

# Writer Unboxed

about the craft and business of genre fiction

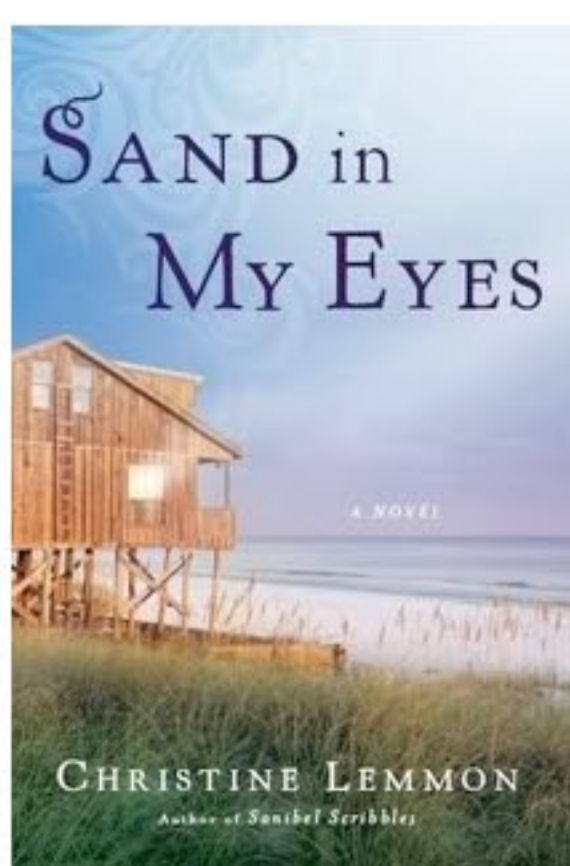


## My Husband as My Publisher

July 11th, 2010 by [Guest](#)

Please welcome novelist [Christine Lemmon](#) to Writer Unboxed.

Christine is the author of three novels -Sanibel Scribbles, Portion of the Sea, and Sand in My Eyes, and the gift book, Whisper from the Ocean. She has lived all over the country writing for radio, newspaper, television and magazine. She currently lives with her husband and three children on Sanibel Island, a subtropical island off Florida's Gulf Coast, which is the setting for her novels. She gets most of her inspiration while biking, kayaking or walking around the island, and watching sunsets with her family, but then she must hold her ideas until night, when her children are sleeping and she can write.



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Her latest novel, Sand in My Eyes, was a fiction finalist in the 2010 Indie Excellence Awards. Welcome, Christine.

### My Husband as My Publisher

By Christine Lemmon

I hurry in my pajamas down the steps of our house on stilts on Sanibel Island—a barrier island off Florida's Gulf Coast—and unlock the shed where we keep the inventory for the four books we have independently published—novels that have gone into multiple print-runs and have sold nearly 50,000 copies and as a result were picked up by a national distributor and are re-releasing nationally summer 2010. Every morning I sign my name in caseloads of these books and my husband, before work, drops them off at bookstores, gift shops, the airport and resorts.

"Don't forget the Indie Excellence stickers," John calls down. My children hear and come running to help put the stickers on the books. Being a 2010 National Finalist in the Fiction Category of the National Indie Excellence Award was our most recent achievement in this passionate and arduous journey of self-publishing and the stickers let readers know that my third book Sand in My Eyes meets the highest standard of independent publishing.

Expressing our creative freedom and producing books every bit the quality of major publishers has been our goal that began ten years ago when John read the manuscript to a novel I had been writing, and announced, "I'd like to publish this for you." I was as ecstatic that day as I would have been had I signed a six-figure advance with a major publisher like Bantam Double Day Dell! My husband worked in sales but had a desire to work on something in his free time, a moonlighting project he could carry out from start to finish and with pride. My writing and his ambition to create something of excellence out of nothing was the perfect equation for self-publishing.

Within days, the two of us, along with our crying baby, were spending hours in the self-publishing aisle of the bookstore reading, mastering everything there was to know about starting a publishing house from A to Z. Hey, if Virginia Woolf and her husband could found their own printing press to put forth her books, then so could we. Within weeks we had an artist creating a cover and a line editor catching typos and a printer giving us estimates. And months later—our trunk loaded with copies of my first novel, Sanibel Scribbles—my husband walked in and out of every gift shop on Sanibel, doing his sales thing. And each time he returned to the car, I'd let out a yelp of pure shock and joy that the stores were saying, "Yes, we'll carry them on consignment and if they sell, we'll take more."

As the novel sold, we put more money into making it better by having a new cover designed. Covers are often what set the national novels apart from the local. It is wise to research online, find a good designer. It can be frustrating. We paid an artist for his time in creating a cover for our gift book, Whisper from the Ocean. He gave us five choices but we didn't like any. We paid for more choices and still didn't like them. We made the difficult decision to start from scratch with a new artist. As a result, we missed getting our book out in time for Florida's busiest season, but in the end we have a cover we are proud of.

Two hundred and forty books signed this particular morning, and stickers on, I meet my husband with a cup of coffee on the front porch where we sit to discuss publishing. It's just me, him, the three kids parading past, the osprey screeching from its nest outside our door, and the pileated woodpecker drumming on our roof. I tell him of the ideas I am getting for my new book, but he reminds me my 30-blog tour is starting and I need to write my blogs and promote. In self-publishing, writing is only the beginning of the journey!

### Things to Take Away if Considering Self-publishing

- \* Do your research. Go to the bookstores and find out the basics and everything you can about self-publishing and the publishing industry – become a master researcher!
- \* Do get a fantastic book cover. You do need a good book cover and to be happy with it.
- \* Do find a very good editor.
- \* Do have a market in mind in which to start. (Do you have a local market? Do you have a niche you can sell in first?)
- \* Do line up proper distribution. If you're going to sell in a resort town or a local area, you can bypass distribution and be okay on your own. But if want to try to get out there and be widely available, you need proper distribution.
- \* Do create a good website and online presence.
- \* Do self-promotion and as much promotion as you can.
- \* Do start small on your print run and then increase when you see how you're selling.
- \* Do have the financial resources to back it all up – between the book cover design, a good editor, website, print run, self-promotion, outside publicity and more, it all adds up and you need to have the money to invest in these important steps.

You can learn more about Christine and Sand in My Eyes on [her website](#).

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**Word of the Day:**

**tarry**

from [Dictionary.com](#)

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