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Annie: Hi friends! Welcome to another episode of That Sounds Fun. I'm your host Annie F. Downs. I'm really happy to be here with you today. We've got a great show in store.

Before we dive in, I want to take a moment and share about one of our incredible partners, [Thistle Farms](#). I've told you more than a few times how much I love Thistle Farms. I've told you about their candles and how they light the way for the next woman survivor of trafficking, prostitution, and addiction.

Let me tell you today about some of the lives changed by that candle. Thistle Farms shared with me a story of a woman who had been trafficked for three years. And when she first learned about the ritual of the candle, she said, "That candle was lit before my trauma even happened. Before I knew I would need to heal from something, someone knew that a place needed to be created for me." Oh, my gosh, y'all.

So this holiday season friends, I encourage you to visit thistlefarms.org when looking for gifts for your friends and family. There's really nothing sweeter than giving a gift that the recipient will love and that helps to lift up the woman who made it.

And just for our friends here, Thistle Farms is offering a discount when you use the code THATSOUNDSFUN at checkout. You get 15% off your purchase. So head to Thistlefarms.org and use the code THATSOUNDSFUN.

And if you didn't hear our amazing news, The Sounds Fun tour is hitting the road again in February and March. Y'all, y'all, y'all! I just like... I can't wait! We are headed to a city near you, and we're bringing fun and comedy, a special guest at each stop, all of that, and more.

Coming with us on the bus, there's a VIP experience that includes a Q&A with yours truly, and a chance to meet and take a picture together, which y'all know I love. It is so fun. I'm so ready. You can go to Anniefdowns.com/events for all the details and to get your tickets. I hope you'll join us.

Intro: Today on the show I get to talk with my friend Allison Trowbridge. Also you'll hear me call her Allie. She goes by both. Allie is the founder and the CEO of Copper. It's a disruptive social platform that connects book enthusiasts and readers directly with authors.

As the publishing landscape continues to lean into book clubs and social media as the cornerstone of a book launch marketing campaign, Copper streamlines the process, offering a unique subscription-based model for authors and a community of like-minded individuals who want to engage with the authors they love and with other voracious readers.

Offering features like a customized bookshelf and discussion guides, audio hosting, and more, Copper takes the reading experience to a new level. Allie is also the host of the podcast Pub Date, which you're gonna hear us talk about, I think it's so cool, and an accomplished author in her own right.

Allie Published her first book, *Twenty-Two: Letters to a Young Woman Searching for Meaning*, in 2017. I think y'all are going to love her and the work she's doing. And listen, what a good week! Thanksgiving week is a good way to talk about what we want to be reading because we've got some time. So I can't wait for y'all to hear from her.

Here's my conversation with Allison Trowbridge.

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Annie: Allie welcome to That Sounds Fun.

Allison: Annie, I'm so happy to be here.

Annie: How have you never been on here?

Allison: I don't know.

Annie: I don't either. Did I not have a podcast when *Twenty-Two* came out?

Allison: I don't think so.

Annie: It came out when? '16?

Allison: 2017. This is what's so sweet is I met Annie at my book launch.

Annie: Yes, I showed up at your book launch.

Allison: Jonathan Merritt brought her to my little mini, mini book launch post-party.

Annie: Oh my gosh, that was mini too. There were like 20 people there. It was beautiful.

Allison: It was such a thrown together little... I think was in the Bowery in New York. And Annie came in is this just flash of effervescent light. And I'm like, "Who is this human? How do I keep her?"

Annie: And we did. We were like, "We are keeping each other."

Allison: We actually did. We actually did. It's so sweet when a friend is... I feel like that's how a friendship should be where you just connect at a certain level. And you're like, "Okay, great. Done. I'm in."

Annie: Yes, that's it.

Allison: "And we're just gonna do life together."

Annie: And we're just gonna do it. That's right. I feel the exact same. I was hoping you would tell that story because I want you to talk to people about launching a book in 2017 and a beautiful memoir of your early 20s. And you haven't written a book since then?

Allison: No.

Annie: That people have read. Maybe you've written one. I haven't read it.

Allison: No, no, no. I have been working on one. I have one ongoing in the background. But yeah. No, I wrote a book called *Twenty-Two*, which was the book when I was graduating college. I felt like there was no mentorship and guidance for young women as they were graduating. And so I wrote the book that I wished had existed for me. And I actually made this commitment as a 22-year-old of like, "Whatever I do professionally, I'm writing that book someday."

Annie: Wow.

Allison: And so it was a really cool seven some odd years later. It was such a neat full circle moment to actually bring it to life.

Annie: What have you seen? Like, what's been the experience of doing that kind of mentorship from afar with people?

Allison: I think we're most impacted by story. And so I wrote it as a series of letters to a fictional character where the reader is meant to almost feel like it's written to them. So instead of writing and hearing the responses, I only write one way letters. It was just really incredible to... Like there was one reader that reached out to me while I was in... because I published the book while I was going through business school-

Annie: Yeah. Not business school. Tell the whole story. In the UK at?

Allison: Oxford.

Annie: At Oxford, yeah. You're going to a big deal business school.

Allison: Totally. It's a two-year program in one year. And so it was just super intense. I do not recommend that timing. Super, super intense time. But one of these readers reached out, and I met her at a pub in London.

Annie: Wow!

Allison: It was life-changing to actually get to see the impact on a reader of something that I had written and to imagine... I kind of say that writing a book is like you build this house and you spend years of your life building and decorating it and like imagining what it could be. And then you just walk away and other people get to go live in it. And they're going to have their own experience, their own emotions around it, they're gonna bring other people into it. And I love the kind of mystery of we never get to know the full impact and experience of what that'll be. We just get to look up at the house on the hill and be like, "People are living in that thing." You know?

Annie: Yes. I say that a lot to authors, especially new authors. I'm like, the night before your book releases is the last time it's yours.

Allison: 100%.

Annie: And then the next morning, you wake up and you go, "Okay, it's ours." But your analogy of moving out of the house is exactly where you're like, "I built that and now I'm gonna move out." And then people are gonna have all these experiences, and you're like, "Thank you so much but I don't live there anymore. Great."

But also there are things you wrote in *Twenty-Two*. There are things I've written in particularly remember in *That Sounds Fun* that if I still lived in that house, I could not write that book.

