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Sabrina: Hi, everyone! Welcome to episode two of LitTea. I'm your host, Sabrina Lotfi, and with us today is Lane Clarke, author of the YA novel *Love Times Infinity*, and an agent at ArtHouse Literary Agency. And, I'm super excited to get started, so let's do this thing!

[Upbeat music ends]

Sabrina: Yeah. You want to just jump in?

Lane: Yeah.

Sabrina: Okay. So, what book made you a reader?

Lane: I think it was probably, like, *Holes* in I guess we read it in fourth or fifth grade or maybe even third grade, honestly. It was just the first time, and I had read a book where I had realized that you could talk about serious issues, but also have a book that's kind of funny. Louis Sachar, I just loved everything that he wrote. With that book, I feel like he really had an impact.

Sabrina: I love *Holes*. I haven't read it in forever, but now I want to go do a reread.

Lane: I haven't read it in forever, but I watch the movie, I feel like every couple of weeks because I'm just like, I need to watch it again.

Sabrina: See, I haven't seen the movie in forever either, and now I want to do a movie rewatch.

Lane: It really does hold up well.

Sabrina: Yeah, that's a good one. Is that the same book that made you a writer?

Lane: No, I don't really know exactly when I became a writer, so to speak. I always kind of, like, dabbled a little. Like, I'd write a little scene here and there. I definitely didn't take it really seriously. It wasn't until I read *The Poet X* by Elizabeth Acevedo where I was kind of like, 'Oh, this character looks like me. Sounds like me. I could do this.' I mean, not the way she does it, because she's amazing, but I was like, 'I could do this, I think. Something similar, not quite meeting her standards, but I could write a book with someone who looks like me.'

Sabrina: And it's a lovely book. By the way, I have just started *Love Times Infinity*, and it's awesome.

Lane: Awww.

Sabrina: If you haven't gotten on it yet, get on it. Okay. And then again, same question, but what book made you want to become an agent?

Lane: I don't know if it was any book in particular. I just remember when I was maybe in high school, and I was a huge *Twilight* and *Vampire Academy* fan, and at that point, I wasn't even really so interested in writing those kinds of books as much as I was interested in finding them. For me, I was like, God, it must be so cool to be the person that kind of ushered this book into the world. Like, 'Found it!' when there's so many books out there being written, and so many great authors to find this diamond in the rough. And -- I had kind of always kept that hope, and so, by the time I got into publishing as a writer, I was still kind of really holding on to that. Like, yeah, 'I love writing books', but finding books that

nobody knows about yet, are still in their early stages, was still the most exciting part about publishing to me.

Sabrina: That's true. That was one of my favorite parts about doing Pitch Wars, was getting to read all the submissions and see what everybody's subbing and read everything first.

Lane: I was always so sad during Pitch Wars. I could only pick one person because I'm like, there are so many books here that I think are amazing, and I would love to work on them. And I'm only allowed to pick one.

Sabrina: Yes.

Lane: And so, I'd get really excited when someone else... Like, we had a little spreadsheet and I'd see someone else picked one that I really loved, and like, 'Oh, yay, thank you!'

Sabrina: Yeah, no that was the most heartbreaking part, is that we could only pick one. Every time, so sad.

Lane: Now I can pick all of them if I want to.

Sabrina: You can! You could do as many as you have time for. I love it. Okay. So, do you have any hobbies or interests outside of writing?

Lane: It sounds so cliché, but it really is reading, I think, because reading and writing is so much kind of like my job now, that people are kind of like, 'Oh, your reading can't be your hobby too'. but it really is. I still find that whenever I'm like, 'Oh, I want to relax, I want to take some time off,' I just pick a book up from my shelves you see back here, and I just read. And I'm like, that, to

me is like, relaxing. So even if it's like, oh, you know, I've been reading all day, work reading, I still get excited at the end of the day to read for fun. It's probably been my main hobby my whole life. And then just like, puzzles. I'm really big into puzzles. I'm like, oh, 1,000 pieces. Perfect.

Sabrina: Yes. I love puzzles. When we first went into lockdown for Covid, I swear I did like five-hundred 1,000 piece puzzles—just like one a day.

Lane: I wish there was kind of like a little free library, but for puzzles, because it's like, you do it and I'm like.

Sabrina: I don't want to do it again. I already did it.

Lane: I'd love to switch it out and like.

Sabrina: *We* could trade.

Lane: Oh, we could. I'm going to send you a big box of puzzles.

Sabrina: We could send each other a giant box of puzzles each. Oh, my gosh.

Lane: I would love something like that.

Sabrina: Yeah, no, I'm totally into this. Oh, and the worst part is when you get to it, the end, and then where's the last piece? Have you ever...

Lane: Oh, my gosh, yes.

Sabrina: It's so depressing.

Lane: If you have pets. I have a cat who, whenever you're doing a puzzle, he really wants to be involved. So, he'll lay on the pieces or swat the pieces around, and I'm like, 'Well, that's definitely going to be lost. Thank you.'

Sabrina: My dog over here, she puts everything in her mouth. So, whenever there's a puzzle piece missing, I'm like, 'are we gonna have to go to the vet for that?' [Both laugh.] What's your cat's name?

Lane: My cat's name is Pickles.

Sabrina: Cute.

Lane: And then I have a dog named Pax.

Sabrina: I have a Ginny and a Buddy.

Lane: Okay. Are they both dogs?

Sabrina: No, the cat is Buddy.

Lane: Okay. Do they get along? Because mine do not. [Lane laughs]

Sabrina: They do. So, he was an outdoor cat and he showed up as a stray. He would run away if you even blinked at him. He *loves* her. He won't ever say it. He'll bat at her face, but like claws in and stuff. But he comes on walks with us.

Lane: Aww. That's so cute. Mine are like, 'Don't look at me.'

Sabrina: Don't look at you at all. Okay. So, do you want to talk about your hashtags?

Lane: These are so exciting to me. So, the first is Black Voices Matter, #BVM. And then #PitBLK.

Sabrina: Yeah.

Lane: So #BVM. Well, it started on Twitter, really, where so many things start for the writing community now. It was in the summer of 2020, right before, I think maybe like a month before the fall of #PitMad. And it was just, I think, such a tumultuous time in the world, but also in publishing. I think a lot of black writers were just getting really frustrated because a lot of agents and people in publishing say, like, 'oh, you know, we want these stories,' but then they wouldn't sign them or wouldn't look for them. And it was just kind of like a lot of lip service.

Sabrina: They want them, but where are they on the shelves?

Lane: Right. Well, the stories are there, so there's clearly a disconnect between what you're saying and what you're actively doing. And so, I was kind of on Twitter, I was like, what if we had a hashtag that was Black Authors Matter or something like that for these Pitch events? And so, all these agents who are saying that they can't find these stories will have this very easy way to find them. And then Pitch Wars reached out and they were kind of like, hey, we saw your tweet. We're talking about it internally. We're trying to figure out the exact hashtag because you always want one that isn't kind of used by other people already. And so, we got to Black Voices Matter, and it's still alive and well, even though Pitch Wars is gone now. But it's been exciting to see other Pitch events kind of adopt it and it becomes something that people still use. It always makes me really excited when I see people using them and they

get all of their likes and they announced their agent representation later. I'm like, yes, it works. Like, that was the goal. That was exactly the goal. So, it was just really exciting. And I think it was just one of those moments where publishing just kind of rallied together. It's like, yes, we need this.

