

The Perils of Being Published—Letting Go by Gerry Bartlett

I just finished another book. Finally. I swear I could have picked on it for another month. You know, reread it and tightened. Tweaked a word here, a phrase there. But it had to go. I'd asked my editor for a "drop dead" date, that's when it positively had to be turned in or the release date changed. So it was looming and I had to declare this puppy done. Oh so hard. I mean it wasn't perfect. That's why once one of my books hits the shelves, I never reread it. Too late for changes!

Get a clue, Gerry. Your book will never be perfect. When it's out there being reviewed some meanie will pick on the very thing that you were insecure about. Oh, woe. Luckily my fans won't read critically. They'll just be glad to see another chapter in the Real Vampires series. They've been emailing me, sending me Facebook notes and Myspace comments begging for hints on this one. So are they really going to care if there's a typo on page 83? Doubt it. And will they think the love scene in chapter ten should have been shorter or(horrors) cut altogether? Not my fans. They're all about the hot stuff.

No one is a more critical reader than the author. And, trust me, you can pain over your work forever and your critique group can go over it with the proverbial fine tooth comb and still your editor will find something new and different for you to fix. That's just the way it is. Doesn't mean you're a horrible writer. Just proves that we can't be objective about our work. And it all comes together to make a better product. Oh, sometimes the suggestions are off target. You get that feeling in your gut that you just can't do what the editor wants. I've had it happen. So I mull it over, reread and think about alternative solutions. Sometimes I can pull a rabbit out of my thinking cap and actually solve the problem in a different way and we are both happy. I've never had to play hardball and say "No, won't do that." Because I realize I'm fallible. And we're both after the same thing. A bestseller with my name on it.

Bottom line, I'm the creative person. The editor is just doing the tune up. She didn't invent the story but she knows the market and what readers want better than I do. I'm not seeing numbers or hearing sales reports and what booksellers are saying. She's reading the manuscript in one gulp too. With fresh eyes. I honestly can't do that, no matter how long I let it chill after I finish it. And I can never do that for long because of all that picking time. Her opinion really matters. So I polish, fret, then send it to my agent because she likes to take the first peek. She lets me know if it's genius or What the..?. I tune it up one more time, take a breath and hit send to my editor. Then wait.

It's gone. Do I get to relax and celebrate? Are you kidding? Luckily I have another contract now. And a deadline. I know how long it takes me to finish a project. Too long. I have to get books out there faster or I'll lose my fan base. Only big names can keep loyalty going with one book a year. So I open a new file, take another breath and write "Chapter One."

Gerry Bartlett just sent REAL VAMPIRES HAVE MORE TO LOVE to her editor at Berkley. It's book 6 in her Glory St. Clair series and will be a December, 2010 trade paperback release.