Allison: 100%. 100%.

Annie: You have to write it, build it, and then move out.

Allison: Yes, yes. And let it be its own thing. Let it be its own being.

Annie: That's the best part. Right? That's why books exist after people die. It's because it's not dependent on the author; it's dependent on the work.

Allison: Right.

Annie: Which is why I am so passionate about books and the book industry and publishing. I mean, it's the original creator form. This is why we're gonna get so into the weeds of the publishing world right now and just let people go with us. It's Thanksgiving week. They're cooking and they are just listening.

Allison: We've got the turkey going, the biscuits baking. Talk nerdy to me, Annie.

Annie: That's right. We're gonna talk so nerdy. I don't mind the name-calling here. I heard Ron Howard on a podcast, and he said, "It's like people don't read books anymore. They just read them on Kindle. They don't buy the hardback, they don't buy it." And I was like, "No."

Allison: No, it's actually not true.

Annie: That's not true.

Allison: EBook sales go down by two and a half percent every year.

Annie: Yes, because people still want to hold them, don't they?

Allison: They want a physical product. Yeah. And especially when we live in such a digital world, I think there's something so sweet and beautiful about... I've nothing wrong with Kindle, but there's something about holding a physical book and the intimacy of that that I think is unrivaled.

Annie: My discipline is I have to put my phone on the other side of my bedroom and get in bed and read a book that I hold. It makes sleep better. It's all the science that all the scientists are telling us.

Allison: Of course. Of course.

Annie: That my life is better if the last thing I look at is a book, not my phone.

Allison: Yeah There's this great stat that says: after exercising, reading is the number one thing people wish they did more of.

Annie: Wow, that's true.

Allison: Isn't that crazy?

Annie: Exercising one, and reading number two.

Allison: I know. But it's so good for us. It makes us healthier, happier whole being. My passion is like how do we get more people reading, talking about books, diving into them, more writers writing? I love all of it

Annie: Before we get real nerdy, why are you an expert on this? Why did you pick this? Why did you pick books? I mean, you created Copper—we're gonna talk about Copper—and it has been a joy to watch you build this by the way. I could get teary. It's been so fun to watch a woman build such a baller company. But why books?

Allison: So, my 20s I spent working in the anti-trafficking movement. I know this seems like a little bit of a detour. But I spent my 20s in anti-trafficking. And when I started, no one knew what slavery was. No one believed it existed. And I watched a series of books get published that laid the foundation for the modern anti-trafficking movement.

And so I saw the power of books not just to effect personal change, but to also affect social change, and actually move the needle on this huge thorny, intractable issue. And so I fell in love with publishing on a whole different level because I saw the power of books. That was part of what also drew me to write my own and want to involve myself in that world. I just really saw the power of it.

Annie: And mixing the power of it, how much you love it, being an author yourself, and having a business degree.

Allison: Yeah. So I think it was also publishing my book while being in business school. Again, I love the publishing industry, I love all the people in the industry, but it also lacks a lot of innovation. You know, we're talking about print on paper. It's an old-school industry by nature. And that's a beautiful thing.

And at the same time, it just seemed, like, "Gosh, there's such an opportunity to serve authors. And nobody is thinking about how authors reach their readers and how they do it at depth and at scale. And being in business school, I had a professor there, Rachel Botsman, who was an author who I super looked up to, and she kept pulling me aside saying, "Allie, I'm frustrated by this process. I don't know what the solution is, but I know there's something here. No one has disrupted this industry, I don't know what the disruption is. But I'm telling you, go look in that direction. There's something there."

And I was burned out beyond. The little airplane of my emotional life, it crashed and burned. I had no interest whatsoever in taking that risk and putting in that energy. But her saying that to me planted these little seeds that I took a sabbatical after business school and it was just a lightning bolt kind of moment.

Annie: So when you get back here after your sabbatical, what makes you even... tell me about the moment you even thought of Copper. Do you remember where you were sitting where you're like, "What if?"

Allison: Yeah, yeah. So I had a mentor. When my book first came out, I was running on fumes. I was frenetic. And I sat down with him at 8 a.m. I hadn't had any coffee yet and I was-

Annie: Where were you at the time? New York? LA?

Allison: I was in Santa Barbara on a break doing my little book launch tour. And I was like, "He's gonna be so proud of me." I have no idea what I'm doing with my life at this point, because I'm about to graduate and feeling all of that pressure. I'm just "I could do this next, I could do this, or I could do this." And he stops me, doesn't even look at the book I've just handed him, and he's like, "Allison, chill the eff out." I'm like, "What?" He's like, "I need you to take a break. I need you to chill out, turn the engine off. Go just sit in a cafe somewhere and rest. The world will be here when you get back."

Annie: Wow.

Allison: I was like, "Can I read another book while I'm resting?" And he's like, "Absolutely not. Absolutely not." And I'm so grateful because he saw the need for me to take a sabbatical. And I do think it's such a lesson in creativity is that we can't create great work out of those fumes. We have to actually restore our souls and rest deeply in order to be able to then birth something.

So it was the hardest advice I've ever taken. It was really, really difficult to be a very driven person and have 300 Type-A students saying, "What are you doing next?" And to say, "I have no idea. I'm going to rest. I'm going to sit." I mean, I'm totally broke, I've just come through business school. It was not easy. But just to slow down and get quiet.

That's where I was talking to a friend's father about a book he wanted to write and had this almost out-of-body experience of "I have to go build this thing, whatever this thing is going to be."

Annie: I think that is such a valuable statement to tell people is that a lot of times our most creative things and our most successful thing are birthed from a moment of rest or from a place of rest.

Allison: Absolutely.

Annie: That's true for me too.

Allison: Absolutely. And I would have just kept going.

Annie: Yeah, that's right.

Allison: I would have just run myself into the ground.

Annie: That's right. So what is Copper?

Allison: So Copper is a platform to connect authors with networks of readers and help them bring books to market. What I realized is that after a very long journey and lots of failures and false starts is that if you look at all of these social platforms that exist, all of them have focused around a creator group and making them the star in some way.

Annie: So like dancers on Tik Tok.