And then #PitBLK, Maya, who's like, I always call her like the founder founder was talking about, because I think over the past couple of years, there's been a lot of Pitch events that get started for different minority groups, marginalized Voices and she was on Twitter and she was like, what if we had one for black writers? And I messaged her and she was like, hey, I think that would be an awesome idea. I totally support it. This is exactly what I wanted from #BVM from the start, for it to kind of grow into something bigger. And then we just kind of paired up. And then we have two other founding members, Ashley and Faith. And honestly, I think they work way more than I do, but just like, getting together a bunch of industry support and how organized they all are, I'm always just like, floored. But it's really exciting and I think people are excited for the event, and just seeing kind of what this one little tweet grew into has been wild.

Sabrina: I love it. It's amazing. I love seeing the BVM hashtag out there when I'm looking at pitches and stuff.

Lane: Yeah, it's always the first hashtag that I pull up, like, whatever the pitch event is, and then #BVM.

Sabrina: It's your *baby*.

Lane: Yes. I prioritize it anyway. I mean, I take pitches from all authors, but black writers are really just my heart.

Sabrina: I mean, yeah, that makes sense.

Lane: Yeah, I'm here. I'm looking at all your pitches and I just get really excited. I end up almost liking all of them because they're all so talented and I'm like, no, I shouldn't request, like, forty books, but here I go.

Sabrina: Hey, you'll get to them if you're excited to read them, that's all that matters.

Lane: Yeah, if another agent offers before I do, then that's great, too. So that's fine.

Sabrina: Yes, exactly. I love those events. When is #PitBLK?

Lane: So, our first one is in September, I believe. Oh, it's September 21st. Because it's like, 'Do you remember the 21st night of September', and it's going to be over two days. Kind of how #DVPit does, or it's the KidLit day just because we know KidLit is kind of the bigger day. And then we'll have an adult and artist day as well.

Sabrina: Cool.

Lane: Yeah, it'll be really exciting. And it's obviously open to all black writers, wherever you're from. If you're mixed, or Afro-Latino, Afro-... anything, really. It's like very open. So don't self-reject at all. It's for all diaspora black writers.

Sabrina: Awesome. Okay, this is actually gonna air before then, so this is perfect. This is going to be awesome. I hope it blows up. I hope it's just as big as #DVPit.

Lane: Yeah, that would be awesome. We're kind of like if even 15 people participate, we feel like that's pretty good for

the first one, but more people then, it's like, amazing because we're like, 'It happened!'

Sabrina: Yes. Oh, I'm so excited to see how it goes. Okay, do you want to talk about your querying journey? Whatever you want to tell us about how long you've been querying, how it went getting your first agent? I don't know if you've had more than one or anything so yeah, whatever you feel like sharing.

Lane: Yeah, honestly, I feel like I never really shared my query stats and stuff because I honestly just don't think it's very helpful querying even when I did in 2019. In querying now are just totally different beasts. And I know that we always try to give advice, but I don't even know if any advice from 2019 is even still relevant because it is just so different. Timelines are totally different. I remember in 2018 waiting eight weeks was reasonable, and now it's like six months.

Sabrina: Yeah, it's reasonable.

Lane: It's just shocking. And I really feel awful that writers have to deal with it right now. I'm always like, I don't even know if mine is helpful. So, I started querying in September 2019. I actually didn't really know anything about writing Twitter or anything. I kind of just started peeking in after I wrote the first draft of my book, and I saw that there was like a #PitMad in September and I was like, okay, well, this is like a good goal for me to get through the revisions. I didn't really know anything about publishing at all, so I was thinking like, oh, first draft, and then I'll do a second draft and I'll just enter #PitMad.

Lane: Obviously, that did not go great. [Lane laughs.] I got, I think, maybe like one agent, which if you get one, I really want to iterate to people... like one! The pitch events, I think, is really focused more on building community, that's really where you'll find a lot of value in it. But also, don't be upset if you don't get 30 likes. If you get one like, out of it, two likes out of it, pat yourself on the back. Congratulations! That's amazing work. I don't even know how many tweets get tweeted during these events, but it's like so many.

Sabrina: So many.

Lane: I always tried so many to go through and look at as many of them as humanly possible. And I still only got through 2 pm.

Sabrina: Yes. Only a fraction.

Lane: Yeah, I was just like, oh my God, I literally can't see them all. So, you did great. If you get your one, that's still amazing. But I got one and I was like, okay, well, query this one and I'll add in a few others. And she ultimately rejected the full. Not surprising now because I'm like, yeah, I probably wasn't ready. And then that #PitMad was a little bit before like the full Pitch Wars deadline, I was like, okay, I'll submit it to Pitch Wars. And I'll just keep querying as normal. And I actually ended up signing with my agent the day before Pitch Wars people were announced.

Sabrina: Oh my gosh!

Lane: Granted, I wouldn't have been picked anyway. Like, nobody requested my materials at all. I actually ended up revising the whole book between when I submitted

for Pitch Wars and when... and the draft that my agent ultimately read. So technically I was like, I withdrew before I wasn't picked, but really, I was not going to be picked anyway.

Sabrina: Okay, well, hey, you know what? You didn't need Pitch Wars.

Lane: Basically, I think not getting any requests in Pitch Wars is what made me revise on my own, because I was like, okay, so clearly because I think it was only like, you submit the first ten pages or something?

Sabrina: It's not a lot.

Lane: Yeah, so it's like, clearly the first ten pages are not working. So that's another, like, even if you don't get into a mentorship program that you want, you still kind of get feedback and maybe not getting as far as you'd like. And so, that's how I took it, and I revised, and then I ended up with my agent, who I'm still with, and then we revised from November to June, so about seven months. I think we did maybe two or three drafts.

Sabrina: Oh, okay.

Lane: That was my first revising under someone else's notes. So, I was like, 'What is this?' He was like, 'Okay, this is great, but we need a plot.'

Sabrina: Love it. Those pesky plots.

Lane: Yeah. I'm like, 'Why, though? Why can't it just be vibes?'

Sabrina: Hey, I'm here for the vibes.

Lane: Yeah, we got it there. And then honestly, I think my agent is very editorial. So, for him, he's like, he wants things to be perfect when they go out on sub, which makes sense because I think when you do a lot of that work on the front end, when you go on submission, editors don't really have to feel like they have to do a lot of work. So, I appreciate it, in hindsight, but in the moment, I was like, 'I do not want to edit this again. I can't do it.'

Sabrina: It's a lot. We go through so many rounds on those things.

Lane: Exactly. I was like, I don't want... Which is so crazy because it had only been, I guess, like, a year from first inception to when I was like, 'I can't do it anymore.' And I hear you can end up working on a book for so much longer than that. So really, I was probably just being a brat.

Sabrina: No.

Lane: And I'm also pretty fast, so I think even in that year, that book had probably gone through, like, eight or nine drafts, and I was just like,

Sabrina: Yeah, that's a lot.

