Lunch and Learn Series

Trelani Duncan
Informal Greeting

I am probably the most arrogant, humble, timid, courageous, fragile, thick-skinned, intelligent, yet ignorant black girl that you will ever meet.

I love life and I love learning. I learn from everything: internal and external, young and old, black and white, foolish and wise. Yet the more I learn, the more that I learn just how little I know.
I am Joan, Maya, Toni, Lynn, and even Monica. I am Carrie, Samantha, Charlotte, and Miranda. I am a wife, a mother, a daughter, a sister, a friend, and a student and God forbid, should any of these titles be terminated then I will write about it.

Therefore, I am a writer.

And I write to style the familiarities of black women in such a way that it is relatable to everyone and in doing so, I strive to gift my readers what I love to experience while reading which is feeling.
What made me Write...

- A horrible book
- Roughly 50 first-story drafts
- Big Circle: Writing, doubting, quitting, etc.
- Conference
  - Networking, advice, testimonies, new like-minded friends, etc.
- Critique group, mentor, classes, and publications
Black Writer’s Reunion & Conference 2012
Writer’s group
The KSA’s of Writing

Knowledge:
- Reading EVERYTHING (sci-fi, fiction, nonfiction, romance, thriller, etc.)
- Read as a writer
  - Why I did or did not like that book?
- Attending workshops, classes, and conferences
- Research
  - Write what you know
  - Even in fiction, true elements are necessary
Skills:

- Practice, practice, practice
  - It doesn’t make you perfect; it makes you better!
  - Regardless of your English grades, anyone can be a writer!
- Read how-to books, listen to the audio tapes
  - Stephen King “Memoir of the Craft” and Jewel Parker Rhodes “Free Within Ourselves”
- Keep a journal
  - Write about everything, everywhere
- Pay attention
  - The way people walk, talk, change of seasons, etc.
Abilities

- Battling writer’s block
- Battling doubt (myself and others)
- Excusing excuses
- Committing myself: I’m going to do this regardless!

Finding a balance

- I have a husband, two kids, school, and work; how am I going to do this?
- Found that nighttime worked best for me and setting realistic goals: 500 words per day
Completed Manuscript

- 500 words per day
  - Sometimes more, sometimes less, sometimes none at all
- I’m done!
- Now what?
- Converting 300+ page Word document into an actual book
Find a publisher?

- Submit query letters, manuscripts
- Wait for at least six months for a response
- Be rejected at a rate of 20:1 (at least)
- Reading contracts with a microscope to ensure that I’m not being cheated
- All costs (editing, conversions, printing, book cover, etc.) are covered
- Burden of marketing is shared
Or Self-Publish?

- No submissions
- No waiting for a response
- Less intimidating contracts
  - There will still be some
- Book is 100% mine, 100% of the time
- I pay for *everything*
- Marketing is my job alone
Decision: Self-Publishing

- KSA’s taught me everything I needed to know
- An editor: $700
  - Even though I made A’s in every single writing class
  - Met through a conference
  - Results were invaluable but hurt my feelings a little bit
- Good working relationship with editor
There was always a nine-to-five pushing me one way and a man pushing me the other, leaving me stagnated in a cage of dependence. I was sick of it and before I knew it, my thoughts had turned into grunts, which turned into mumbles, which turned into a cutting, cussing fit.

“Shantelle? Everything alright in there?” John knocked on the door in that hesitant “should I?” kind of way. “Or do you need big daddy to come in there and make everything alright?” He chuckled.

Why are words coming from his lips? Better yet, why is his ass still here? I jumped out of the shower like a crazy woman, swung the door open, and laid it down flatly just how low down, dirty, and cheap I thought his low down, dirty, and cheap ass was. He left so fast you would’ve thought that the finger that I had mashed in his forehead was a pistol.

Chapter 1

Had I known that I was going to lose my job nine hours later it’s a good chance that I would’ve played the John/prostitute role just a little while longer. The morning had started off as any other one. I waltzed in the office just a tad bit late, which in my opinion was not late.
Self-Publishing Cont...

- Book cover/typesetting: $675
- Compared prices, read reviews
- Selfpublishing.com as recommended by another author
- ISBN: $100 per
- Author photo
- Bio and blurb
Self-Publishing Cont...

- Registering company: So Fundamental Publications
  - Creating a name and logo
  - Printing: $721 for 100 books
    - Make sure it looks like a book that I would read
    - Make sure it looks like a book that was pulled from Barnes and Nobles’ bookshelf
- Finished product
Marketing

- Means everything!
- Started before book was even published
- Researched ways to market
  - FB, Twitter, Amazon, Smashwords, BN.com, my own website, festivals, conferences, etc.
- Book release party
  - Celebration not only for me, but my family and friends. I was back (temporarily)!
Release party: December 2012
Should’ve, Could’ve, Would’ve...

- Been more patient…
  - Editor time
  - Costly errors
  - Embarrassment!
- Avoided that vanity company…
  - Too good to be true
  - Prey on self-publishers
- Purchased 10 ISBN’s from the start
  - Purchased one only to have a “duh” moment
Success!

- Having a published book
- My own thing
  - Make my own schedule
  - Make all executive decisions
- Family and friends are proud
- It can never been taken away from me
- I have mentors and such, but I’m also my own motivation