Allison: Exactly. And photographers on Instagram, and gamers on Twitch, and musicians on SoundCloud, and crafters on Etsy. And for whatever reason, no one has ever built something for authors. Ever. There's never been a platform to help Authors-

Annie: No. Because Goodreads isn't for authors. I stay away from that thing.

Allison: When your book comes out, the first thing editors and agents tell you is, "Whatever happens, Annie, no matter how tempted you get, do not look at Goodreads."

Annie: Yes, that's right. They say, "Do not look at Goodreads."

Allison: You will never want to write another book because people are mean. It's for very critical readers. Which is fine. We need a place for that.

Annie: That's fine, it exists. You're just not going to catch me then.

Allison: Absolutely not. Absolutely not. And so there's never been a place to send her the author experience. And I think part of it is because there's places for writers and bloggers, but to write a book and spend years of your life creating something that is going to exist in physical form and is actually a product that people buy, that's a very, very different experience than writing a weekly blog. Right?

Annie: Right.

Allison: And so I think there was this assumption that publishers could do that. But publishers don't build tech. They don't build platforms. And so it was this gap in the marketplace.

Annie: But to be fair, you didn't build tech at the time either.

Allison: No. Absolutely not. Absolutely not. I never in a million years. I went to business school because I saw that nonprofits lacked good business thinking. And I thought I was gonna stay in the nonprofit. I had no intention of starting a company. That was not on my radar.

Annie: Especially a big tech company.

Allison: I had no idea. I had no idea. But it was seeing this gap. And I started out thinking, "Okay, I'm going to be a different kind of publishing house. I'm going to help..."

Annie: That's what I remember. You were like, "Let's go, Annie."

Allison: Well, this is the beautiful thing about entrepreneurship, and I would encourage any listener who's ever thought about entrepreneurship or wanted to be an entrepreneur, you first fixate on a problem, ideally, a problem that you have experienced, so that you have an intimate understanding of the problem and the pain points. And then you focus on a market that you're going to serve. So what is the market of people

who need the solution to that problem? And then you innovate and iterate and change and pivot until you get to the solution, the product market fit to bridge that gap. And sometimes you get there immediately. And sometimes it is a very long, iterative process.

So my first iteration of solving that problem was thinking, "Okay, I'm going to be a different kind of publishing house and solve these problems that I'm seeing around helping authors reach readers as the publisher. So incorporated as a publishing house, started out, raised a little bit of money, and ways into it, had a... I call it the entrepreneurial trough of sorrow.

Annie: You don't have to tell me, but tell me.

Allison: Oh, my word! We did all these financial models, and I had this meeting with my sweet CFO, who was working, I don't know, five hours a week with me. And we had a big whiteboard, and basically mapped it out. And it was like, "We aren't gonna make any money" was the moral of the story. There was no way I could raise enough money to be able to build a big enough company to navigate the high fluctuations of this market.

So I said to him, I was like, "Okay, well just write platform on the board. I think maybe this is the wrong solution and maybe it's a platform." And so he writes platform and circles it. And I would point it to them, like "That's what we're gonna do." He's like, "Okay, great." So yeah, it was the art of the pivot. I mean, I would have done things so differently, but I was so committed to this thing.

And it was like, "Okay, my initial vision of what I thought this was going to be was dead wrong. And so now I thought I was driving a little bus and it's actually an airplane and I went off a cliff. And I've got to build wings and now I've got to make it fly. Anyway, it's been a steep, steep learning curve.

[00:18:55] <music>

Sponsor: Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation real quick to share about another one of our incredible partners, [Rothy's](#). New shoes are the perfect way to welcome any season, you know this, and there's no better place to get them than from Rothy's. They have their best-selling flats and round or pointed toe, so cute and they go with everything, and then their sneakers and loafers are the perfect match for moments when comfort is a must, which is like always to me. Y'all know this.

Rothy's has got your fall footwear needs covered. Nothing says fall like soft plush merino wool. Y'all, this is year three that Rothy's has launched an exclusive autumn collection featuring washable merino wool styles and they are incredibly comfortable and cozy.

And just like all your other favorite Rothy's styles, they're 100% machine washable. And Rothy's style doesn't just stop at shoes. Y'all, their spacious washable bags are perfect for effortlessly carrying all of your essentials.

It's tough to say if it's the comfort or the cuteness that I love most about my Rothy's, but one of my favorite features, this is probably my favorite, is it they're made from recycled plastic water bottles. Get those things out of the ocean and onto our feet. Right?

Got some good news for you fellas too. Rothy's shoes aren't just for women anymore. That's right. Rothy's now sells men's sneakers and men's driving loafers. Okay, fellas, we see you. The men's line features the same level of craftsmanship as Rothy's women's line.

They're durable, washable, and better for the planet. Plus they are extensively tested for a perfect fit wash after wash. In fact, Forbes calls Rothy's men's shoes "a traveler must-have." Real Rothy's customers have nothing but great things to say. Like Lisa who says, "These shoes are like walking on clouds." Okay, Lisa! And Julie who loves this quote, "No break-in period, no blisters. Just pure comfort." Julie loves her comfort. No wonder Rothy's are best-selling shoes. The point in black has over 5,000 near-perfect reviews.

To help you enjoy this fall season in style, Rothy's is doing something special. That's right. They gave us this chance to share this super rare opportunity with our friends for a limited time. So right now you can get \$20 off your first purchase at Rothys.com/soundsfun. That's our rothys.com/soundsfun. So head to Rothys.com/soundsfun to find your new favorites today.

And now back to our conversation with Allie.

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Annie: I'm so interested in talking about this because we've experienced it with the That Sounds Fun Network, where I personally had the problem where I wanted a better experience on the network. I knew there were things I wanted that I wasn't

experiencing. And then I knew the market was podcasters. I knew the podcasters needed help.

Allison: Right. Absolutely.

Annie: And while outwardly it is growing, we are adding shows and the shows are going, inwardly we're having to innovate all the time. And go like wait, That didn't work. This isn't working. This is working but that's not working for that."

I mean, I think even people don't realize that when outwardly you see a product on a shelf, or outwardly you see a platform launch, or outwardly you see a meal at a restaurant, in the kitchen, they are still trying to come up with a better menu.

Allison: Absolutely.

Annie: It's wild. I have no idea. I've never been an entrepreneur before. I just have never built a company like That Sounds Fun Network like you've done with Copper.