Lane: 'I don't want to read this anymore.' But for me, it was more I felt like there wasn't really anything else I could do. I was like, 'Okay, I've had your notes. I've had my notes. Between the two of us, I don't think we can take it further than this.' And I think that's kind of a good time. We were like, okay, we're probably ready for submission. So, we went on submission, and I was on sub for maybe, like, two weeks before we started. We

started doing editor calls, and then we went to auction, I think a week or a week and a half after that. So that's why I'm always saying I feel like people ask me a lot about the querying process, and I just don't feel like it's helpful because I'm like, honestly, it was very fast, and I cannot say enough about how much luck goes into this process. We like to think it's a meritocracy, and that if your books go get snatched up immediately, and it sadly just doesn't, and there is so much luck about finding the right reader at the right time, and your agent is in the right headspace to read your particular book, and I mean...it's a lot.

Sabrina: It's so many levels of the right reader at the right time.

Lane: And so, I definitely understand the frustration that things are taking a long, long time, but I also think that you don't want agents having to rush to read your stuff, because I know that even after I've read maybe, like, ten queries in a row, I tend to just be like, I'm too tired to really read it, and I don't give it, I feel, like, as much attention as I could, so it's taking longer. But I think one of the reasons it's taking longer is because agents want to help you, want to find those books, and they don't want to go into a book knowing, at least for me - I speak for myself - that I don't like going into a book knowing that I'm just not in the right headspace for it.

Sabrina: Yeah.

Lane: Because then you reject a book that, had you waited a couple of days, a week, you maybe would have loved it. I've had queries that I rejected, and then I'll be doing a pitch event, and I'll see it pop up, and we don't really

remember what we've already seen, and so, I'll like it, and then I'll be like, oh, you just rejected this, like, a month ago.

Sabrina: Oh, my gosh...

Lane: Okay, we'll resubmit it. And then they do, and I'm like, oh, I love this. It really is not like if you get rejected in a query, a lot of times it has nothing to do with your talent, your ability, your work. It is just a combination of a lot of factors. And I don't know if that's, like, freaking people out more, but just feel solid and that we don't like to do it either.

Sabrina: I mean, you have to, though. You have so many you couldn't possibly physically take on all the clients that query you.

Lane: Yeah, and there are so many times where I'm like, you have to be like, so nit-picky, because you're like, I would sign 90% of you, probably. I feel like I have a really high full request rate because... I don't know. I need to know more before I just say no to this person who literally is giving me sometimes their life's work. I don't want to just be like, 'Oh, I read ten pages. No, thank you.'

Sabrina: Dreams are in your hands. I do understand. Yeah.

Lane: I think it definitely takes me a long time to get the full because I have so many of them. But yeah. I don't know. But we don't like to do either.
I really like the way ArtHouse does it. ArtHouse is the agency I'm at.

Sabrina: Yes. Tell me about ArtHouse, and how they do queries, too.

Lane: Yeah. So, it was started by Felice and LaToya, who are our two founders. They've both been in publishing combined decades, and they're just amazing. I have learned so much from them, even in the past two months. But the way we do queries is we have, like a shared inbox a shared Query Manager. So, everyone sees every query that comes in to any agent at ArtHouse. And you can address your query to the agency generally, or you can address it to a particular agent. And then what happens is if you address a query to me, I kind of get, like, first dibs on it.

Sabrina: Okay.

Lane: But, if for some reason it's not for me, then I can just mark it that way. But, every other agent will look at it as well if I don't, like, snatch it up immediately. So, you really get like, there are five of us. Yeah, there are five of us. You really get like, five shots because every single person sees it. And then once we've all seen it, I think it's like if four of us pass, then the system will send out the decline. Which, one, I like because I don't have to do it because I really hate doing it. I have to do it specifically for our picture books in our middle grade because I'm the only one that represents them. And it is by far the worst part of the job. I just absolutely hate it. I have a rule where if you send it during a pitch event and the pitch event is still going, if I do ultimately end up passing on it, I wait until the next day because I'm like, I don't want to send it in the middle of while they're pitching. It would make me kind of sad, but I'm just like I don't like doing it.

Sabrina: I know...

Lane: Kudos to all the agents that have to just have their own box and reject all of them.

Sabrina: I do think a lot of people use Forbes, but you still have to push the button yourself, and you have to select which Forbe you want to use.

Lane: I just hate it so much, and it's really just part of the job, but it's like our least favorite. So, trust me, we are not, like, sitting there cackling like, oh, it's like, hard. But that is what I really love about ArtHouse is the way that we handle queries. Because then it's like "Okay, well maybe you just picked the wrong person to send your query to, but that's okay because there are other people.' And it happens a lot where one of the other agents will pick up something that was addressed to me but I passed on. Or I will pick up something that they passed on. So, it really has been a system that works really well.

Sabrina: That's cool. I like that. Yeah. A lot of times it's so hard to do the research and know, especially depending on how much people put up on their wish lists, about... some of them are vaguer than others. Some of them just do, like, a blanket: 'I take these genres', and it's like, but what is the genre, right? So, yeah, it can be hard to...

Lane: Right. And especially because I remember going through and they'd be like, okay, you can only submit to one person at a time, but that person could take months, and so, you really have to let you sit there, like, stressing over.

Sabrina: Okay, well, which is the right person? Who is the right one?

Lane: Yeah, definitely still do your research, because if you want someone specifically, they kind of get, like I said, first dibs. So, I think it's a great match for me, and it is a great match for me, and it's addressed to me. Then it's like, 'Yay, it's mine!'

Sabrina: No fighting on the back end?

Lane: Yeah, but if for some reason it's not, you're not penalized for it. It will make its way to the right person.

Sabrina: And that's easier on you, too, because you don't have to pause and go, 'Hey, do you want to look at this?' to every one of your colleagues?

Lane: Yeah, exactly. It's like, they will see it, and then if someone is interested in one, like, they read it before I do, but it's addressed to me. They'll just tag it, so I'll know, like, okay, yeah, you take it.

Sabrina: Nice. I like that. Are y'all a central office, or do you all work? I can't talk. Do you all work remotely?

Lane: Yeah, we're all remote. Our founders are bicoastal. So, Felice is in California, and LaToya is in New York, and then the rest of us are all just kind of spread out.

Sabrina: Love it! Yeah, that's got to be so much easier.

Lane: Yeah, it really is.

Sabrina: I mean, I'm a big fan of anything I can do working in my PJs.

Lane: Yeah, I'm like, on calls all the time, and I'm like, oh, this is so nice, and just sitting, pause Real Housewives, do my little call, un-pause Real Housewives. It's nice.

Sabrina: Love it. Okay, what to you makes an ideal client?

Lane: I don't know if there's, like, an ideal client, because they really are just all so different and have so many different needs. But for me, I think... '*Ouch!* What's that for?' Oh, my gosh. My cat is, like, 'Pet me right now.' [Laughing.] 'You made me lose my train of thought.'

Sabrina: Oh, that's okay. No, you were actually saying something so valid, and I love that, that there's no ideal client because everyone's so different, and that actually is, like, the perfect answer for this.

