

QQQ Tanisia Moore

[00:00:00] **Tanisia:** I choose to protect my peace by not always being on Twitter. because, you know, surprisingly writers have a lot of drama. You, if you on, you'll find out somebody mad at something

[00:00:17] **Sarah:** Welcome to Queries Qualms and Quirks, the weekly podcast that asks published authors to share their successful query letter and discuss their journey from first spark to day of publication.

[00:00:28] I am your host, author Sarah Nicolas, and literary agent Sarah N Fisk. Known affectionately as your family's favorite author, Tanisia "Tee" Moore writes uplifting work for all ages. For young adult readers, her debut book with co-author Lynn Miller Lockman in the Women of Power Series profiling Women filmmakers, was announced in November, 2020. For adults,

[00:00:50] she is the author of After The Storm, an inspiring contemporary romance novel of redemption and restoration. Tee has been published in the Alabama News Medium and Readers Digest, as well as a TEDx talk on motherhood and entrepreneurship. So please welcome Tee to the show. Hello.

[00:01:08] **Tanisia:** Hello there.

[00:01:10] **Sarah:** So today we're gonna talk about your journey to publication, and we're gonna start by going all the way back to the beginning. When did you first start getting interested in the writing? And then how long did it take before you started getting serious about pursuing publication?

[00:01:24] **Tanisia:** So I've been writing for as long as I can remember. I'm sure like most authors we've been writing since we were like knee-high. for me it started with getting my first journal at six years old, writing about like my favorite candies. Probably what little boy I had a crush on at that time who didn't know I had a crush on him.

[00:01:42] You know, all the stuff that, six-year-olds concerned themselves with. and then from there it was kind of like one of those things, it was my therapy that I didn't know with my therapy at a young age. And I got an award, I think like third or fifth grade, writing something on, um, mlk, ironically, and.

[00:02:01] Received their award in my elementary school. I just recently found their certificate, so I was like, oh my gosh. I did get an award when I was a kid.

Like, I can show this off now. but so I've always been writing something, always been writing, whether it's me journaling, whether it's me writing random essays.

[00:02:18] it's been literally my saving grace. So by the time I started to get serious about publication was probably about 2012 ish. And I had just graduated law school maybe two years prior to that. And so I was at this place in my life where I was just like, what's next? Like, didn't, I feel like this is you getting an exclusive here.

[00:02:40] I didn't really wanna be a lawyer. Ok. Like, I just thought like, that's what you do, right? You go law school, you take the, and you become a lawyer. And, but there was still something in that was unsettling. Like I still felt like I was. Trying to find myself. So I started writing after the storm, really technically in 2012, or at least the outline of it.

[00:03:02] And I got really excited cause it was like the first thing, like I really outlined, I really got this story, started writing it in 2014 and didn't finish until 2018. Um, but for me, I started to get serious when I started having my kids. I wanted my kids to see me live life and what that looked like, that my life just didn't stop when I became this mother.

[00:03:28] It really was the genesis of my purpose, like finding myself. And so I, I always share whenever I talk about anything and like my kids are kind of the birthing place for what got me started, especially having my daughters wanting them to see. Their mother, like, Hey, you could be a mom, but you can also have a life.

[00:03:49] And so that's when things started to turn and kinda to shift. And so I took the independent route initially into publication with After the Storm, just more of a way to like dip my toes into it. Like, you know, I f I wrote a book, I finally did it yay me. And then I thought, gonna be done. Cause at that time I had two kids and I was like you know I'm good. I'm good on this.

[00:04:11] I'm, so that's how we got serious about. I blame my kids. y'all can thank them.

[00:04:18] **Sarah:** Nice. How did you learn more about the publishing industry? Like how it works, how to go about it, how to query everything like that?

[00:04:26] **Tanisia:** Google is your friend, with all things. And so I really went actually kinda standoffish about the publishing industry. Like I've had heard,

first of all, I didn't know you could be an author in real life. Like, you know, like you read the books. These people like, I didn't know was like a career, like a job that you can do.

[00:04:44] and so coming from a Caribbean background, uh, my dad is Jamaican, so like that's just not the thing. Like you, Dr. Lawyer, engineer, like something like that. Author was not on my bingo card. Like I didn't know that was a job or something I could become. And so I got serious about, okay, I'm going to now go this route of becoming an author, I got on Google, started like looking up stuff, learning about, you know, the houses and the different agencies.

[00:05:16] And that wasn't until about I would say 2019 after I had my third child, third and last child, y'all, we not having no more babies over here. We're done. We're good. but when I had him, uh, I really started to kind of look around and kind of see what was out there. And for me, eventually I got on Twitter, I had this love hate with Twitter for years. It still exists. Um, but now, but now in a different way because now I'm pretty connected in the writing community and know people now, but that's really where things started to kind shift for me. But yeah, getting on Google, literally how to write a career letter. I mean, it's out there. People have all types of samples out there.

[00:06:00] Some of them are trash. Like I wouldn't follow them, but, you know, teach their own. But, you know, getting out there. And that was really how I started. And then once I got my first agent, I started to really build community. and once I really began to build that community around me, it got a little easier in re in regards to building out my portfolio, and understanding.

[00:06:23] Like, I remember my first picture book I wrote, thought it was the best thing this side of heaven. Like, you couldn't tell me that all 1200 words did not belong in that book. Um, cause they, they all belonged in the book. It would make me cry, even though as I'm reading it out loud and I would read it, I was like, man, it's still going.