Allison: Exactly. Yeah.

Annie: I just didn't know.

Allison: Exactly. But that's the beautiful thing is that I think the best entrepreneurs are people with problems.

Annie: That's a really good way to put it. It's good.

Allison: Because if you experience a problem and you're an empathetic person, you don't just want to solve it for yourself. You want to solve it for everyone else who's experienced that problem. .

Annie: And so when we think about Copper... let's talk to our friends, for starters, who are readers. What is Copper for readers?

Allison: It's a place where you can save, share, organize books. So it's bookshelves, it's curation, it's the ability to create recommendations. So being not only able to track what you're reading, but share, like, "Here's my reading list" if you're starting a company and being able to share it and share it to other social channels.

And then it's also discovery. So being able to follow friends and see what they're reading and read books with them. And then it's also being able to connect with the

author. What's wild to me is that there's no place right now where readers can actually talk to authors about the book while they're reading it.

Annie: No.

Allison: It just doesn't exist. And so it's discussion threads where readers can ask questions to the author, they can ask questions and debate ideas with each other. Kind of like Reddit threads, but around the book. If it's a fiction book, you can add a spoiler alert so then you can see the titles so that we don't give anything away.

And then we also have live events. So you can host and join live events and live discussions in the app about the book, whether it's with the author or with other readers.

Annie: What's the benefit? I'm in a book club and I love it. We meet like once a month. But it's all people in my neighborhood.

Allison: Oh, sweet.

Annie: So what's the benefit of doing kind of an online version of that?

Allison: I think in-person is amazing too. The online is just helping you connect with people that you don't live in the same vicinity next to. And especially, again, with the author themselves being able to take 20 minutes and ask the author those face-to-face questions.

I wanted to recreate that experience I had with that reader in London, where I got to see the impact the book had on her life, and I got to answer questions and process it with her. It truly shaped me as a writer and made me want to do it again because it's such a hard process. It's so hard. It's so hard. And that's the payoff as you see it impact somebody.

So I wanted to close the gap between author and reader, and then again, allow readers to connect with one another and do that in a way that was sustainable, scalable, and just hyper-social.

Annie: I mean, it's wild to think that you had that one conversation in London, and then the one conversation in Santa Barbara, and God's just like... You tell me. I won't tell you. You tell me what you've seen God tie together.

Allison: Oh my gosh. I mean, it has felt like... I mean, it's totally like that analogy of the back of the tapestry, you know, where it's just all knotty and loose ends and super messy. It is a bumpy road. I recently reframed my thinking about entrepreneurship from... because every day you run into problems.

Annie: Literally every day.

Allison: Literally every day. And I kept thinking, "What's wrong with me that this is so hard." I recently reframed it to, okay, my job is I'm a creative problem solver. And so every day, I'm going to sit down, and I'm going to expect there to be problems that I get to creatively solve. And then it helps you roll with the punches more and just realize that it's all part of the process.

I look at where it's at and it's honestly been a divine scavenger hunt of feeling like the whole way... it's just I find another clue and then that connects me to a person that I then get advice from, and then they introduce me to someone else. And then that person gives me an insight that then I bring back into the product, and then that influences the team. And then the team does... And it's just the whole thing has been just really this divine scavenger hunt on the way to the treasure of creating something that will be meaningful in people's lives.

And it's super humbling, because I look at what it is today and I'm like, "That did not..." It wasn't like that just came from my brain. I wish I could say that it did. I'm not that smart. I truly fixated on this problem. I honestly think it's just the not giving up.

Annie: Oh, we're going to talk about that. Because you've been working on... I mean, you've been telling me about Copper for two years?

Allison: Yeah, couple of years.

Annie: I mean, you just haven't... Every time you ran into "Oh, this isn't going to work," you did not care. You didn't care about it being a sign that the door was closed. How did you know to keep going?

Allison: Honestly, there was just enough there where I was like, "There's still a thread to follow. There still..." And just I know how big this problem is. I know that people need what we're building. And so it's truly been honestly a deep sense of conviction. Because it has been so unbelievably hard that I'm like... Yeah, you have to be insane to do something like this. I think there was a wire that didn't get connected at birth.

Annie: The coining wire.

Allison: But where it's like, "Hey, this is not working, it's time to just let it go." Or "that's really risky. Maybe you should get a job." Just like... I don't know. I couldn't let it go because I knew that people needed it. And I think that it's only been... sometimes I wonder like, why hasn't this been built before? And I think because it sounds obvious, but it actually was such an iterative journey to find the obvious piece that was kind of buried in the middle of the market.

Annie: Something that Jesus just keeps reminding me is that it is very rare in the Bible that we're told to stop.

Allison: Wow.

Annie: We're told not to fear.

Allison: Wow. That just gives me chills, Annie. I've never thought about that.

Annie: Over and over again Jesus says, "This is why you should pray and not give up, and this is why you should persevere and knock and the door will be opened, ask, seek." It's not like, "Knock, and if it doesn't open, walk away."

Allison: Wow.

Annie: Right? I kind of had this moment a couple of weeks ago where I was like, "Oh, we're just not supposed to give up."

Allison: Wow.

Annie: So all you're doing, all you are doing is gospel work. You are doing gospel work with Copper.

Allison: Gosh, that's so true. At every turn, I've truly had some very, very intense heart to hearts with God of like, "Okay, is this just not meant to happen?" Because it's so hard. And I'm okay. It's a bruise to the ego, but I'm okay. I feel like I failed so many times over in this thing and just kept moving forward with it.

Again, advice to aspiring entrepreneurs is it has to be something where not only do you want it so much, but you're so deeply in on it that plan B is a new plan A. You know what I mean? When I was a little kid, we'd visit my grandparents. My

grandfather had this picture that hung above the dining room table of a golfer, and it had a quote by it that said, "Play for more than you can afford to lose and you will learn the game."

Annie: Play for more than you can afford to lose and you will learn the game.

Allison: Yeah.

Annie: Wow.

Allison: I used to stare at that as a little kid because I'd be bored at the dinner table and I'm like, "I don't get it. That doesn't make sense." And as I would get older and older, it started to land. I just reflected on that a lot through the whole thing. It's like my first small angel check was from the mother of my god kids.