Lane: Yeah. But I do I look for clients who one are kind of... So, normally when I have a call with a potential client, I talk through my editorial vision for it, and I love when they kind of, while I'm talking, like, they're kind of brainstorming as we go, and it authentically becomes, like, a very collaborative conversation, and then it's like, okay, I love when that happens. Very organically. And I'm like, okay, I can already see that this writer would be really fun to work with. It would be, like, really a good team for both of us. So, just writers who are excited, I think, about the editorial process. I think, especially if you spent a lot of time with a book before you talk to an agent or you get an agent, and you can kind of be a little bit married to things. And I definitely like when people have things that they're like, 'I will not change this.', because I like to know, like, okay, where's the real heart of the book that you're kind of like, 'This has to stay the same.', and I think you should have that. You should not. Like, if someone is like, what are

you willing to change? You're like, 'I'm willing to change anything.' It kind of scares me a little bit. It sounds like there has to be something that you care about in this book enough where you would really push back on wanting to change it.

Sabrina: I mean, if you change everything, it's not the same book, right?

Lane: And I know that a lot of times there are those things that exist, and they're kind of scared to say it because they're like, 'Oh, I want them to think that I'm really easy to work with.' But just be honest, it's totally okay to have things that you will not change.

Sabrina: I think sometimes, too, especially if a project is fresher, is that you don't necessarily know what those things are until someone suggests a revision, and you're like, yeah, absolutely, there it is. That's my no.

Lane: Yeah, so definitely, I think just thinking through, like, I think if you start, like, okay, why did you write this book? That should always be, like, the thing that stays the same. But, yeah, the writers who are just excited about the editorial process, excited about at least hearing ideas, even if they might not be the exact right idea, but are still kind of open to that process. But, yeah, I think just writers who love writing and write the things that they want to write, I think there's a lot of pressure, especially now, to write kind of like, oh, you know 'What trope is popular on TikTok?' or something, and I really love it. Just, I can read the book, and I 100% like, yeah, this is you. This is you on a page. You just wrote what you love, and it feels really authentic, I think is, like, the ideal client.

Sabrina: I love that so much. What a perfect answer. So, what should authors expect from their agent? And, more specifically to you, what should authors expect from you as their agent? Kind of twofold.

Lane: So, from your agent, I definitely think you just want someone who is going to listen to you. I think that is one of the biggest things, someone that you just feel supported. The truth of the matter is there are going to be some clients that your agent has who are going to just require more of their time. That's just kind of how it shakes out. And it might be you, but that shouldn't mean that that agent is kind of, like, not there for you. You should still feel supported and like, you can go to your agent for anything that you need. Your agent is just really there to kind of be your voice. For me, I'm always like, my job is to kind of be like your guard dog a little bit. If there's an issue, my job is to raise it on your behalf. Because, and this is something that my agent does and I really love it, is that he is very focused on me having a very good relationship with my editor. So, if there's any tension or anything that's going on that might affect that, he kind of takes it on his own plate. So that at the end of the day, me and my editor still have that very good comradery relationship. And any of those things that have to be sorted out are sorted out. Honestly, I don't even know all the things that he has probably had to deal with because he just handles them.

So that me and my editor only really have that relationship.

And I think that that is exactly how I approach it as well - probably because of him - where I'm like, oh, I really appreciate that. There's never really any tension because it's handled by him. And so, that's kind of how I see it. As well as my job is to make sure that your working relationship with your team is always good and that if there is any tension, if there is any unhappiness, it's with me, and I can handle that with them on your behalf. And when they're talking to you, it's like all that stuff is not a focus of you guys' relationship. So, I think just finding an agent who will advocate for you, will listen to you, and no problem is too small. I mean, I know I ask the tiniest questions. Can I ask them to send me, I don't know, a graphic, just small things. And having someone who's responsive and you don't feel like you got ghosted by an agent, because I know that can happen sometimes and it's just really sad. But yeah. And I think that's what my clients can expect from me. I always tell them I am a very online person. Like, if you DM me, if you email me, I will probably answer and honestly in an amount of time that's probably uncomfortable because it's like, I open it, like, as soon and I'll answer it, and then I'll look and it's literally like they sent it, like the same minute.

Sabrina: I love it.

Lane: And I'm like, I'm so sorry. I know that that probably makes you think I was watching my inbox for you, and I really wasn't. I just happened to be in there.

Sabrina: That's so cute. I love that. How editorial are you with your clients?

Lane:

I'm pretty editorial. For me, kind of for two reasons. So, one, I think I'm also like my agent in which I want the strongest version possible to go out to editors because I think it gives your books a real fighting chance when they're going through acquisitions and they're thinking, okay, well, how much editorial work are we going to have to put in this? What are the chances that the edits are so big, it moves around seasons, those are all things that they think about. So, while obviously going in that they're going to probably want some changes, you want it to be kind of very manageable for them because editors right now are slammed. And so, if you can kind of give them every reason to say yes, it makes your job a lot easier. But two, this is hopefully, if we successfully sell this book, it will be the last time that you really have to just spend as much time as you want on your writing. You don't have deadlines where you don't have, like, 20 people in the distribution and production chain waiting for you to finish a copy of it. There's just so many more people that become involved. And I like to protect the time when you're not on someone else's schedule, as long as possible. So, you can take however long on these edits you need to take. I am not putting you on a deadline unless you want one that's just helpful to you, but otherwise I'm like, here it is. I'll check in on you in three weeks. If you need more time, great. If not, great. Okay. And so, I am pretty editorial because I want it to be in a good place, and I give you the time to do that, however long it takes. I'm not in a rush. So, if you're not in a rush, then it's fine. And I think that's just a lot of the fun. That's why I really love Pitch Wars, too. It's just really picking out those pieces of a story that are already really great and like, okay, well, let's apply that to the rest of the book. It's just such a fun process. So, I'm sure my clients are like, 'I don't want to'. I know I have one client who she's so lovely and she has a

picture book. And you think in your head you're like, okay, picture book. It'll be so fast. And I think we're on our second round of full edits because I'm like, okay, let's just change this little line, especially in picture books, because I'm really about kind of like the rhythm of how it reads. And so, I sent her notes at 4:30 this morning.

Sabrina: I love it.

Lane: I'm sorry. I can't sleep. I was like, I might as well work on this. But she's lovely and she just has a sweet picture book. But yeah, I'm a heavy with the red pen kinda person.

Sabrina: No, that's good. We need that sometimes.

Lane: Yeah. I feel like as long as I can take what I dish out, then I don't feel super guilty. And, I can handle a pretty strong editorial hand as well, so it works out. I'm like, trust me, I will pay for this in karma, I'm sure.

Sabrina: I mean, it sounds like you already went through a lot of rounds. You know what it's like? You've done this before.

Lane: Yeah, exactly. But then submission was pretty painless. I'm like, you see it's like you do it all on the back end and then hopefully I mean, granted, again, like 2020 and 2022 are just so different when it comes to publishing and timelines, but for me, I'm like, that's my goal. It's like, get it as perfect as possible so we can have a hopefully painless submission.

Sabrina: I mean, if you know there are reasons to say no, you've got to fix that. What are some common mistakes you see

in queries and sample pages to kind of help people do the edits before they get to you, so that you have no reason to say no?

