

# BREAKING IN

Debut authors: How they did it, what they learned, and why you can do it, too.

BY CHUCK SAMBUCHINO



## Brooke Davis

### 1 *Lost & Found*

(literary fiction, Dutton Adult, January) "A 7-year-old girl named Millie is abandoned by

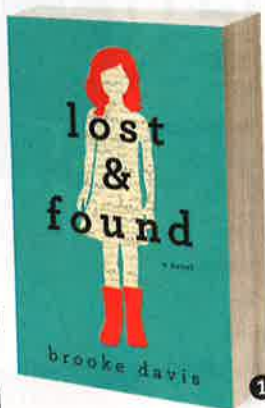
her mother, so two octogenarian friends follow Millie on a road trip across the Australian desert to help find her mom."

**WRITES FROM:** Perth, Australia.

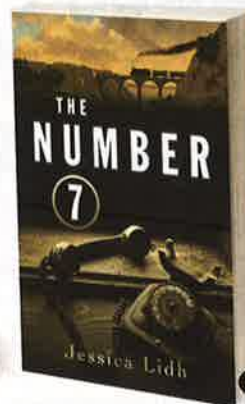
**PRE-LOST:** I had some short stories and nonfiction pieces published in Australia, but this is my first novel. I did attempt a novel when I was 10. It was basically just a rip-off of *The Baby-Sitters Club*, and luckily—because it was abominable!—I gave up about 20 pages in. **TIME FRAME:** I wrote it over five years as part of a Ph.D. in Creative Writing at Curtin University in Western Australia.

**ENTER THE PUBLISHER:** I work as a bookseller in Australia, and the account managers from the publishers were always asking me about the book I was writing. When I finished, one of them read it, and liked it, and took it to the head office of Hachette Australia. They ended up publishing my book. So being involved in the industry was really helpful for me.

**ENTER THE AGENT:** I was put in touch



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with my Australian agent—Benython Oldfield from Zeitgeist Media Group Agency—through a friend in Australia. I sent Benython a copy of my manuscript the day after I'd been made an offer from [Hachette].

**ADVICE FOR WRITERS:** Work hard, be patient and become part of a writing community. Get involved in the industry in some capacity—even as a volunteer—to gain a better understanding of how it all works.

**WEBSITE:** milliebird.com. **NEXT UP:** As soon as I get some time, I'll start writing the second book! I'll never have a first book out again, so for now, I'm just enjoying the feeling of completing that goal.



## Jessica Lidh

### 2 *The Number 7*

(young adult, Merit Press, December 2014) "When

16-year-old Louisa receives a haunting

phone call that unearths a buried family secret, she has to choose between revealing the truth or keeping it hidden forever."

**WRITES FROM:** Rockville, Md. **PRE-7:** I was working as a part-time manager of a Swedish antique shop while applying to graduate programs. Now I'm a high school English teacher with an M.Ed., a book I'm proud of and a house full of Swedish antiques.

**TIME FRAME:** For 10 months, I wrote in the mornings before work. While at work, I also took advantage of Swedish customers who wandered in. I sat the older ones down and asked them to tell me what they remembered about Sweden in the '40s. **ENTER THE AGENT:** I found Dee Mura Literary in the *Guide to Literary Agents* [WD Books]. Kimiko Nakamura is my agent. I was so lucky to find her. The GLA was the best \$30 investment I ever made.

**WHAT I LEARNED:** I now approach books I'm reading as case studies. What's working? What's not? How can I learn from other people's stories and techniques? **PLATFORM:** I have a website with a blog, a Twitter account, a Facebook author page and a Goodreads author account.

**WEBSITE:** jessicalidh.com. **NEXT UP:** I'm halfway through writing my second YA novel.