[00:06:42] Like even I thought it was too long. Um, but nonetheless, all those words belonged in that book. And with each rejection I learned that all those words did not belong in that book and that something was not working. We're gonna have to figure this thing out. And so the thing about when you make that shift over into traditional publishing, There are rules that do apply Now, I like to break rules from time to time.

[00:07:06] but there are some things, and there are some crafting elements that I think sometimes you miss out as an independent author who doesn't have a good editor to help you. I'll keep that to myself, but like that's, you know, uh, there's, there's a whole conversation with that, but there's a lot to be said about having a good person looking over your work and, and knowing what's actually in the market.

[00:07:33] and so that's really how I learned. I learned trial by error. Like I said, Google was my friend, but then once I got into a community, that was the game changer. Finding my people who I could connect with my squad, really helped change the game. And I mean, I'm still a newbie, I'm still a baby in the industry, but. I've probably accelerated a little bit more. One because again, I have a legal background, so some things come a little easier for me to understand when it comes to like contracts and like breaking down stuff like that. and then because by trade I write as an attorney, I listen. If I was, if I need to save my life, I could write, I'm gonna, I'm gonna write my way outta it.

[00:08:13] It, it has saved me on law school exams plenty of time and it's probably how I passed the bar was there were essays. yeah. So yeah, just doing the research and, um, I really will say getting back on Twitter at the time that I did, um, was also very beneficial for me to learn more about the industry.

[00:08:33] **Sarah:** So then what happened? Can you break down for us your journey to signing your first book contract?

[00:08:39] **Tanisia:** Oh gosh. Okay. So all the details. So, I connected with my first agent. Um, I'm on my second agent. but I connected with my first agent through a mutual friend of mine, of ours actually. And it was also around that time when George Floyd, was murdered. And so there was a lot of push for diversity all of a sudden.

[00:09:02] and there was like this call for black voices, um, you know, wanting people wanted to help, blah, blah, blah. Um, and I say, blah, blah, blah, because three years later we now see what happens to that call. But anyway, on the side, that's not what we're here for. But I took advantage of the opportunity that was out there is actually how I met the black creators in Kid Lit Community, when Antoine Edie had put out that tweet that's kind of how that community got birth and that's really where I met a lot of my, my friends turned family now.

[00:09:35] so met my first agent, like I said, through a mutual friend and sent her, a couple of picture books that I had written that had some pretty good potential, but just wasn't, still, wasn't hitting the mark. and so one of the things

that I tell people, it's a, weird Cinderella story, like how I got an agent even both times, it's not the norm,

[00:10:00] **Sarah:** Hmm.

[00:10:01] **Tanisia:** but it's still something that I celebrate and I don't diminish it.

[00:10:04] Received more than enough rejections. I also knew my bandwidth that I was not going to query for years, upon years, upon years. That was just not what I was about to do. I'm not, I'm not built for that. Having taken the bar in two different states for me I was a "one and done"r, um, if I had failed the bar, I wasn't taken again.

[00:10:25] So the same thought process applied for the aquarium process. If it wasn't gonna shake out in about, I don't know, six months to a year, your girl was going, I was out, but so just wasn't gonna do it. So I, I connected with her, the books that I went on submission with, with her, the, I think we went on submission with, um, one book, initially one picture book and all passes on all them.

[00:10:52] I did get like an r and r, which is a revised and resubmit. I really do hate those.

[00:10:57] **Sarah:** Yeah.

[00:10:58] **Tanisia:** They're dumb, but they happen. I'm like, you want me to revise the book? Pay me to revise the book. I'll revise it all day long. But anyway, that doesn't always happen. So I ended up, writing the book that's actually debuting the September from Scholastic, called I Am My Ancestors' Wildest Dreams.

[00:11:15] I wrote that book in about 30 minutes, the first draft. And, and it, and when I say it poured out, it poured out and I wrote it. Because I was grieving that 2020 was just a blue, it was just a trash year, right? Like you, it first it started with Kobe dying and that's, that's what I should've known, that the year was going to go downhill from there.

[00:11:36] and then Covid, and then you're finding out like, oh, Ahmaud Arbery. Well, when did that happen? Then you had Breonna Taylor and then it was George Floyd, and it was just like, wait, we're in a pandemic. How's all this

stuff happening? And so it was just a very trying year. And then Chadwick Bozeman died and the grief that hit me, and it was more so because of their age.

[00:11:59] Like they weren't, both Kobe and Chadwick weren't that much older than me. And it was just putting things into perspective like, gosh, you really don't know your, your date, um, when you're gonna leave. And so it's like you gotta leave it all on the ground, all on the table. Like you can't take it with you.

[00:12:17] So I'm like, And I remember just grieving and I just like couldn't shake it like you would've thought Chadwick was my first cousin, the way I was like crying. But it was just like, I just felt, and I just kept hearing this mantra, and it's a very common phrase, I am my ancestors' wildest dreams.

[00:12:32] Like, what does that even mean to be your ancestors' wildest dreams. And so, wrote that book, sent it to my, um, best friend Ebony, and she was like, oh my gosh, Tee, this is, this is amazing. I think we made like maybe one change to it and then we ended up going on submission with that book. I wanna say October, 2020, sometime in October, 2020.

[00:12:57] And I, I say within two hours I had my first, A bite from an editor, and I was like, oh, wait a minute.

[00:13:06] **Sarah:** This is different. Yeah.

[00:13:08] **Tanisia:** This is, this is not what they say happened. And within, probably within, the, the next day or so, we had another bite from another editor, and then the rest were turned into passes.