Annie: Oh my gosh.

Allison: I mean, people that I love and respect who bet on me to make this work. And honestly, I think if I had the resources to just have funded this myself, I would have given up years ago.

Annie: Wow. Because you're like, "It's just money. It's gone."

Allison: Yeah. It's the fact that people bet on me and believed in me. I have a friend who once told me the story of Peter walking on water. He's like, "Everyone focuses on Peter walking towards Jesus. But you have to also think about all of the disciples in the boat who were behind him cheering him on. Well, and cheering them on and supporting him. You know, watching him go and-

Annie: You're so much nicer. I'm always like, "They weren't brave enough." Because Peter is my guy. I love Peter.

Allison: Oh, I love that.

Annie: So you're like, "Oh, they were cheering him on." And I'm like, "Yeah, they were too scared." You're like, "No, no, no." You're telling a much better story. You're so sweet. You're right. They were cheering him on.

Allison: They were cheering him on or whatever. But I told that to my friend Esther Fleece once... She's an amazing author. We always had this thing where anytime one of us

is doing something that's hard or takes courage, the other one will text and say, "I'm in your boat" with a boat emoji.

Annie: Okay, that's much sweeter. Very good. "I'm in your boat."

Allison: "I'm in your boat. I'm in your boat." All of that to say I think I had a lot of people on my boat. I had a lot of people who were just saying, "We're watching you go and we believe you can do this." And so there were a lot of times I stopped believing in myself. Even now I would say it's like every week or two I have like a dark night of the soul where I'm like up all night, like, "What am I doing?" But it's people believe in us.

Annie: That's it. I think this is true entrepreneurially. I think it can be true about spiritual things going on in your life. It can be true relationally-

Allison: Absolutely.

Annie: ...where you go like, "I think this is falling apart and I don't know what to do."

Allison: Absolutely.

Annie: I think you're modeling a beautiful thing of going like, "I am 100% sure of what God is asking me to do with Copper, and also I asked Him questions to make sure I'm 100% sure."

Allison: Yes, yes. And both are true.

Annie: Yes, that's it.

Allison: And both are true.

Annie: I think that is the way of faith. It's going, "I all the way believe this. And if God turns the road or closes the door, I will be fine."

Allison: Yes, absolutely.

Annie: "It will not rot my faith to not get to the end of this story."

Allison: Completely.

Annie: "But I'm going to live like I'm going to get to the end of the story because I believe this."

Allison: 100%. 100%.

Annie: Yeah, that's right.

Allison: And that's why I would encourage anyone who's been through a season of... or is feeling burned out right now to find a way to take that break and turn the engine off and get to that place of true restoration.

Like when a weekend doesn't make you feel restored, like a true two days off doesn't make you feel filled up, that's probably when you need a longer weekend. But taking that time for me, I finally came to a place with God where I was going for this walk and I just had this sweet revelation of "I'm okay just as me. Like if I never produce anything ever again, if this is it, and I'm just kind of... I just live a very quiet life henceforth, I'm okay. I'm enough. I don't need to earn love or approval." And getting to that place of security in my identity gave me a foundation from which I could go out and build something and not have an identity crisis when it got hard.

Annie: Yes, yes. Or when it does what you didn't think it would do, either way, negative or positive.

Allison: Totally.

Annie: If your identity can be detached from your purpose as best you can and from the work you're putting your hands to, then when you win, it ain't about you, and when you lose, it ain't about you.

Allison: No. Absolutely not. Absolutely. Again, it's been so incredibly humbling because I feel like it's been a... I like to say I got a PhD in rejection for one. Whenever you go and do fundraising, you just learn how to get everybody telling you... I mean, most authors experience that too. Anytime you're doing something creative, it's... yeah, it's building those resiliency muscles along the way I think is the most... that's where the value is.

Annie: I 100% agree. So for our friends listening who want to write a book, is Copper for published authors like me and for people who are going to self-publish a book of poetry about their grandparents?

Allison: Yeah. It totally is. We call them aspiring authors, which actually something that's really beautiful is I read this amazing, amazing statistic that says 81% of Americans dream of writing a book are dead.

Annie: Oh my gosh. 81%.

Allison: It's so amazing. And I just think about how many stories need to get told that don't get told because people have no idea where to begin, or they don't have the encouragement or support to do it. And not everyone is going to need to hit the bestseller list. It's writing the story, whether it's even just for your community or your grandchildren, or for that group of a thousand or a hundred people who need to hear what you have to say. I just want to see more of those books get written and stories get told and aspiring new authors break into the market who don't have...

I mean, it's a very kind of closed blackbox sort of industry where if you haven't been a part of it, it's hard to know where to start. And so I think a lot of stories don't get told. So I want Copper to be a place that creates more equality and equity across the publishing world and allows more new voices and underserved voices, underrepresented voices to have the opportunity to access audiences and get amplified.

[00:36:29] <music>

Sponsor: Hey friends! Just taking a quick break tell you about one of our amazing partners, [Indeed](#). Indeed is a hiring partner that gets you at what you really want, a shortlist of quality candidates as fast as possible. Because you can do it all: attract, interview, and hire all at Indeed. Don't struggle on your own to find quality candidates.

As our team has grown here at Downs Books and at the That sounds Fun Network, we've consistently seen how challenging it can be to come up with a pool of truly qualified candidates. But the hires we've made through Indeed, which we have three people that we have hired through Indeed, have yielded such impressive results, y'all. I mean, such impressive results.

Indeed can help you hire the right people right now. Indeed partners with you on every step of the hiring process so you can find talent with the skills you need through tools like Indeed Instant Match, Assessments, and virtual interviews.

Indeed makes it easier for star applicants to shine with over 135 assessment tests. From cooking to coding, pick whatever skills are important to you from over 135

different ones, and get a clearer view of your top talents' abilities faster. These assessments make the interview process smoother for everyone, talent doesn't have to prove themselves again, you've already seen what they can do. And you can dive deeper into talking about what's important to you.

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Sponsor: And I have one last incredible partner to share with you, [Pendulum](https://pendulumlife.com). We're all paying attention to being good friends to ourselves and becoming the healthiest version of ourselves that we can be. And we all know that nutrition plays a huge role in your gut health or what they call your microbiome. Okay. And we're learning more and more about how gut health impacts your mental and physical well-being.

