From her, Logan learns that Pie has been blackmailed by the king into stealing a lost necromantic item, one capable of creating an army of flesh bodies. Banning magic is no longer enough for the king and he appears set on using death itself to crush any who use it. If Logan can put aside his hero conflicts for long enough to work with his former antagonists, he can stop a civil war between undead and magic.

[00:08:38] But doing so puts him at odds with the one man who's ever made him feel happy and worthy of love- Pie. I'm a bi woman, an IT professional, a Pitch Wars alum, and mother to the world's wiggliest toddler. I'm lucky enough

to live in the historic city of Bath, and when I haven't got my nose in a book of one sort or another, I enjoy photography and cheese.

[00:08:55] **Sarah:** Thank you for sharing. And for those of you who process that sort of information better by reading it, as always, the link for the query is included in the show notes. So how has your experience been since signing that first contract? Especially let us know if there were any surprises along the way.

[00:09:13] **Rose:** the publication speed was a surprise, because initially we were looking at coming out March 2024, and it got moved forwards, so that was, that was a surprise. Um, and it, it's nice to have a book out quickly, but it also, it was a lot of, a lot of hard work and a lot of stress getting all those edits done in that short time.

[00:09:34] **Sarah:** Yeah, a lot of scrambling.

[00:09:36] **Rose:** Yeah,

[00:09:37] **Sarah:** All right. It is time for the quick round. I call it author, DNA.

[00:09:41] Are you a pantsier or a plotter?

[00:09:43] **Rose:** total pantsier

[00:09:45] **Sarah:** do you tend to be an over writer or an underwriter?

[00:09:48] **Rose:** Underwriter currently, started as overwriter, now I'm an underwriter.

[00:09:51] **Sarah:** Do you tend to write better in the morning or at night?

[00:09:54] **Rose:** Both, I, I do most of my work either early morning or in the evenings.

[00:09:58] **Sarah:** When you come up with a new project, do you typically start with a character or plot or concept or something else? First?

[00:10:06] **Rose:** Usually like a vague idea, and then characters, and then the plot evolves around that.

[00:10:11] **Sarah:** Do you prefer coffee or tea?

[00:10:13] **Rose:** both.

[00:10:14] **Sarah:** Oh, okay.

[00:10:15] **Rose:** Yeah, I like coffee to keep me awake, but I like expensive green tea while I'm writing as well.

[00:10:20] **Sarah:** Whenever you're writing, do you prefer silence or some kind of sound?

[00:10:23] **Rose:** I need music,

[00:10:25] **Sarah:** When it comes to the first draft, are you more of a get it down kind of person or a get it right kind of person?

[00:10:30] **Rose:** uh, get it down.

[00:10:31] **Sarah:** What tools or software do you use to draft?

[00:10:34] **Rose:** Word, just word.

[00:10:36] **Sarah:** Do you prefer drafting or revising more?

[00:10:39] **Rose:** Drafting, I think.

[00:10:41] **Sarah:** Do you write in sequential order or do you hop around?

[00:10:44] **Rose:** Generally sequential.

[00:10:45] Probably

[00:10:46] **Sarah:** And final quick round question, are you an extrovert or an introvert?

[00:10:50] **Rose:** Probably more of an introvert, unless I'm in the right sort of group of people.

[00:10:54] **Sarah:** All right, it's time for the second Q of the podcast. What were some of the qualms or worries that you had on your journey? And do you feel like they were realized or you overcame them or how did they shake out?

[00:11:04] **Rose:** A lot of issues with where I stood and how, how I was doing, because certainly after 2020, it was very hard to get any kind of feedback from agents or even that, that much in terms of response, right? So it was a lot of, am I doing it wrong and not knowing if I was doing it wrong. it turns out I wasn't, but yeah, so there was a lot of that.

[00:11:28] I still have a lot of, you know, is this going to be enough? Have I done enough? Am I doing enough? Is it selling enough? It's only been out two weeks and these worries are already, Definitely piling up. Um, and I think that, that doesn't ever change. Um, unless you get to be really big.

[00:11:46] **Sarah:** Yeah. Yeah. Um, I feel like that's probably one of the most common ones is like, am I good enough? Am I doing enough?

[00:11:53] **Rose:** yeah.

[00:11:54] **Sarah:** Yeah. all right. The third Q, do you have any writing quirks? Is there anything about your writing process that you think is kind of different or interesting or unique?