[00:13:20] And I was down to this, these two editors, one at Simon Schuster, one at Scholastic. And so I'm just like, oh my gosh, what is happening? So I ended up going with the editor over at Scholastic, who I just, I simply adore my editor there. and the book was sold by November. Matter of fact, before the election, I had accepted the, the offer from Scholastic.

[00:13:43] It was really crazy cuz it's like, this doesn't happen. Like this is not what happens to people. Like, this is weird. And so for, for a while I I felt a little, a little bad, a little weird, you know, kind of like, um, what about other people? Like you don't wanna kind of post back cause you see people like, I'm so honored to say I've signed with so and so, or I'm so happy to share my announcement.

[00:14:06] And I realize like my story may not be the norm, but I still get to celebrate my joy and I get to celebrate this goodness because this won't always happen. won't always get a yes that fast. It won't always be that way. Um, the rejections still come, they still bother me, but I'm gonna celebrate the yeses that do come and I'm not gonna worry about the time limit in which it takes.

[00:14:27] I remember signing my book deal, and I remember just thinking like, I told one of my other best friends that I signed with Scholastic, and she was like, Scholastic, like, like, cause it's, it's, I mean, you grow up in this, the Scholastic book fair. And I get to do this with my kids. Like I volunteer when the book fair comes in because it's just like, it takes me back to my childhood.

[00:14:49] I'm just like, this is still expensive, still still costs \$5 for these pencils. Um, you know, but yeah, so it was, man, it was great. But I ended up having to leave two manuscripts, almost three, I say two and a half. The, the one story that I initially started with, the one I said was 1200 words. It's shortened and it's changed formats, but I haven't let that story go because that one is about my son. And it's very near and dear to my heart, so I have not let that particular manuscript go. the other ones that, that I have queried with initially, I did part ways kind of with those and they're, I won't say they're forever gone, they're just on pause for right now. I always believe that you can come back to, it's, it's art, right?

[00:15:40] So you can always come back to that piece. You can always change it. You can always modify it, it, you know, something might come, but right now the priority is not those. And so those are sitting shelved away and I look at them from time to time and I'm just like, I wonder if I could do something with this story, like, you know, is it time yet?

[00:16:01] It's been exciting, but I tell you what, when I get a rejection now, or when we go on submission, I, I always joke around with my girlfriend and we'll, like, I, like why haven't, why has anyone like said anything? Like, it's been two hours. No one's called me and said anything. Like, how, how do they know?

[00:16:17] And, but, you know, but the reality is, is that that's not norm. And so when I go on submission now, I go find something else to do. Like, I don't have the expectation that I'm gonna get something back within a month or two months. Like agents and editors, they're busy. Y'all are busy, busy. Like, you know, it's been a, a wonderful ride thus far.

[00:16:43] to walk into a two book deal that was the deal with Scholastic. And get that in like two weeks. So that, so to, to sign with an agent within like a

month's time. and, and again, that one was, I had a mutual friend, but the, my first agent could have said no when she read my work too. So I also do not take away from that because I know that my talent is what got me in the door and I know that I belong in the space that I'm in.

[00:17:11] It's not luck, it's not anything. Yes, I'm blessed, but what I'm blessed with is I'm blessed with the talent that has been given to me. And so that's the gift that I share. but it's, it's been, it's been a journey friend. It's been a.

[00:17:26] **Sarah:** Yeah. I think it's important cuz a lot of people think that referrals are like this kind of just, you know, get in free pass and it's not cuz an agent, even if they have a referral from someone they know really well, someone they trust, if they don't think they're can sell the book, they're not gonna sign the client even with a referral.

[00:17:44] Yeah.

[00:17:45] **Tanisia:** it doesn't work that way. Like it's, it doesn't, like my agent now, Jem like we are work very close. when I queried her, she gave me, she gave me an R&R. I was so was like how dare you give me, your friend, an R&R? I'm not going to do it. I did it. I was highly offended. Like she would the nerve of her to give you r r but I mean, but again, that's the strength of our friendship though too. Like it mattered that much more to her. That she is able to represent my interest well and be the person because she has to be my agent. She now has to be my partner in publishing.

[00:18:39] that's a different wheelhouse than her being my girlfriend that I get to shoot the shit. I mean, oh, I'm sorry. Cus um, shoot the breeze with, um, you know, on a day-to-day basis, like there's, there's business and like I'm entrusting her to a book seller for me and sell books on my behalf and other sub rights for my behalf.

[00:18:58] Then I, she needs to make sure she can do that in an unbiased way. So her r her r and r was appreciated because it, I mean, it helped I guess. I mean, whatever. But, but yeah. So, but like you said, referrals, they're not, they're not this get in free card. They're not like it automatic. I've put referrals out there I let my friends know that.

[00:19:22] I don't know. What's gonna happen with that? I can vouch all day long and say, your work is phenomenal. It's great, it's all this. But at the end of the day, I'm not an agent. I'm not building a list. I don't know the market enough to, you know, that's, that's what y'all getting this 15% for.

[00:19:37] Like, that's for y'all to figure out what markets are, what's hot, what's selling. I just write books. Cause the moment I have to step in and put on my attorney hat I have to, um, help you negotiate my contracts or do anything like that, that's when I know that we don't need to work together. Because I, I'm now having to put on extra hats that I don't, I don't wanna wear it.

[00:19:57] I just wanna be a creative in this space. So, yeah. but yeah, referrals, they're good. can move you up a little bit, but they are not, they're not guarantees for sure.