The science is clear that a healthy gut microbiome with the good bacteria that helps our bodies process food is a key to healthy lifestyles. But now we're learning about the connection between your gut health and type 2 diabetes.

Pendulum glucose control is the first and only medical probiotic that's designed to help manage A1C and blood glucose levels to the health of your microbiome. So people with type 2 diabetes over time they can lose the gut bacteria that help them digest fiber and manage their blood glucose levels. Sometimes diet and exercise alone can help keep that in check. But studies are showing that the best approach is one that emphasizes diet, exercise, and a healthy gut microbiome.

If you have type 2 diabetes, I know it can feel like an uphill battle to keep those levels in check with diet and exercise alone. It's possible that your gut microbiome might need attention. Pendulum glucose control helps fill in the gaps by providing the first and only probiotic designed to manage blood glucose and A1C levels. With Pendulum, you can feel in control of your levels, not the other way around.

So take control of your glucose levels today. Try Pendulum glucose control for 90 days. If you're not satisfied with your levels, you'll get your money back. So visit pendulumlife.com to find out more and use the promo code THATSOUNDSFUN for 20% off your first bottle of membership. That's pendulumlife.com, promo code, THATSOUNDSFUN.

And now back to finish our conversation with Allie.

[00:39:58] <music>

Annie: Equality and equity are really important. We just had an episode a couple of weeks ago where Christina Edmondson was saying the thing that the church can do to increase diversity is not just awareness, it is actually sharing power.

Allison: Yeah, 100%. 100%.

Annie: So Copper is doing that, because anybody can get on there as an author.

Allison: Yeah, yeah.

Annie: So there is no barrier no matter socioeconomic level, the family you come from, the race you were born. None of that affects your ability. Male, female, anybody can be an author on Copper who writes books.

Allison: What's sweet is to get verified on the platform, you actually have to be a published author. You have to have a book out. So it's also fun, because, I mean, maybe you have a huge TikTok following, but if you're not a published author... You know, it's really allowing the authors to be the stars.

Annie: So cool.

Allison: But when you onboard, you can also mark if you're an aspiring author. And so we'll roll out like a badge feature so that it's... it's fun for me to think through the tools we'll be able to build to support those who are working on a book, dreaming of a book, wanting to write a book don't know where to begin, don't know who to talk to.

Annie: And what does it take to be published? Is it you have to be on Amazon? Do you just have to be able to buy a book?

Allison: You have to be able to buy the book.

Annie: Okay. So it's not like a publisher has to pick you up to get verified.

Allison: Mm-hmm. You can be self-published. You just have to have done the work.

Annie: That's awesome. All you have to do is have done the work.

Allison: You have to do the work.

Annie: That is so good. That 81%, let's get 81% of our friends writing books that are all of them 100% dreamers. I'm just dreaming up like, Man, when I started, if I had Copper... because my first book was self-published. If I'd have had Copper to gather my audience around and talk with me through reading the book, I would have learned so much about the book and about my own process.

Allison: That actually just gave me chills, Annie. I didn't know your first book was self-published.

Annie: Yeah, yeah. At 2010.

Allison: I think so many people, so many of us, in general, we opt ourselves out because we're like, "Well, I don't have a huge following. I don't have connections in publishing. I don't know where to begin. I mean, again, for your listeners, it's like you just did the work, you just wrote the book that needed to be written, and you put it out there and you trusted the process.

And I think that's the journey I want to encourage people on. It's like you had the story beating inside of you. And you just did it.

Annie: I said to people, I was like, "Just get the book out." When they're like, "How do I write a book?" I'm like, "Just get it out of you and then call me back." Like, "I can't do anything until it is out of your body." And I also think the place that the enemy tries to stop authors is between their head in their hands. Because once you typed it-

Allison: Absolutely. It's all the resistance

Annie: ... and once it's emailed to somebody else, you can't get it back in your body. The book is out, you've done the work. Now it's just about whether you take the next steps. But the hardest one is moving it out of your body. The loser brain, the resistance, whatever, all the things that Seth Godin talks about, if you let that win, we can't help. Copper can help you.

Allison: No, Copper can't help you.

- Annie:** That Sounds Fun Network can't help you. No publisher... we cannot help you if the book stays in your brain. But if you will just let it out of your fingers, there's thousands of people who can help you.
- Allison:** Absolutely. Absolutely. And that's what's fun. I mean, that piece is where the true magic happens. To me, that process of writing and creating is genuinely a mystical experience. Like my book, *Twenty-Two*, was something that I had this concept, and then probably five years later, I was really, really jet-lagged overseas and sat up in bed at dawn and had the... it was like a download, where I just... Did I ever tell you that?
- Annie:** No.
- Allison:** It was one of the craziest spiritual experiences of my life. I sat up in bed, and it was just like a prrrrr, just download of "I just saw it." And it was like, "Oh my gosh, it's letters. It's like *Screwtape Letters* meets *Little Women* in the 21st century. I just saw exactly what it had to be. And from there, I just kind of went to act on it. But all of that to say, that piece of it is truly the mystical, magical, spiritual part of creation. And then the rest of it I can build the platform where we can connect the dots.
- Annie:** That's right. That's right.
- Allison:** Then we can do the tech.
- Annie:** I sat in my manager's office yesterday and just cried because something went sideways. And I was like, "The thing I can't understand is how did this thing go sideways when I see it 10 times bigger than this." I was like, "I can see the whole thing. I know how it goes." And she said, "Well, if you can see it, it's gonna happen. We're just gonna have bumps in the roads like this."
- Allison:** Wow.
- Annie:** And I was like, "Oh, okay." She was like, "Yeah, this is building. This is building something. This is what it means to build something out. I need you as the creator, I need you to see the end because I can't see the end. But I can get us there." Because I was like, "Is this me? That thing is never going to happen."
- Allison:** Totally. Totally.
- Annie:** You're reminding me, like, man, those downloads matter because on the days where the "stop to" of the bus means that the tire blew does not mean the bus route stops.

Allison: Exactly.

Annie: The bus will keep going to the destination but we might have a blown tire apparently.

Allison: That's what we're got to get out the crank. Totally.

Annie: That's exactly right.

