

# My Heavenly Agent

Susan Peabody

I have always wanted to be a writer, so in my thirty seventh year I started writing a book. It took nine years to complete and it was about my painful struggle with codependency and a violent marriage. The book actually started out as journal entries. Then I used the notes from my journal in a class I was teaching about codependency at my local adult school. One day, just for the fun of it, I added an introduction and table of contents. Then, for years after that, I re-wrote sections and added new material—sharing my evolving manuscript with my students and anyone who might be interested.

I never really thought my book would be published, but my friends encouraged me to try and so off it went to various publishers who I thought might give a newcomer a chance. Of course I received a lot of rejection letters, but most of them had a sentence or two which encouraged me to keep on trying—so I did.

Eventually, I got discouraged so I decided to give up after sending one more copy of my book to a local publisher by the name of Ten Speed Press. Then, half-heartedly, I waited for a response. Nothing happened and I accepted this because when I had begun looking for a publisher I had turned the whole process over to God. He would be my literary agent, I decided.

Turning my attention away from being a published writer, I returned to my regular routine—raising two children as a single parent and holding down a job as a secretary. Then, one day, while sitting at my desk at work, I heard a distinct voice in my head say, “Call Ten Speed Press.” The voice interrupted my thoughts and was so strong it immediately got my attention. Still, I was not sure if I should do as the voice commanded. I had never called any of the other publishers who had received my manuscript. Why should I do so now.

To help me decide what to do, I called my friend Matt who had been selling home-made copies of my book on consignment at his bookstore. He encouraged me to go ahead and call. “Ask for Phil,” he said, just as he was hanging up the phone.

With my friend's encouragement I called Ten Speed Press and asked for Phil. The secretary put me through and I introduced myself over the phone. Then I asked Phil if he had seen my manuscript. "I don't think so," he responded. "Why don't you tell me a little about it." So I described the contents and he seemed interested. Then he suggested I come down to his office so we could talk about it further. Excited about the invitation, I left work and took a copy of my book down to Phil's office, still not knowing who he was. (I secretly hoped that he was an editor and that he had the power to recommend my book for publication, but of course I tried not to get my hopes up).

I arrived at Ten Speed Press and was shown into Phil's office. Phil was a very friendly person who gave me his full attention. He wanted to know more about how I had come to write the book and what I thought it had to offer my readers. I chatted on about my own struggles with codependency and how I wanted to help others with my book. I also explained that unlike other books on the subject I had a whole chapter devoted to God and his power to heal people from this painful disorder.

After listening attentively, Phil got on the phone and asked two people to step into his office. While we waited for them to arrive I suddenly noticed that we were sitting in a very plush office. A moment later, I was introduced to George and JoAnn who addressed Phil as "Mr. Woods." I caught my breath, suddenly realizing that I had been talking to someone very important. "Who is this?" I asked myself. "Dare I ask?" Then Phil, who was now Mr Woods, turned to me and said "You know your manuscript sounds very interesting to me. I am going to ask my editors to take a look at it and get back to you." Then he handed the book to George, shook my hand and smiled broadly. "We'll call you," he added.

I got home an hour later floating on air. Then I called my friend Matt and asked, "Just who is Phil?" "Oh," said Matt, matter-of factly, "he is the owner of Ten Speed Press. Didn't I mention that?" I sat down and then mumbled my thanks to Matt for his help.

A week later I got a call from JoAnn at Ten Speed Press. "Congratulations," she said, "we have decided to accept your book for publication. Can you come down tomorrow and sign a contract?" "I'll be there," I said excitedly. "Thank you so much for this opportunity."

Naturally I couldn't sleep that night, so the next day I drove bleary-eyed down to JoAnn's office and signed a contract to have my book published. Then I asked JoAnn, "Where is Mr. Woods?" "He's not here today," she explained. "Actually, he rarely comes in these days, and it is almost impossible to get an appointment with him." "Oh," I muttered, smiling to myself and saying a prayer of thanks.

An hour later I arrived home feeling quite elated. Then, grabbing my mail, I went into the kitchen to make myself a cup of tea. Suddenly, I stopped in my tracks. There, among various bills, was a letter from Ten Speed Press. "What is this?" I asked myself. I opened the letter and gasped. It was a standard rejection letter, complete with an apology and words of encouragement. I stood motionless trying to sort this out. Then I looked at the date of the letter. It was mailed on the day I had called Ten Speed. Then, suddenly, everything seemed crystal clear. This was all God's doing. He gave me the nudge to call at just the right time— just when Mr. Woods was in his office and available, and just before the rejection letter came. (I would never have called if I had already received the letter.)

Today, as I think about the events that took place, I realize that I made the right choice asking God to help me find a publisher. He had all the right contacts and knew just when to act. Now my dream of helping others through my book is coming true, and I owe it all to my heavenly agent.