[00:20:06] **Sarah:** All right. It is time for the first Q of the podcast. Can you read your successful query letter for us?

[00:20:13] **Tanisia:** I can, I can, I can. Okay. Y'all don't, y'all don't laugh. so dear, miss blank blank. or you could say, dear Miss chambers Black. I'm seeking representation for BLANK TITLE, a women's upmarket fiction with heavy romantic elements, and it's complete at 93,068 words. This manuscript is reminiscent of Black romance novels from the mid-to-late '90s but remixed with a millennial flare.

[00:20:40] It is ideal for audiences who enjoy the works of Terry McMillian, Eric Jerome Dickey, and Issa Rae. It also may be great for fans of the movie. "Girls Trip."

Ava "AJ" Kincade is a boss. Queen bee. Head Black girl magic in charge. But AJ has very little control over her love life. As she waits for news of a possible career-changing promotion at one Atlanta's fastest-growing aero-defense firm, she must first come to terms with divorcing her former NFL husband.

[00:21:09] Devastated, AJ's fierce femme crew hatches a plan. And it turns out, an impromptu trip to Las Vegas is the perfect distraction. A chance meeting with a handsome stranger causes AJ's heart to skip a beat. But AJ can't get caught up with her feelings. She's no fan of fairy tales. After all, what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas – until it doesn't.

[TITLE] is a story about a woman navigating life after divorce – and with the help of her best friends, relinquishing control, and healing from the past in order to make room for true love.

I was previously represented by Jacqui Lipton at Raven Quill Literary. While there, I received a book deal with the Chicago Review Press to co-author a book within their Women of Power Series on contemporary women film directors.

Additionally, I have an unannounced two-book, picture book deal with Scholastic. (which is obviously now announced)

[00:22:00] In addition to releasing my debut indie novel *After the Storm* in 2018, I also published an essay for *al.com* about how becoming a mother reignited my childhood writing dream, and I had the honor of presenting a TEDx talk for Alabama A&M University. Lastly, I am a member of #BlackCreatorsInKidLit (admin/legal), Romance Writers of America, SCBWI, and the Authors Guild.

As requested, I have placed in the body of this email the first chapter of the manuscript. I hope that you continue to stay safe during this time. I look forward to hearing from you. Thank you for your time and consideration.

[00:22:31] **Sarah:** Awesome. Thanks for sharing.

[00:22:32] **Tanisia:** Yes.

[00:22:33] **Sarah:** So how has your experience been since signing that first contract? You talked about it a little bit, you know, cuz you got that first contract quite quickly. Um, especially let us know what surprised you along the way.

[00:22:45] **Tanisia:** Oh gosh. I didn't expect to break up with my first agent at all after signing my first, um, book deal. And so that was, I would say was painful. I am a pretty relational person. I, it's kind of like, you know, even as a married person now, like I didn't go into my marriage like, Hey, I'm gonna divorce you one day, so hang tight.

[00:23:08] Like, you just, you don't walk into relationships like that. And I felt, for me, I know every agent's style is different and things of that, but for me, I needed a relational agent because I figured if you're taking some of my money, we need to know each other. We're gonna have, we don't have to get to know each other a little bit better.

[00:23:27] Cause I need to make sure that you, you good. and so we had that relationship, but once the relationship ended, things shifted. I had considered her not only a colleague because we're both legal professionals, but you know, I had considered her a friend because I had, you know, she knew my kids, I knew her kids, and, you know, things like that.

[00:23:47] And so, in my mind, it was just business. I just needed someone that I felt could carry me a little further in my author career. and I really, I really did

desire to have a black agent, a black woman agent at that, because it's something about being able to work alongside somebody who understands you, understands your culture.

[00:24:15] And so with the, the novel, the, the one that put the letter that wrote that particular adult novel the novels is blackity black. The characters are these professional, women are authentically themselves. There is things that are just cultural references, um, or saying that they will say when they're together that I don't have to explain to her. I just, I just don't, cause she understands it. That was important to me, to, to connect with someone that got me, just as another fellow black woman or black person, period. And so breaking up and, and, and doing it in the way that I did, I picked up the phone, I set a meeting instead of sending an email because I thought the strength of our relationship was one that was like, you know, I'm gonna call you.

[00:25:02] We're gonna have a conversation about it. I don't really want no bad blood. I just think that I need to go in a different direction when it comes to career. And So, and we still have to connect, we still have to talk because, you know, when you get an agent and that agent sells your work, they're entitled to commission for the life of the project.

[00:25:20] So we gonna have to talk. I need to make sure I get my checks, um, my royalty checks whenever they decide to come. So, you know, but that's part of the business, you know, and I think hindsight's 2020, you don't know what you don't know until you know, like they say. And so I, I didn't know what I needed in an agent until I got into an agent author relationship.

[00:25:44] and I think that's something that new authors are, are people who are querying need to understand, like have your idea, but start to take away that, that adage of this is my dream agent. Baby, there's no dream agent. you, you want a person that can work for, you need to know what works for you and what you're looking for.

[00:26:03] But they're a person. They're, they're, they're gonna fall short. They're not going to meet every single expectation that you may have set in your mind. Like you're gonna have to come back down to, to a realistic term because the moment that dream agent disappoints you and they fall off that pedestal and you realize that their humanity is a game changer, right?