Lane: Yeah. So, in the query, I think it's just, tell us what the book is about. I think some people get so worried that they're going to spoil it or tell you too much that they end up over correcting and they don't really tell you anything. And so, it's just like 'This book is about a 17-year-old who lives in Boston' and it's so vague after that that you're kind of like, what happened? I don't know what it's about. So, I see that a lot. I actually read the query last. I start with the sample pages.

Sabrina: Oh, I was going to ask about that. Cool. Okay, cool.

Lane: Because for me, even if I really love the concept, I very much really care about the writing. I just really want to find talented writers. So, I read the first few paragraphs and I'm like, okay, do I like this? And if I like it, then I'll go back to the query and I'll try and see what it's about. And sometimes I can't figure out what it's about from the query. And a lot of times, actually, a lot of Query Managers, at least for us, we have a section separate from your query. It's just like a pitch, which is like two or three sentences about what it's about. And a lot of times that is actually a lot more informative than the query is. So sometimes I don't even read the query, I just read their pitch and it gives you so much more information. So, I just take that pitch and expand it a little bit in your query letter and then it'll work. It will be great. I think sometimes people spend a lot of their query letter telling us about themselves, which is great. I love to read the bio section, but I think you want to balance that again against giving us what book your book is about. Sometimes it will be like one sentence

about the book and like three paragraphs about their bio. And I know it can be hard when you have, you've been writing for a long time and you have a lot of awards, a lot of accolades, and that's definitely something that we want to know. But just don't forget to tell us about the book itself because that's really what we're the most interested in. I know I'm never gonna sign someone just because they already have a bunch of awards. It's cool if I'm already into the writing, I'm already into the book. It's like a fun thing to know. And it's definitely something on our call that I'd like to chat about. But I would never sign just based off of that alone. So, never forget kind of like the work itself. And then for sample pages, I think just making sure you're starting in the right place is big. I've seen a lot of prologues lately. I know there's a lot of discourse around prologue, not prologue. I don't actually mind a prologue, but for query purposes, I will usually skip it and go to Chapter One first in an actual book. Or when I read the full manuscript, I will start at the Prologue. But I think a lot of times the Prologue is more detrimental to the overall work than Chapter One is. Because Chapter One is like, okay, we really start getting the main character's voice. A lot of times the Prologue is background on the story, or a dream.

Sabrina: It might not even be from the main character.

Lane: It's, I think, really hard for me, at least, to really get a sense of the book itself because they can be written almost in totally different styles. So, I usually skip it and go to Chapter One because I think that's like a better example of what the overall work is going to be like. So

just think about even if you have a prologue, I'm not saying you have to remove it because like I said, I like prologues in books that I read. But maybe decide if you want to use – like, remove it for your query purposes. Have your first chapter so that we get a good idea of your voice, your character's voice and the story. I think that's a big thing that happens a lot.

Sabrina: This just took me down a weird tangent. So, you don't have to answer this, but when you do enjoy prologues, what do you like to see in there?

Lane: Yeah! So, I will say dream prologues are not my favorite.

Sabrina: Okay.

Lane: Just starting with dreams in general is really tough for a book. I really like prologues that are related to the main character, but a little bit removed. So, say. Okay, your character is an elemental teenager, and the Prologue is when the gods of those elements, like fractured or something related where it's like a little bit of background to the world building, I think is really cool. I like if your book has an original text you created and you create, you put, like the excerpt, I guess, as the Prologue. I like those. I think a lot of times people think their prologue is a little too long. I think your prologue should be much shorter than your typical chapter link, because I'm like, 'Okay, I just want to get to the story. I just want to get to the book.' Yeah, I think when it's kind of related to the world building, I tend to really like it when it's a little shorter. Just like, just give me a little splash of what's to come. I really like those.

Sabrina: Okay, cool. Did you want to add anything else to mistakes you see in sample pages? Or you don't have to.

Lane: Yeah, I think that's it. Oh! Also, one thing: I think a lot of people try to do the omniscient narrator a little bit where they're like 'In this story', like that kind of narration. That personally doesn't work for me.

Sabrina: Okay.

Lane: I'm sure there are agents that might work for. I feel like it really just takes me out of the book. And it's not that I don't like broken fourth walls. I like broken fourth walls. I just think I don't want to be reminded that I'm reading a book, I guess, if that makes sense.

Sabrina: No, that makes sense.

Lane: So, if it's like this story follows, and I will say I think in middle grade there's a little bit more leeway there because the voice can work a little bit better, like a Lemony Snicket or something like that. But I think it's really hard to pull off in YA and Adult. I think that's a common thing.

Sabrina: No, that all makes sense. When you do request more materials, do you read through the entire manuscript or do you ever stop early? And what are some things that make you stop sometimes?

Lane: Yeah. If I'm requesting pages, I will always request a full. For me, it's just a lot easier to be able to read all the way through. Then I read 100 pages, and then I have to wait to get the rest of it, and I'm kind of, like, in the zone reading it. So, I would just request the full. And I know, I think when you request the full, writers kind of get more hopeful. And I definitely think that makes sense. And I do hope that I can't always give notes on it just because I did request the full. But, the trade off in that is

that it also makes it easier to stop whenever I want. So, my rule - I have a couple of ways I approach it. One is if I put it down and I'm not necessarily, like, dying to read it within two days, usually I'm like, okay, that's probably a pass because the ones that I have finished all the way through are typically because I've been really excited to get back to them. There's something I'm really interested in seeing or really like there's a character that I'm like, I need to know what happens to this person. If I don't feel that, then usually it's not that the book is not well written, it's just I am not personally super excited to go back to it. A lot of times I will stop reading if the pacing really slows down. I think especially in books where there's kind of like a journey or some type of movement from point A to point B, that journey can sometimes be so protracted, I start to kind of, like, forget why they're even on the journey.

Sabrina: Oh, okay.

Lane: And I love those slice of life moments, but I think after a while I'm kind of like, 'Okay, I just want to get where we're going.' I think I call it *The Lord of the Rings* effects for so much of it.

Sabrina: I was just thinking about *Lord of the Rings*, and I was like, dude, you got to get the ring to the fire. You got to do it.

Lane: So much of the movie, they're just climbing the mountain. And I'll be really honest, I fast forward through all of that. I only watched Legolas' scenes because he's always, like, fighting and stuff. So, I'm like, I can deal with that. I can't deal with, like, Frodo climbing up the mountain. So that is where I start to just really veer off. And I'm like, okay, not that I don't care,

but it's not totally holding my attention. So, I will usually stop reading around then if it's kind of like it's been three or four chapters and we're still kind of just walking. I'm like, okay, and so, those are some of the things if I'm not excited after two days to read it or pick it up again or it's just kind of lagged for a while, are usually my biggest two reasons to stop reading. I will also stop reading if I get to content that is concerning to me.

Sabrina: That's fair.

Lane: Yeah. So, if it's like a character that is a different ethnicity than the author and the depiction is a little bit ignorant, it's like not the nicest word, but the feeling I get where I think it just probably could be handled better. Usually if it's a small thing, then I'll just kind of make a note of it and then it's something that I would bring up on a call or something like, hey, this is just something I noticed, and get their understanding of it. But if it's like a big thing and it's kind of like throughout, then I'm kind of like, okay, well, I personally don't want to represent those types of stories.