[00:12:03] **Rose:** I don't know about different or unique, but I, I really use the Discord Sprinto bot a lot to focus. I find that's a good way of actually getting me to sit down and write the words, is to give myself the 50 minute time. And make sure that I Get the words down.

[00:12:19] **Sarah:** Yeah, that is a new one for the podcast for sure. When you were in the lowest parts of your journey, whatever that may have been for you, what kept you going and why did you stick to it?

[00:12:30] **Rose:** Mostly my friends. I have a bunch of really good friends who have been incredibly supportive. Who genuinely believed in me and encouraged me even when I was ready to give up. And I do, I do genuinely enjoy writing, I enjoy what I do, so I didn't want to stop doing that, even when I felt that publication was sort of out of reach,

[00:12:54] **Sarah:** Do you feel like you made any mistakes along the way that you might want to let people know about so they can hopefully avoid the same ones?

[00:13:01] **Rose:** I definitely think, certainly some of my earlier books I queried too early. Um, I should have done more revision. I should have maybe written a few more books before trying to query because they weren't, they weren't ready.

I think I've let comparisons get in my head quite a lot. people's journeys are wildly different.

[00:13:18] People get different number of requests, different number of agent offers, different advances, and it's not anything, you're not a lesser person for this, even though it can feel like that at times.

[00:13:30] **Sarah:** Yeah, the comparison game can really mess you up.

[00:13:33] **Rose:** Yeah,

[00:13:34] **Sarah:** Can you share with listeners one of the most important lessons that you learned on your journey to publication?

[00:13:40] **Rose:** I think it's, it's, it's find your people. I know that's like, it's a bit of a cliché, but it, it definitely is, that's, that's what's helped me the most. Finding friends who've been supportive, finding other writers to You know, I can speak to them about their process, how they've worked, is this normal? Is this, is this something that should be expected?

[00:14:00] It's great, I've got three books out of this, I've made some really good friends. I definitely think it's much better to go in and look to find people rather than to get bogged down with comparisons and feeling bitter about, you know, they got more than me. you know, you will feel this, but don't let it sort of affect how you treat people or how you come across to people

[00:14:24] **Sarah:** Yes. This is not a business that most of us succeed in completely on our own, and you've definitely mentioned some of them, but who are some of the people who helped you along the way and how?

[00:14:34] **Rose:** Okay, so the first first group of people are a group that I met when looking into RevPit and so there's a bunch of us yeah, it must've been 2020. we, we were all, trying to apply. One of us got in, no, two, two of them got in. Uh, the rest of us didn't. But we formed a nice little group, uh, with the pit squirrels, . We've known each other for years now, and they, I love them. They're, they're amazing.

[00:15:01] they're absolutely wonderful. And then I've, I've got another group that I've met, so after being agented, again on Twitter, just mostly through sort of sharing little snippets and things I've got to meet people. Um, and again, there's, I've got another little group of people, another little discord chat.

[00:15:19] And again, they, they've been absolutely amazing at being, you know, am I, am I doing this wrong? Is this a mistake? and just keeping me going. and hopefully, hopefully I'm doing the same for them, but yeah. shout out to my jar as well.

[00:15:34] **Sarah:** Nice. Do you have anything coming up that you'd like to share with listeners?

[00:15:38] **Rose:** so I do have a second book in the deal that I have with Hodderscape but I can't share any details of that yet. But, um, keep your eyes out, because hopefully we'll be able to announce something soon about that. .

[00:15:51] **Sarah:** All right. Rose, thank you so much for coming on the show and sharing your story with my listeners. Yeah.

[00:15:59] Thank you so much for listening to this episode of Queries, Qualms, and Quirks. You can find the text of Rose's query in the show notes along with links to find out more about her and her books. If you enjoyed the show, I'd really appreciate if you'd help me find new listeners by leaving a review, telling your friends, or sharing this episode on social media.

[00:16:16] If you're interested in supporting the show, go to patreon.com/sarahnicolas. That is Sarah with an H and Nicolas with no H. And if you're a published author interested in being a guest on the show, please click on the home base link in the description or go to sarahnicholas.com and click on the podcast logo in the sidebar.

[00:16:32] That is Sarah with an H and Nicolas with no H. Thank you so much for listening and we'll see you next time.