[00:26:24] So you just need to kind of know like, what are the non-negotiables? What is it that you're really seeking in this partnership, with your agent? And so that was something I had to do for myself after one, making the decision to

leave my agent, and it took, it, it was not an overnight decision. It took me, it took a few months for me to get to that decision of, okay, I'm going to, Listen, cause the query query trenches is ghetto.

[00:26:48] I don't, I don't care what nobody says. I don't, I don't wanna be in it.. I didn't wanna go back into them again. And then also, I was now entering, going back to this fear of my adult novel. A novel. And I, and I'm a novelist. I love writing novels. It's, I love reading romance novels. It's my thing. I write picture books because I have my kids and I wanted to see more representation in the market for my children and also for children to come, you know, or in their age group.

[00:27:19] But I was nervous about putting that work out there. Putting this, this novel out here, um, that is, I love this story so much, but, um, out into the world, out into the spaces and not knowing how it would be received, would I get an agent? And it would've been very easy for me to submit picture books because by now my picture book writing has like, you know, it sits a lot better.

[00:27:42] It's given what it needs to give, when it needs to give it. Um, and so I could have submitted, you know, and, you know, I had a little cushion because I had a two book deal, you know, offered from Scholastic. And I, you know, I had the deal from Chicago review press. that was scary. Like I said, I didn't, I didn't anticipate leaving my, my first agent.

[00:28:03] And then, like I said, Jem I queried a whole bunch of other people. But in my heart, I wanted Jem to be my agent. Like I knew she was my person. Even if she didn't realize she was my person, she was my person. Um, so I, I, so I know I just probably semi contradicted myself, but um, I just knew like I would love to work with her.

[00:28:23] But also when I first initially started queering, it's funny how life comes back to you full circle and you really can speak words to, I don't like saying the word manifest cause it's kinda played out, but you really can speak life into how you want your actual life to live. And so I had queried Andrea Brown, literary agency before, and I knew I wanted to be at, you know, it's A B L A who don't wanna be at ABLA.

[00:28:52] Um, and so I was like, you know, but I didn't think at some point I would circle back around and end up there at A B L A. And so I had a, I had a moment in June of 21 where I just. Broke down crying. I had got my r and r from Jem. I had gotten three or four rejections that were coming in from Kit, and I don't even know how many.

[00:29:17] I have to go back into grave trackers to see how many managers, see how many people I queried. But they was coming hot and heavy and heavy. And then she hit with that r and r and I was just like, oh my gosh, what am I doing? Why? And so, for a moment, I had that thing. Maybe I should just go back. Maybe it was a mistake to leave and I mean, you, you go through this, this thing of you like doubt and fear.

[00:29:42] And so for the month of June, I stayed off of Twitter, all social media actually. And I focus on my, my portfolio. And it was not easy. And I'll never forget watching, actually, I wasn't watching, my mom was watching the Tamron Hill Hall Show. this author, this new author came on there, she wrote the book, oh my gosh, is it called Flights? I think it's called Flight. I think her name was like TJ something. But anyway, she was on there. She had had like 41 rejections, right? And my mom like re like, so she love rewind shows. Like She'll, she's my mom is that person. Like, she will be like, come here, t come, come see this real quick. She'll pause it, rewind it so I can see whatever it's, she wanna show me.

[00:30:25] And she did that, but I needed her to do that at that time. And so this woman is on there and she's sharing her story. First of all, she different, she didn't have none of her books up behind her. Cause you know, authors like, they had they books behind them that they got coming out. She had not one. And she was sharing her, her story. And because she had got a seven figure book deal. Okay. And then she took a seven figure movie deal. That's what I said. I said, oh, ok. That's beautiful. Um, that's amazing. Now tell you that's, that's not the norm either, but the book is actually really good. I did read it. Um, and it, it was phenomenal. I see why I got a movie deal.

[00:31:04] And so I'm listening to her story, this woman who was a flight attendant who wrote this book on the plane, when she would be, you know, sitting down not tending to the, to the people on the plane and, you know, and she submitted it looking for an agent 40, I think she said it was like 41 rejection. She received the 42nd one she got and got an agent and it was the story that I needed to hear to keep going. It was, okay, I can get back on my horse, I can do this. We, we could try this again. And it's just an r r She's not saying your work is trash. And it was a craft issue. Right? Like we, and sometimes we have to separate ourself from the notes and see like what actually is the, is, is the story an issue and it's not working?

[00:31:55] Cause publishing is subjective. Art is subjective, period. I've seen illustrators work, they have come over and I've been like, no, I don't like that. it's not, not what I would like. Somebody else likes it. I don't like it. It's with

anything. You read a movie, you hear music, whatever the case may be, you get to be subjective.

[00:32:15] It's just not for me, it's the past. Right? Cool. But when the notes come back and they're talking about pacing or they're talking about, and my issue was pacing, that was the biggest issue. That's a craft issue.

[00:32:26] **Sarah:** Mm-hmm.

[00:32:27] **Tanisia:** It's also a fixable issue that can be fixed and can be worked. And so that means I need to fix the craft.

[00:32:33] and that's when I got back into like taking like some courses and you know, really leaning on people to kind of connect with them on like, okay, how do I fix this pacing issue? What does this mean? What needs to be sped? What needs to be slowed down? And so I think another thing learning on this journey, like after signing this first contract is I'm forever a student.

[00:32:54] **Sarah:** Mm-hmm.