Sabrina: No, that makes sense.

Lane: I will say that's not a common reason. I think I actually so far have had really thoughtful writers, I think in my query box. I haven't really had that issue very often. If it is an issue, it's usually caught at the query stage. I don't usually get, like, through a full and I'm like, 'Whoa, what is going on?'

Sabrina: Yeah, no, I do. There's not a lot of them, but I do remember some questionable subs that we would get in Pitch Wars, too, that I would just be like...

Lane: And I just sometimes kind of like, 'You thought I was the right person for this? That's interesting.' And then sometimes I think the writing just kind of falls apart, especially, you know, I think...

Sabrina: After the samples.

Lane: Yeah. We're so used to those sample pages being perfect because you just work over them to death. And then we get to the pages that are typically not the ones submitted for sample pages. And then you could definitely see the drop off. And that could be tough because it's like. I love this. And I want to work on it. But the writing is not quite where I need it to be. And a lot of times I will just do a Revise and Resubmit on those and just like, give it. Send it back to me when you've kind of gone through them. And I'll usually send them whatever notes I've written, and 'Hey, send it back, maybe after one more revision because I know you've got it. I've seen the sample pages. I just need you to show me you can finish carry it through.'

Sabrina: I think part of that stems from, like, I think it's a lot easier to get readers to read your first little chunk in exchange on that, just because time wise, we can't. Yes. I think it's so important to get at least one person you really trust to do line edits on your entire book with you and go through and just get in there and be like, yo, you got to fix some of this stuff.

Lane: It can be kind of steep sometimes, the drop off. And I'm like, no, it makes me so sad because I'm like, oh, man. But, that's why I do a Revise and Resubmit, because I'm like 'I know you've got it.'

Sabrina: I love it. Okay, are there any other reasons you would do a Revise and Resubmit? Like if plot falls apart or anything?

Lane: Yeah, a lot of times, so, I make notes as I go in, like, in red pen on my little iPad, and if I start to get more questions than I have answers for, then I get a little wary. So sometimes it will be -- my rule is always if it needs edits. That doesn't really scare me away from a manuscript if I know how to fix them. But, if we get to a point where I see a lot of issues and I don't necessarily know how to fix them. I can flag them. And I kind of just have to give it to you to see if you can fix it. Then I will do a Revise and Resubmit for those because I want to make sure that I am able to give the best editorial advice that I can for the projects that I sign and the authors that I sign. And there are times, sometimes it's just like a lack of knowledge on my part. So, if the characters, say, has, like, a chronic illness or something, and it's not one that I'm very familiar with, but I can tell that there's something missing from the text to just really boost the representation or the storyline that you're building. I'll just flag it, and I'll put that in my notes when I send back to you, like, 'Hey, I'd really love to see more in this area,' or something.

Sabrina: Got you.

Lane: But I don't want to tell them. I don't want to prescribe what it is, because I really, honestly don't know. And so, I just want, I guess, to brainstorm a little bit. But - usually - it's just that I'm reading and I'm seeing I have a question, or I'll think, like, well, would they really react that way based, like, the characterization and then maybe lining up all the way through? That'll be a lot of times when I'll be like, okay, maybe let's up the stakes

here so that we care about this thing that you want to care about later on. Yeah, it depends how big the edit is and if I currently have the tools to address it.

Sabrina: Got you. That all makes sense. That all makes perfect sense. Okay, I want to go back to author questions. Actually, this goes with both. What is the hardest revision you've undertaken as an author, and what's the hardest revision you've made a client do?

Lane: The hardest revision I've done, I think, was my first revision with my editor. I had, kind of, when I first wrote *Love Times Infinity*, it's a moment that happens, it always happened in a particular spot. That's how it had happened when I first imagined it. *Hello*. (My dog just got home.) And so, my editor, when we had our call, she was the only one that had a big change to when that moment happens. And I knew that it was coming because we had talked about it already. But, I think by the time it came, I was so resistant because I was like, 'No, I think it's in the right spot.' It's kind of like the impetus for a lot of why the rest of the book happens. So, trying to kind of give the book a whole new engine leading up to when that now happened, it was tough, and I was very resistant because I was like, that is, like, the one thing that I was so certain of when I first wrote it, and I thought it was one of those things that I was married to. I was like, no, it has to be where it is. But I think that's the joy of at least being open to edits and thinking through them, because then after I took, like, a week where I was like, 'No, you're wrong,' I was able to kind of think, like, okay, well, maybe if I moved it here, I could have this here instead.

Sabrina: I love the grudging, Well, maybe....

Lane: Yeah, 'Maybe you know how to do your job.' And my editor is brilliant, and I do think it was a good idea.

Sabrina: And you're happy? You're glad you did it, I'm sure. You seem really happy.

Lane: Yeah. I'm glad I did it. I think that was probably the hardest one because it was just so different from what I had initially imagined. The hardest one that I've ever.... So, she's not actually a client. She's my Pitch Wars - my first Pitch Wars mentee.

Sabrina: Oh, sweet.

Lane: I had her rewrite her entire book in...

Sabrina: Like, two months, right?

Lane: Yeah, it's like two months - you know Pitch Wars - and it's really even less than that because than that, it's like, well, now I need time to read it again, and do the line edits and, you do know, like, the pitch, and get the query ready. Yeah. So, she really had a month to rewrite 80,000 words, and she probably did actually have to rewrite, like, 60,000 of those words.

Sabrina: Oh, wow.

Lane: It was honestly, looking back, and that was so sadistic. I don't know why. I mean, I know why I did it, because I had faith that she could, and it made the book so much stronger. Kind of how I said the agent thing where I'm like, I read the sample pages first because I'm really most interested in the talent. Like, she was so talented, and you can tell, and it was like, this is not exactly the right story yet, but I have no doubts that you can get it

there because that's how talented, like, that's how good your writing is. And so, when I emailed her before we picked anyone, I was kind of like, I want to be really frank with you right now. If I pick you, you will have to rewrite this book because I feel you should be kind of open, especially for Pitch Wars, where it's like, you have a very short amount of time to do it. If you would do that with your agent, they'd probably give you a year, and you're gonna do it in a month. And it's the holidays and we're in the middle of a pandemic, so have fun. It was just a lot. And so, I emailed her and I was like, what I'm gonna ask you to do is gonna be kind of crazy, and I just need to know how open you are to that process, because it's gonna demand a lot. And it's easy to be the one to ask someone to do that. It's much different to be the one who has to do it. And she rose to the occasion. Her book was spectacular. We now have the same agent, but definitely the wildest edit I've ever done, ever asked someone to do. The amount of work she did in literally a month was honestly, I think, as inhuman. She's superhuman. I don't know how she did it. The amount of times I read that book in like, a two month span of time was a lot. We just went totally nuts. It was so worth it because that book is just amazing and I'm so excited for it to be out there one day. I think every other round of her edits now with our agent, she's kind of like, this is not bad. I have done the worst I could possibly ever. Yeah, it's all downhill from here. You can do anything at that point. And so, yeah, that's definitely the wildest. I have one now that I think is going to be a pretty big rewrite. But again, she does not have to do it in a month. If you take a good two years, that is totally fine. So, in a sense, I don't think it's possible to get a bigger edit than the one I did. Because I look back now like, I'm so sorry. I cannot even believe you agreed to do that.