Allison: It's so true. I think we look at other people's success and we assume that we're the abnormal ones who it's really hard the whole way.

Annie: Totally.

Allison: And then everybody else is just say smooth sailing.

Annie: That's what I'm doing. Because people listen or go on, "Annie, cried in a manager's office yesterday?" and I'm on Instagram going, "Look how easy it is for that person. Look how big that is for them. Look how many people are doing that with them. Look at that." Everybody has people they're looking at. There are people looking at you and me thinking we don't have problems and we're both crying in our manager's office. And we're looking at people and thinking they don't have problems. They have problems too.

Allison: We're just all big bunch of problem havers.

Annie: It is hard being a human.

Allison: It is so hard being a human. It is so hard. And I think it's also so that, you know, thank God none of us can take ourselves too seriously.

Annie: That's right. That's right.

Allison: Because we're not that capable.

Annie: Right. I mean, as I'm listening to you, I'm thinking this is also... I'm going to be passionate about books my whole life. One of my grandmothers was a librarian and the other set of grandparents owned a local bookstore in my hometown.

Allison: Wow.

Annie: So all I ever knew... Yes, I spent every Saturday at my grandparents' bookstore.

Allison: Oh, my gosh.

Annie: It's why our company is called Downs Books. It's because that was the name of the bookstore

Allison: Oh, Annie.

Annie: I know. Ain't that cool? So I have always known and loved books. But even as we're having this conversation, I'm going, "Well, that's why it matters even for the Bible." That's a little bit of Jesus to you. But I don't mean it to be.

But even books like *Little Women* and books we can circle up around on Copper are like, "Oh, yeah, because this is written down by someone else and they survived their story and they didn't take themselves too seriously, okay, I'll be okay, too."

Allison: Totally.

Annie: Books just remind us that we're going to be okay.

Allison: Yes, yeah. It's the greatest driver of empathy. And I would go even farther to say, you know, if nothing near-death crazy intense happens, if there aren't big problems to be solved, it's not a good book.

Annie: Oh, man, I hate that you said that.

Allison: I know I went there. I went there. I know I went there.

Annie: Because that's true about life. There aren't problems to be solved if it's not a good story. You're right. You're right, Allie.

Allison: I know. And so in my weekly "This is too hard. I can't do this," I try to put myself 10, 20 years down the road looking back. Like imagine looking back and seeing the whole big picture.

Annie: And that picture thing, you turn it around and you go, "That is so pretty. I had no idea the back is so brutal."

Allison: I'm just seeing all these ugly knots and loose ends and it's just a mess. It's just a mess.

Annie: So Allie, all of our friends are like, "Put me on Copper. How do I start? I want to be in book clubs. I want to talk to my favorite authors. I want to build a bookshelf," we go to Copperbooks.com?

Allison: Copperbooks.com. And then you'll be able to sign up for early release of the app and be some of the first users on the platform. We want all of the That Sounds Fun community.

Annie: Oh, you know. Well, you and I offline have brainstormed four times-

Allison: So much.

Annie: ...about how we get That Sounds Fun involved with Copper-

Allison: So much.

Annie: ...how I get, as an author, involved with copper. And the baseline is if we love books, we need Copper. If you love books, you need Copper.

Allison: Yeah.

Annie: But now it's also like my friend built this. Everyone listening is like, "My friend built this." And we're gonna love it. You're releasing stuff all the time, making it better, better, better. It's so fun. It's just going to be so fun over the next year everything we're going to be able to release and launch and all of the features. It truly becomes just connecting the dots.

Allison: Because I just have this dream of there being like a That Sounds Fun hub over there, and everybody's just talking to each other about what they read.

Annie: I love that. I can't wait. Because we love talking about books. People get on me all the time about how many authors we bring on. And they're like, "How am I supposed to keep up with all this?" I'm like, "We just need a book club.

Allison: Yeah. Just go to Copper.

Annie: you just need to go to Copper. What are you reading right now?

Allison: Oh my gosh. Gosh, I'm reading so many books. What am I reading? I actually just started reading *Deep Work* by Cal Newport.

Annie: I've heard of it, I haven't read it yet. But I've heard it's good.

Allison: It is blowing my mind. We're reading that one as a Copper team right now. And it's super convicting because we don't realize how distracted we are day in and day out in our lives. And so it's all about how do you get intensive focused time. The people who have truly shaped culture, society learned how to do deep work. Even if it was just two hours a day. And for all of you 81% of people who are going to write your book, it's deep work.

Annie: Deep Work. You have to be away from your phone.

Allison: It's deep work. Yeah.

Annie: I worked at a coffee... I forgot a coffee shop I'm working at one day a week to get through some writing. And the person behind the counter was someone who knew who I was, which was very good. And they're like, "Do you want the Wi-Fi password?" I was like, "No, please do not give me access to the internet. I have to not work." He was like hanging up somewhere. They weren't like, "Annie, would you like..." They were just being sweet. I was like, "No, no, no, please don't tell me because I have to do deep work. If I have any access to the internet, deep work is not happening."

Allison: No. Totally. Totally. And then I've also been trying to read more just fun fiction. Because it's just so sweet to get lost in a story. I recently Shauna Niequist turned me on to Louise Penny.

Annie: I haven't read it yet.

Allison: Oh, Annie.

Annie: Okay. Louise Penny. I'm writing it down.

Allison: Oh, Annie. Oh, Annie. I didn't even know this was a genre. Cozy mysteries.

Annie: I did not know this was a genre either.

Allison: I had no idea.

Annie: Cozy mysteries.

Allison: She has like 17. Now, she's like the modern-day Agatha Christie.

Annie: But a little cozier?

Allison: It's this guy, Inspector Gamache-

Annie: Oh, yes. People are going to love this.

Allison: And they're always eating buttery, flaky croissants and talking about food, which is why I think Shauna likes it. It's yummy. It's just so good. It's so good. That's been fun. I've read a couple of those.

Annie: Is Louise Penny still alive? Is she still living author?

Allison: Yeah.

Annie: Can we get her on Copper and talk to us about it?

Allison: Totally. She just released a book I think this week.

Annie: Oh, great. Okay, we're gonna get into it.

Allison: I know. It's so fun.

