

## 5-MINUTE MEMOIR

## I Met My Publisher on Twitter

BY REBECCA STRONG

The number 119 stared at me. I'd just finished transferring my poorly organized record of novel submissions into an Excel spreadsheet when I saw it. In the nine months since I'd begun this process I'd queried 119 agents. I'd written several different query letters, enclosed between five and 50 pages of my manuscript in accordance with each agency's guidelines, and sought representation on both sides of the Atlantic. My partials and fulls were sitting in the digital drawers of people in London, New York, Los Angeles and Toronto. Yet I wasn't any closer to the dream of holding my own traditionally published book in my hands.

As part of a writing club in Madrid, Spain, I knew other people going through the same process. We got together in a small neighborhood cafe and exchanged stories of rejections or, worse, silence. We shared agent information and joked that we hadn't properly lived until we'd sent out at least 100 queries.

Turned out I was well beyond that number. I needed a new strategy.

I've always been persistent. The giving-up gene had long ago mutated into the try-again-and-again gene. Since putting that novel in a drawer wasn't an option, and approaching the same agents repeatedly was bad form, I decided to try some small presses—the ones that took unagented submissions.

Several queries later, I was browsing a Facebook Group for writers when I saw a mention of #AdPit, a Twitter-specific pitching frenzy. At 2 a.m. in Madrid, composing an 140-character rendition of my entire manuscript was the last thing I wanted to do. Especially since my novel neither fit the genres that usually populated these pitching wars, nor matched the interests of the agents and publishers who followed the hashtag. But I had nothing to lose. So I keyed in the 140-character synopsis and turned off the lights.

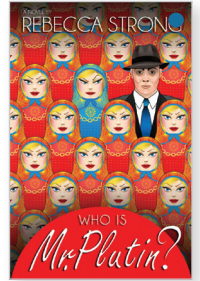
The next morning I woke up to a "favorite." In the world of #AdPit that meant someone—a gatekeeper—wanted to see my work. It was a small press I'd never heard of, but I sent five pages (as specified in the guidelines) and promptly forgot about it. Too many disappointments had taught me not to get my hopes up.

A few hours later—the same day!—I had a request for the full.



My heart began to beat faster. I made a cup of tea, crafted a reply that sounded neither too desperate nor too blase, attached the manuscript and clicked *send*.

In two days, I woke up to another email.



"Thanks so much for sending it over," the message read. "Your novel sounds like it may be a good fit for a new imprint we are putting together. I am passing your manuscript over to our acquisition editor and she'll be in touch if she decides that it fits the bill."

During the next six days, falling asleep proved a challenge. Every night I checked my email, first at midnight, then at 2 a.m., 4 a.m. and 8 a.m. Finally, on day seven, my eyes groggy, I saw it: a congratulatory email from the acquisition editor and a contract.

Nine months later, the first copies of *Who Is Mr. Putin?* arrived at my house. I took a photo of them—still in the box—and immediately tweeted it. Then I put the picture on Facebook, Instagram and Pinterest.

You can never have enough social media—especially if that's how you found your publisher.

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