Sabrina: And then pull it off, too. It's all amazing.

Lane: And it's funny because now she's one of my closest friends and I'm like, I'm shocked you don't hate me.

Sabrina: Y'all went through it together, though.

Lane: We went through it together. And I'm just, like, very happy that she trusted me with that process.

Sabrina: Well, and you were there with her for it, too. I mean, it sounds like you were there for her, too. You said you did multiple reads. I mean, you didn't just like, 'Here's your edits and then I'll see you in two months.'

Lane: No, I think we did one full round and then we did a smaller round and then we did a line edit round. So, we did like, three rounds in two months. And – luckily - she's like me and neither of us sleep, so we would just be sending emails back and forth at 03:00 in the morning. But it was a fun experience, but I could not ask someone to do that again.

Sabrina: Yeah, it is a lot. Pitch Wars. We do, we ask for the impossible. And they deliver. It's incredible!

Lane: They do. They deliver. That program is just amazing because looking back, I'm like, I couldn't have done what she did. Like, I would have been...

Sabrina: I couldn't do that.

Lane: I would have been sobbing every day. I'm sure I owe her, like, therapy bill. A few of them.

Sabrina: Oh, my gosh. Okay, let's get into your writing process a little bit. Are you a pantser or a plotter?

Lane: I am a pantser, to my own detriment.

Sabrina: So, do you do a lot in revisions later? I guess.

Lane: Yeah, revisions are a lot. I think that's kind of like the tradeoff that you do for being a pantser. But I will say I pants a lot of times in *Loves Times Infinity*, and all the words that were in that original draft, almost all of them are still in existence. So, it's not so much like pantsing requires a lot of edits because you have to change a lot. It's more my process of pantsing is really, like, getting the main emotional arc down and then having to build in, as my agent calls it, a plot or something. [Laughing.] And, that is a process that takes me a little longer because you kind of have to, like, smush your emotional journey into an engine that makes sense. But, yeah, I pants, I can't plot. I've tried. It just kills a book in my brain. It's like, once I know exactly everything that happens, it's almost like watching a movie for the first time. And it's like, I can still watch that movie again, but it's never going to have the same umph as it did the first time, because especially if it's like a horror movie. I think for rom-coms, it's like, I can watch it 100 times or more, and not be sick of it. But horror is special because it's like the first time you legit don't know what's going to happen, and you never really have that same feeling again. And that's how outlines kill my brain. I can't tell myself exactly what happens, or I will be so bored that I will not finish writing this.

Sabrina: That's cool, though. I'm a total plotter. I can't handle all the decisioning involved with not knowing anything. I'm just looking at I don't know what to do with too many options.

Lane: Yeah, that's fair. Definitely being a more sane approach.

Sabrina: I don't know. There's some really nice freedom and, like, you really can do whatever you want when you're pantsing. You can just go for - whatever.

Lane: Yes. And then it's like your editor is like, 'So what's your book about?' And you're like, 'I don't really know yet.'

Sabrina: It's a book.

Lane: It's coming together. We'll see.

Sabrina: There are people in it. There's words on a page.

Lane: Yeah, exactly.

Sabrina: Okay, so how quickly do you pants?

Lane: It really depends. It honestly just depends how much stuff is going on in my life. A lot of times the first draft, took a few weeks.

Sabrina: Oh, wow.

Lane: My second book that I wrote, I think it took about a month and a half, and then the current book, I'm thinking, has taken months. So, I think it just depends really, on how quickly the story kind of forms itself in my head. And sometimes that process is really fast, and

sometimes, like, now it's really slow, so there's no set time, really.

Sabrina: Okay, that makes sense. How do you stay organized with everything both in your books and with agency stuff?

Lane: Excel is like, technically like, Google Sheets is like, my baby. Google Sheets, a Google Calendar are like, I can't start my day without them. I can't end my day without them. They are what keeps me together for drafting? That's, honestly, one of the reasons why I do draft so quickly is because in order to stay organized, to remember what I've written, I have to write it really quickly because it's kind of like, oh, I have to remember all these people's names. I need to write it all down as fast as possible. Even when I take a couple of weeks off, I have to go back and read it all again because I'm like, I don't even know what this character's name is, and it's the main character.

Sabrina: That's funny.

Lane: So, that is one of the reasons why I draft quickly because I'm like, I need to write all this information. I need to get it out before I forget all of it.

Sabrina: That makes sense. Do you ever work on more than one project at a time when you're writing?

Lane: I do, but I try not to. So, I usually try to make sure that nothing is in the same stage. So, if I'm drafting something, then if I'm working on something else, I need to be like, revising it instead of drafting it is usually how I try to balance multiple projects.

Sabrina: Do you have any tips for battling writer's block?

Lane: I think read more, watch TV. I think a lot of times it's just that your well is dry. Like, you can't produce creative work if you're kind of like empty creatively. And so, sometimes you just need to take a step back. And if you're like the type of person who can't read while you're writing, watch a movie, watch TV. I get, I think, most of my writing style from television. So, whatever it takes. I think writer's block is a lot of just being stuck because you're tired. Yeah, you're tired. Your creative well is empty, especially once you've kind of passed, when you're actually in publishing and there's a lot more input to your work than you're used to. I think it's very easy to get bogged down in what other people expect from you, what's trending... Write what you want. And a lot of times that's revisit your favorite shows, watch new shows. I think especially for writer's block, television, movies. Change the medium, like still consume, but don't necessarily feel like you need to read the newest release or something. Just watch a movie.

Sabrina: I love watching movies and TV too. I love getting the dialogue and how the different characters talk. It's such a great dialogue tool, as well.

Lane: I think you can just learn so much as a writer from film and TV. I think we kind of get bogged down and like, oh, I need to. And you should definitely read if you're a writer, whether that's audiobooks, whatever medium you need. But a lot of times you can get a lot of that through television.

Sabrina: Yeah, I love that. Okay. Let's talk about *Love Times Infinity*.

Lane: Oh, my gosh. Yes!

Sabrina: Okay, so what inspired you to write it? Well, actually, first, do you want to tell us about it? From you.

Lane: Yes! *Love Times Infinity* is about 16-year-old Michie Cooper, who is worried about getting into her dream college, Brown University, and struggling with the idea if she even deserves to get into her dream college or really be able to accept love from anyone, really. She has an estranged relationship with her mother due to the fact that she is a product of her mother's sexual assault. And so, a lot of that bleeds into her own self-worth, her own confidence, and whether or not she would have been better off not being born is her struggle.

Sabrina: I think this book is so important, and I've been enjoying it so much.

Lane: Thank you.

Sabrina: And I'm really enjoying the chemistry between these two characters in there. Yes. Okay, so what inspired you?

Lane: Yes, *Love Times Infinity*, when I started writing it, I didn't even really intend to publish it. It was really kind of a personal writing exercise, just sorting through a lot of the feelings that I had about my upbringing. I had a very similar upbringing to Michie, the main character. And when I was 25 and writing this, or 26, I was just like, you should be over these things by now. Why do they still have so much power over you? And just writing out that process - kind of like self-therapy or journaling. And then, like I said, so much of it, the

process is luck that I feel like it all just kind of happened at the exact right time, and it's releasing at the exact right time that I feel like a lot of these conversations are being had. And yeah, it's been a journey.