Annie: I'm so happy. Okay, before we go, we got to talk about Pub Date, your new podcast. What's it about? When we're recording this, it has just launched.

Allison: It lunches today, I think. One of my favorite things is to talk to authors, not only about their books but about the process of the book.

Annie: Yes, everybody wants to talk about the process.

Allison: Because it is truly a perilous journey of near-death experiences and sobbing in the office. All of it. All of it. So I realized the date that an author obsesses over for a year and a half is their pub date—the date their book will be published. So I wanted to do a podcast that was focused on the pub date and on the date the book is going to come out. Not all episodes, but most of the episodes will actually release on the pub date of the book.

- Annie:** Of the person's book. That's so brilliant. That's so brilliant.
- Allison:** And so it's them being able to share not only about the what of what they wrote, but actually get off script and talk about the why and the how and the challenging parts and the transformation that happened in their own lives for that book.
- Annie:** Can we do that interview? Here's what I would love. I would love to do a pub date episode with you. I'm inviting myself onto your show.
- Allison:** You're on.
- Annie:** I would love for you to also have me and one of my employees who has had to help run the preorder. Because she has said every day, "I had no idea how much more an author did besides write the book."
- Allison:** Wow.
- Annie:** She was like, "I've never seen anything like this." She was like, "I thought you wrote a book and then the publisher gets it out."
- Allison:** No. no.
- Annie:** And the publisher does make the book. I don't know how to make the book. But in 2021, it is on the author to do a lot of the marketing. The publisher helps you create for sure. But it has been a bit of a mind-boggling experience for my co-worker.
- Allison:** Totally. People have no idea how much... I mean it is a full product. It's like launching a company. It's a full product launch. Which again, going back to Copper, I realize all of these authors are trying to like dance on TikTok, and they're like, "Why am I failing at marketing." And it's like, well, dancing shouldn't have to be the only way to do marketing in 2021 and to reach readers. So it was like, "Okay, there's got to be a better space for that." But yeah, there's so much behind the scenes.
- Annie:** People just don't realize how much an author needs a team.
- Allison:** That's so true.
- Annie:** An author gets disappointed at pub date and launch week because it's just them and their publisher. So let's back up a year and make a way for you to have someone you employed to help you launch a book.

Allison: Yeah, absolutely.

Annie: I mean, we have a team here. It's not just me.

Allison: It truly takes privilege.

Annie: Absolutely. I think it would be fun if you want to. You can say no. But I think it would be so interesting for people to hear-

Allison: I love that idea.

Annie: ...what it takes for a team to get a book out. It's not just the author.

Allison: I love that idea.

Annie: And it was a kid's book. I wrote 32 pages. Like it's not a lot of words.

Allison: Wow.

Annie: But it has been probably the most work-intensive book launch possibly for my team that we've ever done.

Allison: Really?

Annie: Mm-hmm. It's been wild. So I think you would enjoy hearing from her.

Allison: Done. Done.

Annie: I think it'd be really fun.

Allison: Oh, that's so good.

Annie: Okay. Is there anything we didn't say? Okay, people need to go listen, subscribe to Pub Date. I can't wait to listen to those because the making the sausage of publishing...

Allison: Oh my gosh.

Annie: ...makes me equally like a researcher and Joan of Arc-

Allison: I know. I know. I know.

Annie: Where I'm like, "What happened to you? They forgot to put in your forward?" I mean, things like that just made me want to lose my mind.

Allison: I know.

Annie: So we listen to Pub Date, we go to Copperbooks.com. That'll get us all started with Copper.

Allison: Yeah. Follow us at Copper Books on Instagram.

Annie: I love that space. Oh, I love it. And you were just in Forbes so we'll link to that. No big deal. Just a total profile in Forbes about being a businesswoman. Fine, Allie. Fine. What did we not talk about that you want to make sure we cover.

Allison: That was perfect. I think we nailed it.

Annie: The last question we always ask, because the show is called That Sounds Fun, tell me what sounds fun to you.

Allison: Ooh, what sounds fun to me I'm gonna say cozying up with a cozy mystery and eating a buttery croissant. That just sounds so happy right now.

Annie: But we're not in Paris sadly. We'll have to eat the buttery croissants with us. Nashville is not known for our croissants. I'm sorry to tell you.

Allison: Well, that's unfortunate.

Annie: I know.

Allison: We'll start a croissant shop next.

Annie: Now we have a problem.

Allison: Now we have a problem. We know we have a market of selling croissants to others.

Annie: That's right. That's right. We need to innovate a solution. We're about to start a new business.

Allison: Get ready, Nashville!

Annie: That's a great answer. Cozy mysteries with a buttery croissant.

Allison: I mean, let's do it. Let's go! Especially for the holidays. I will say whenever there's a time like the holidays where you're getting some downtime, do yourself a solid and just pick a fun book that you're going to just get to lose yourself in. I focus so much on learning and kind of the work side of things. And I think there's something so beautiful to allow our imaginations to run wild. Find a book that you will get lost in the story and just bless yourself.

Annie: That's it. Happy Thanksgiving. Bless yourself.

Allison: Happy Thanksgiving.

Annie: Oh, well done!

[00:57:19] <music>

Outro: Oh my gosh, you guys, don't you love her? Isn't Copper the coolest? I know. I know. I know. We're all gonna be there. I'm gonna be there. You're gonna be there. Be sure to check out Copper, check out Allie's book *Twenty Two*. Especially if you are in that age bracket or you have somebody you love in that age bracket, man, I loved it. I read it just a few years ago and I absolutely loved it. So grab a copy of that and Allie's podcast *Pub Date*. Make sure you're subscribed and you'll hear us on there one of these days pretty soon. Go follow her and follow Copper. Tell her thanks so much for being on the show.

If you need anything else from me, you know I'm embarrassingly easy to find. Annie F Downs on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook. All the places you may need me, that's how you can find me.

And I think that's it for me today, friends. Go out or stay home and do something that sounds fun to you. I will do the same. And today what sounds fun to me is seeing my family. My nephew and my dad always listen to the podcast and dance along to the song that's about to come on from Tauren Wells. So I wish I was with them today. That's what sounds fun to me.

Have a great couple of days. We'll see you back here on Wednesday with my sweet friend Hannah Brown. We'll see y'all then.

[00:58:29] <music>