[00:32:54] **Tanisia:** I could become the Tony Morrisons or you know, the Kwame like, it doesn't matter. I still have to be a student of the craft. I still have to be able to learn something new or, you know, what's the style that I'm really going for? What is, what am I digging into? And so, once I was able to kind of separate myself after I stopped crying, I went ahead and got back on my horse, started revising, and I submitted again to Jem in September of 21, I saw that she signed somebody new and I got mad. And I dare you, sign another person. I was like, what are, what are you doing over there? How dare you be out here signing clients? Rude. And so I sent her my packet and it was probably like a few hours later, she like, texted me, was like, Hey, um, you know, we should talk. And I was like, oh, is this, is this happening?

[00:34:08] Is this we doing, we doing this? So that was really exciting because I knew I earned it. And that was like, the best feeling for me was like, I earned that. I, I went in, I dug deeper into my work and I earned my position, you know, to be able to like, okay, I'm finally here. And so that has been exciting. And so, You know, since then, I've signed a three book deal with Ray Craft.

[00:34:39] Um, my editor also happens to be, uh, an amazing friend of mine, Winsome Bingham, and that's, she's a, she's her superstar at this point. Winsome just out here just writing books and selling. And so, but getting the work under her, and bringing forth, the Micah Hudson series, which is a chapter

book series, and following this, this cute little boy and showcasing my Jamaican heritage in those, in those pages.

[00:35:07] And then, um, recently announced a book deal, another book deal with Scholastic for a picture book called Wash Day, that, uh, Raisa Figueroa will be illustrating. So I'm like super, super excited. that she is like agreed to, like, you know, tell her side of the story with her beautiful art. So I'm excited about that and I am still, still working on this damn novel and still getting it together, getting it cleaned up, making it become something.

[00:35:38] And I think something that your audience to know is like, take your time with your work. Like sit with it. Make it the best you can make it. Like, because it, it's, it's, it's, it's a lot. It's a lot. But you know, it, believe that once it's done, it, it's gonna be so worth it.

[00:35:57] **Sarah:** Yeah. All right, cool. it is time for author dna. It's a quick round. Are you a pantsner or a plotter?

[00:36:05] **Tanisia:** I'm a pantsner

[00:36:06] **Sarah:** do you tend to be an overwriter or an underwriter?

[00:36:09] **Tanisia:** Overwriter

[00:36:10] **Sarah:** Do you prefer to write in the morning or at night?

[00:36:12] **Tanisia:** Night.

[00:36:13] **Sarah:** When you start with a new project, do you typically start with character, plot concept or something else first?

[00:36:18] **Tanisia:** The mixture of plot and concept.

[00:36:21] **Sarah:** Do you prefer coffee or tea?

[00:36:23] **Tanisia:** Coffee's disgusting.

[00:36:25] **Sarah:** Okay. When writing, do you prefer silence or some kind of sound?

[00:36:31] **Tanisia:** It depends. either silence or I put psych on in the background.

[00:36:36] **Sarah:** Hmm. Cool. 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?

[00:36:42] **Tanisia:** I have become a get it down

[00:36:44] **Sarah:** What tools or software do you use to draft?

[00:36:47] **Tanisia:** Scrivener or Microsoft.

[00:36:49] **Sarah:** Do you prefer drafting or revising more?

[00:36:52] **Tanisia:** Neither one. Revising.

[00:36:57] **Sarah:** Do you write in sequential order or do you hop around?

[00:37:00] **Tanisia:** Oh, sequential order.

[00:37:01] **Sarah:** and final quick round question. Are you an extrovert or an introvert?

[00:37:05] **Tanisia:** Can't you tell I'm an extrovert?

[00:37:09] **Sarah:** Yeah. Sometimes people fake it.

[00:37:12] **Tanisia:** Mm-hmm. You know, I, I, people enough and then I have to recharge. I might be more of an introvert, I guess by true definition cause people drain me cuz I give so much of my high energy and then I have to like recharge and reset.

[00:37:26] **Sarah:** Now we're gonna talk about the second Q of a podcast. What were some of the worries that you had on your journey, and do you feel like they were realized or you overcame them, or, you know, how did that shake out?

[00:37:37] **Tanisia:** I think what I'm still working through is imposter syndrome. it's not as easy to shake off. It's getting better. Therapy is my friend. Um, and kind of unpacking some of that trauma that's, been internalized, but having to remind myself that and my girlfriend, Ebony says it's the best. She says, my art is the prize. And so having to remind myself that I do belong

Scholastic is just not buying books for the, for the hell of it. They're not just like, sure you can have a book deal. This sounds great. And I earned it. I earned it. And the reality is, I am a good writer. Even if I wasn't writing books for the masses, I know that I can write.

[00:38:27] I've seen it. The grades in school proved it. I, I proved it. Like I've, I've done it. And so having to remind myself I belong and I'm enough. there are times when publishing disappoints me, a lot. But, um, and so I choose to protect my peace by not always being on Twitter. because, you know, surprisingly writers have a lot of drama. You, if you on, you'll find out somebody mad at something. Like recently I saw something going around, you know, talking to authors about, Expectations when it comes to their agents and stuff like that.

[00:39:06] And I had to decide on I wanna dance party or did leave alone.

[00:39:12] **Sarah:** Yeah.

[00:39:12] **Tanisia:** but I, you know, I didn't want to entertain it, you know, as a small business owner myself, when I see sometimes the entitlement of authors in the industry in the space, whether they're new or, or established, it's a little bit problematic,

[00:39:30] **Sarah:** Mm-hmm.