Sabrina: I'm actually really glad to see your book come out when it did.

Lane: Thank you. It was funny because when you're first in that process, everyone's kind of like, are you going to be comfortable talking about these things? And I thought I had a healthy amount of distance because, oh, you know, it's fiction. I've kind of put in a lot of padding where I don't really have to talk about it that much. And then all of this blew up, and I felt like I had to talk about it because I was like, I don't ever want anyone to go into this book thinking that I'm talking out of the side of my neck, kind of just taking anyone's voice or not telling a story that I'm certainly not an authority on. But for me, it's at least an authentic representation of my own experience.

Sabrina: I haven't finished yet, but I am just – It's so beautifully done.

Lane: Thank you.

Sabrina: How does it feel having your book out in the world?

Lane: It feels... I still don't even think I fully have processed it. I thought I would be super emotional, but I really wasn't. I was kind of, like, excited for it to just be out. There's, like, a very common thing right after your book comes out. It's called like, debut depression or something, and you just kind of get that because you put all of your energy into this one thing, and then it

happens, and it's like, okay, well, that's done, but that hasn't happened yet. I'm very excited. It's out. I can't control any of it anymore. People are going to read it, and they're going to have their own opinions about it, and I've done what I could do.

Sabrina: You did great. You did great. I love it. Did you want to share anything else about I don't want to give away anything that's too spoilery, obviously, and I don't want to ask anything too pointed because I want people to be able to go read it.

Lane: I don't think so. I just hope everyone goes into it with an open mind. And I think the most rewarding thing about writing is when you have a goal for your work and people who read it immediately kind of pick up on it. So, my goal wasn't to lecture anyone or to come down on anything. Michie, she's a teenager, and she's still sorting a lot out, just like I was, just like I still am, and that people pick that up and they're like, it really is just to provide a perspective. I love that because I'm like, you got exactly what I wanted to do. So, I hope people learn something and maybe open their hearts a little bit and just receive the chief experience and how they can be supports to people who are - especially children - who are in similar situations.

Sabrina: Can you give us a hint at what you're working on now or anything coming up? It's okay if you can't, too. I guess sometimes you have to keep your lips closed, but...

Lane: It's still going to be the emotional punch that I think people got from *Love Times Infinity*, or will get if they read it. But it's focusing a little bit. I really wanted to explore grief in my second book and how especially grief for the loss of a father. And so, that will be a big

theme in this next book and kind of exploring. Michie has an estranged mother who she really doesn't have access to, and I wanted to explore kind of a parent who is estranged, but you do have access to, and that impact on a teenager.

Sabrina: I love that. And can you share with us is it YA as well?

Lane: Yes, it's YA, and I think it's slated right now for probably 2024. I have to finish writing it.

Sabrina: Hey, you got this. You've got some time.

Lane: It's super late, but now that *Love Times Infinity* is out, I feel like I have a lot more time to focus on book two. And my editor, and my publisher, were just really supportive of me being kind of like, I can't promote this and write this at the same time. Like, I want to write something to me that was either as good or better than *Love Times Infinity*. I was like, I don't want to rush it. And they were super supportive in that process, which is definitely a privilege.

Sabrina: Well, and it's also gotta - there's got to be so much going through your head as the book release leads up, and I'm in the nerves and in the feels and everything. There's gotta be just so much happening.

Lane: Yes, exactly. And I was like, I can't even think about this book. I have this whole other book that has to be launched, and I think we just really underestimate how much work it takes to launch a book. And I'm grateful that I had a pretty good support from my publisher, but some people have no support.

Sabrina: It's amazing, the different levels. Yeah. Are there any recently released or upcoming books you'd like to recommend?

Lane: Oh, my gosh, okay. I have so many. I just finished reading *Jackal* by Erin Adams. It's a thriller that takes place in a small town in Pennsylvania, where they have these woods where several Black girls have been killed, and the main character returns home for a wedding. And her goddaughter, I call her, so to speak, that's kind of their relationship, goes missing. And it will make you angry, it will make you seethe. It is just so searing and amazing. And everyone should read it. I think it comes out in October.

Sabrina: Okay, that sounds really good.

Lane: And that's an adult thriller. And then in YA, there's *We Deserve Monuments* by Jas Hammonds. It's a graphic, queer contemporary that is just so beautifully written. It has a very spunky grandmother character, and it takes place in a small town in North Carolina, and it has a bit of a mystery in it. And it's just so well written, so beautiful. Jas is amazing. Definitely pick that up. And that's in November. And then *The Two Lives of Sara*. It's an adult literary fiction. It's the prequel to *Saving Ruby King*, by Catherine Adel West.

It follows Sarah King, who is Lebanon King's mother. Lebanon King was Ruby's father in *Saving Ruby King*. And it just takes you back to Memphis in the mid-1900s and it's just so good. So, yeah, those three I highly recommend.

Sabrina: Oh, my gosh, these sound amazing. And then, do you want to tell everyone where we can find you, both as an agent and an author?

Lane: Yeah. So I'm very online. I'm on Twitter, Instagram and TikTok under @lanewritewords. I am always on Twitter, literally always. So, you'll probably catch me on there any time of day. And then, yeah, that's probably the best way to catch me.

Sabrina: And then what about your website?

Lane: So my website is laneclarkewrites.com. You can send me a message on my contact form, which is currently down for reasons, but it will be back up eventually. And then you can send me nice messages.

Sabrina: You can also go there and click that "Buy" link.

Lane: Yeah, the book is on there with a link to pretty much everywhere. And then you can sign up for my newsletter, which I don't send often, but when I do, it's very exciting. And then ArtHouse, I'm on there, but I'm not like, on there super often. But you can read my manuscript wishlist and the other agents' manuscript wishlists, and submit your queries to us. We have a pretty diverse reading taste, so there's probably an agent there who will be very excited to see your queries.

Sabrina: Oh, my gosh. Okay. No. This was so good. Did you have anything else you wanted to add to anybody?

Lane: I don't think so. This was fun.

Sabrina: I know. I loved it. I had such a great time chatting with you.

Lane: Thank you for having me.

Sabrina: This was so awesome. Thank you so much for sharing your time with me and all of your knowledge.

[Upbeat music starts, and fades]
Sabrina: Okay, everyone, that's it for episode two of LitTea. A media list from this episode and all the Lane links can be found in the show notes on my website. Thanks so much for joining us.

Sabrina: Okay Ginny, say goodbye.

Ginny: Barks.

[Upbeat music ends.]

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Lane's book: Love Times Infinity

In this episode:

Holes - Louis Sachar

The Poet X - Elizabeth Acevedo

The Twilight Saga - Stephenie Meyer

Vampire Academy series - Richelle Mead

#BVM - Black Voices Matter

#PitBLK - Twitter pitch event for Black authors - starts
September 21, 2022

Real Housewives

Lord of the Rings

Jackal - Erin E. Adams

We Deserve Monuments - Jas Hammonds

The Two Lives of Sara - Catherine Adel West