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**Swimming with Sharks**

**By Lisa Hood**

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Swimming with Sharks

I just finished my first novel, "Shades of Betrayal", and felt a rush of giddy excitement at the prospect of being a REAL writer. I had a vague idea that I would need an agent, so I went to a search engine and typed: "Literary Agents". My search returned thousands upon thousands of results, and as I surfed from page to page, I quickly realized getting an agent was not going to be an easy undertaking. Most would not accept unsolicited queries, or queries from previously unpublished authors. I wondered if it would just be easier to contact publishers directly, in essence acting as my own agent. My bubble quickly burst when I found very few publishers willing to accept unagented queries. I was disappointed but not deterred.

In retrospect, I wish I had begun my search for information with these words: "Writer Beware". These words would have saved me from surfing in shark infested waters. The sharks got me, but thankfully it was just a little nibble, they didn't tear off my entire leg. Here are just a few tips to keep you safe from the sharks posing as agents and/or publishers:

Regardless of what they call them: Reading Fees, Evaluation Fees, Handling Fees, Sliding Fees, Publishing Fees, Marketing Fees, or Adjunct Services, FEES = money leaving your pocket and going into theirs. I paid an agent to set up a web site where my book would be promoted in junction with submissions to various publishers. I wanted to believe my dream was coming true, so I gagged my inner critic and stuck her in a dark corner. Paying up front fees just doesn't pass the common sense test. "Fee-charging violates the basic premise of the author-agent relationship: a shared financial interest in the sale of the author's manuscript." (Writers Beware, p.2)

Referrals can be made for editing, illustrations, cover art or publishing by the agent, who in turn receives a kickback. Avoid agents that require use of outside companies as a condition of representation.

## Swimming with Sharks

Contests may be used to lure unsuspecting writers to an agent or vanity press. A new writer, eager for acceptance and validation, is especially vulnerable if their writing is favorably judged. This adds fuel to their belief that if only they had readers, their work would be appreciated. With this newfound confidence, a writer may decide to bypass traditional publishing to publish and distribute their own work. This is a viable alternative for some: however, there are plenty of con artists waiting to take your money.

### Resources

Writers Beware, <http://www.sfw.org/beware/agents.html>

Unknown Author (2004) Writers Beware. Retrieved March 12, 2004 from [www.SFWA.org](http://www.SFWA.org)

Lisa Hood is the author of "Shades of Betrayal" and "Shades of Revenge". She has been writing for over 10 years and is presently working on her third suspense novel, "Shades of Jealousy." She is also the Talent Liaison @ BOOKJOBBER.com. Other articles by Lisa Hood can be downloaded from <http://www.bookjobber.com/articles.asp> or [mailto:lisa\\_j@bookjobber.com](mailto:lisa_j@bookjobber.com)

### **Vacation Packages from the Belize Jungle Dome**

**By Andy Hunt**

#### **Vacation Packages from the Belize Jungle Dome by Andy Hunt**

Following up from our new schedule of Adventure Day Trips in Belize the Belize Jungle Dome is pleased to announce its Schedule of Belize Vacation Packages for 2005

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Belize Zoo, Discover the Ancient Mayan Temples, Jungle Horse Back Riding Adventure, Swimming Holes, Tikal and Belize River Boat Trip

## Swimming with Sharks

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Andy is owner of the Belize Jungle Dome in Belize, Central America. A former UK soccer player he now offers Adventure Vacations for Families, Groups and Individuals from his Jungle Resort



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