[00:39:30] **Tanisia:** um, because it sets newbies up for failure. like expecting an agent to turn a a novel around in a month is unrealistic. Um, and so, but. Also trying not to worry about that either taking on the negative external forces around me and not putting that on because that feeds at imposter syndrome. It makes me worry. It makes me be like, oh, maybe my book won't earn out. Oh my, maybe my book won't be in Barnes Noble, because they're not Barnes Noble's doing this and that.

[00:40:01] And it's like, well actually they've been doing this all this time. It's not new. It's just that you just realize that they've been doing it all this time. And if you think about it, hardcover books are expensive. I myself prefer good old paperback. Cause you know, \$5 is \$5 save,

[00:40:17] **Sarah:** Yeah.

[00:40:19] **Tanisia:** know? So having to really. Watch my imposter syndrome, because it gets fed a lot by external stuff, you know, as a, as a black creator, oh, the, the industry is doing this and it's just like, that's not my experience. But then

you begin to think it is my experience, or it could become my experience because that's what that person experienced, not knowing the full story of the other person.

[00:40:42] in that regard, I'm, I'm always thankful though for my education in regards when I say my education has a, and as an attorney we're taught to not marry one side of the story. So I can't go off knee-jerk reactions by training, you know? Cause,

[00:40:58] **Sarah:** Yeah. Especially if you're getting like most of it from Twitter because so many people on Twitter misrepresent things or overblow things or, don't present all the information, you know.

[00:41:09] **Tanisia:** Mm-hmm.

[00:41:10] **Sarah:** Which is true everywhere, but especially in the publishing

[00:41:14] **Tanisia:** Especially on hashtag writing community Twitter

[00:41:17] **Sarah:** Yes.

[00:41:18] **Tanisia:** and your imposter syndrome will, will get fed. And so I had to really watch that. So that was definitely a worry of mine or, or is a concern of my, as I go through this journey.

[00:41:29] **Sarah:** Mm-hmm.

[00:41:30] **Tanisia:** Um, it's just, like I said, constantly reminding myself that I am enough and a no is not a personal attack on me.

[00:41:39] It doesn't mean that I'm not a creative, it doesn't mean that I, I didn't make good work. It wasn't good for that person for whatever reason.

[00:41:46] **Sarah:** All right. Now it's time for the third Q I call it the fun 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?

[00:41:56] **Tanisia:** I love to watch psych.

[00:41:58] **Sarah:** Yeah, you mentioned that. That's funny. I used to watch Law and Order when I was writing.

[00:42:02] **Tanisia:** Really like, oh, that's, that's heavy now. That's some heavy stuff in that now psych,

[00:42:07] **Sarah:** Well that was before we had streaming too, and so that it was just always on, you know?

[00:42:12] **Tanisia:** that's right. Cause I used to come on USA all the time. But yeah, like I watch, I watch psych, I've seen literally every episode and the movies, huge, huge, huge, huge fan of Psych.

[00:42:23] And so I will watch it in the background because it's not distracting. although when I do watch it and if I do see something, I will laugh. Like it's the first time I've seen it. but I've, I've been watching them for a long time, but that's something when I'm really need to get into my zone. I'm putting psych on, like,

[00:42:40] **Sarah:** great. I love

[00:42:41] **Tanisia:** and I reward myself with cheesecake from Publix.

[00:42:44] **Sarah:** Oh, nice.

[00:42:44] **Tanisia:** Mm-hmm.

[00:42:45] **Sarah:** When you were in the lowest parts of your journey, whatever that was for you, what kept you going and why did you stick to it?

[00:42:53] **Tanisia:** Oh gosh. Oh, that's a good question, Sarah. Okay. So when I was in that part where, like I said, watching that woman, I can't remember her name, I hate that I remember her name. but that was a pretty low moment, being back in the quarry trenches and like having to be there again. And, you know, getting ex when you experience stuff so fast and then like, then you get hit with real life, you're like, wait a minute, rude.

[00:43:21] trying to remind myself like, well, I did it before I could do it again. And I think what kept me going for me was I just deep down, I just see my life differently. I just see more for myself. And so it, it would've been very easy just to give up and go look Look for a nine to five and just go back to doing the same.

[00:43:43] Same. But at this point, a nine to five is the idea. It makes me itch. So it just would not work out. And so, and I got a taste of it. I got a taste and so I was like, Scholastic like you, girl. They

[00:43:58] bought a book from you. And so when you get a taste of it, it's like, how do you go back? How do you, how do you go back to before that like, and it would've been easy to do that. And so I think for me, One of the things that was very instrumental for me, there's always been instrumental is my faith. Like, I, I love Jesus.

[00:44:15] We, we are friends, we, we tight leaning in on my faith, reminded myself of what the scripture says and you know, being reminded that hey, like, you know, all things were together for the good of those who love him. And purpose doesn't mean that are gonna pretty, doesn't mean that life is gonna be great . One thing I love in the Bible - I love to interpret the Bible. So, you know, he was talking, he was like, Hey, hey, hey, don't worry about it, but one thing I can assure you that you will have is trouble.

[00:44:43] It's gonna come, life is going life. And so, but that's part of the process and I think, having to remind myself, having, having an amazing support system of writer friends. Who get it, who knows what it's like when we can't write because we're having, life is happening to us and you can't tap into your career.

[00:45:02] Like it's not so simple. Um, and you're an author, you know, you have a moment of slump and people like, just write, just go write! I can't, like, it's literally like writer's block at this point. It's just my creative juices are not flowing. It's just not there. Um, but having a support system to rally me on, to cheer me on and to remind me, you know, hey, like you got this, you can do, this was instrumental.

[00:45:29] And then three kids of mine, what is it that I want them to see? What is it, you know, if I'm a walk away from this, am I walking away from it because it's just really not working, it's just not what it's meant to be? Or is it I need to go through the process. I need to go through, through this valley because there'll be more valleys, there'll be more hills and all this stuff.

[00:45:52] But it's part of the journey. Rejection is part of the journey. It's just, it is what it is, it's par for the course. and how do you navigate through that, through that low? And so once I realize like, no, I really believe that I'm, I'm meant to write. I'm meant to be in this industry. I'm meant to lend my talents and give my gifts.

[00:46:10] Like it's not about me. It's about touching these readers who are gonna read, whether it's a romance novel, a chapter book that I put out there that is for them, this is my gift to them. that also kept me going for it. But yeah,

definitely those kids, they, they want a lot of stuff Sarah they wanna do a lot of stuff.

[00:46:29] They want all the toys they see on Nick Jr, and you know who gonna buy it for them?.

[00:46:36] **Sarah:** Can you share with listeners one of the most important lessons that you learned on your journey to publication?

[00:46:41] **Tanisia:** I would say one of the most important lessons, first of all is Patience Publishing is a, um, hurry up and wait

[00:46:51] **Sarah:** Hmm.

[00:46:52] **Tanisia:** hands down when you get the agent. Celebrate that. But also when you go on submission, celebrate that part.

[00:47:00] **Sarah:** Mm-hmm.

[00:47:01] **Tanisia:** When you get a rejection from an editor on submission, celebrate that part. Um, so celebrating every step of the way and also getting an agent is really just half, it's not even half the battle.

[00:47:14] It's like maybe a third, like cuz once you get an agent, Then the agent now has to get out there and they're getting those projections on your behalf. and you might not sell a book.

[00:47:24] **Sarah:** Mm-hmm.

[00:47:25] **Tanisia:** It might be a year, and it might be a year and a half, two years before you sell your first book. and it doesn't mean your, your art is bad, doesn't mean any of that.

[00:47:33] It just means it's just not selling. It's just part of the part of it. And so, is there some comfort in having an agent? Yes, but it also depends on the agency that you're at. Like, if they're kind of corporate, like, or if they're more, you know, familial and relational, they can kind of work with you and stuff like that.

[00:47:50] But having patience is going to serve you well and realizing that don't nobody owe you a damn thing. You not owed an agent, you not owed a book deal, you not owed nothing. Don't care who you are, what you do, you,

you, you, you earn it, you work for it. Celebrate. Like, you don't have to. I think I, I get tired of seeing people, like, I don't wanna see the stories about people who you didn't, you didn't wear 2020. I'm that God bless you. What it, I personally don't. and you don't have to listen to everybody's negative story about publishing. Um, it's just kinda like when, when I was pregnant, I didn't wanna hear anybody's story about their horror stories, about their pregnancies. I didn't, and I don't share mine unless somebody ask me.

[00:48:38] because everyone's experience is different. I've had negative stuff happen to me in the industry. It hasn't been mind blown, like, oh my God. But it's been annoying. I've had a book that was passed on because they said, oh, we have too many books of hair in the industry. I'm sorry. You got too many black hair books.

[00:48:55] I, I can count how many you got. And they're on my bookshelf. I mean, black hair care books you got like, but I can tell you there are plethora books on trees and, and dogs. There's never enough of those. So, you know, so that was, that was annoying. That was, that was, yeah. Like, that was a slap in the face.

[00:49:15] but it's par for the course. And so having patience, remembering that to not be an entitled person, we're all professionals or we should be acting like we're professionals. it's a job like this is, if you wanted this to be your career, you, you need to come to the table like you want it to be. and work on your craft, forever

[00:49:33] be a student. Never, ever stop learning. Like continue to learn, continue to grow, and get better at your craft. And, and go from there.

[00:49:43] **Sarah:** All right, great. Tee before you go, can you, for listeners who may be interested in checking out your work, can you tell us about what is upcoming for you?

[00:49:52] **Tanisia:** Yes. So as I mentioned, um, this September, September 19th, I Am My Ancestors' Wildest Dreams is coming out. It is a book that pays tribute and memorializes, contemporary black men such as Nipsey Hussle, Chadwick Bozeman and Kobe Bryant, and even some oldies, but goodies like Thurgood Marshall, Ralph Ellison, and just it's my love letter, to young black boys everywhere.

[00:50:22] Letting them know that they stand on the shoulders of these giants that have gone before them and laid a path letting them know that they are

loved. That no matter what they put their mind to, they can accomplish any and everything and they are destined for greatness. And so that is coming out from Scholastic.

[00:50:42] so that is available for pre-order, wink, wink. Um, and also, um, the companion title to that book, follow up will be I Am Black Girl Magic coming out in the Fall of twenty-four so those are the books, but the My Drops this fall

[00:51:01] **Sarah:** cool. Right before my birthday.

[00:51:03] **Tanisia:** Yes. See, a nice birthday gift for you.

[00:51:07] **Sarah:** Thank you so much for coming on the show and sharing your story with everyone.

[00:51:11] **Tanisia:** Yes, absolutely. Thank you for having me. I appreciate it.

[00:51:14] **Sarah:** Of course.

[00:51:15] Thank you so much for listening to this episode of Queries Qualms and Quirks. You can find the text of Tee'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 appreciate a few to help me find new listeners by leaving a review telling your friends, or sharing this episode on social media.

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[00:51:49] Thank you so much for listening, and we'll see you next time.