



Getting Published: What No-One Tells You

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THIS TITLE SEEMS like an excellent opportunity for a good long whine. Or a mournful bleat or a howling RAGE or maybe, *sotto voce*, a forlorn tale of hopes dashed.

What do you imagine the life of the successful author to be — a madcap dash between TV-interview sofas and award parties? Long lunches with the lovely editor or the devoted agent before getting a quick cab home to put in some important time in the counting house counting out the money?

Well...no. To the casual observer I have nothing to complain about. After all I am published. Widely. Internationally even. My works are still in print. I earn royalties. I meet my lovely readers from time to time but — you knew there was going to be a 'but' didn't you? The Kardashians are not the only ones with big butts.

BUT what do you imagine will happen when you get published? Fame? Fortune? An editor or agent who discerns and nourishes your talent, alerts you to new opportunities, keeps in touch...encourages you, rings you for a career-directing chat?

Dream on.

I am not the only one to find life – and the publishing life in particular – is not without its disappointments. The successful, well-balanced author



needs to be that rare creature that possesses the emotional hide of a buffalo and the artistic sensitivity of the butterfly.

I have met authors who have had success, sales, awards, an agent and a book launch — but the publicist forgot to invite them to their own launch. Sad — but true.

I personally have taken part in the Edinburgh Children's Book Festival three times — and on two of those occasions the publisher failed to get the books to the book signing session.

Of course, celebs produce the *really* popular books. And celebs get all the publicity budget. There may be a connection. Waterstones won't stock your book unless your publisher pushes it, discounts it — and even pays them.

Ho hum.

As a reasonably successful mid-list author no one makes much of an effort to publicise you. New books might get a bit of attention for the blink of an eye, but it passes. The same book even though it stays in print and continues to sell will never be mentioned again. It will be our little secret. Gather a few authors together in a room and does the conversation veer towards culture, philosophy, art...literature? No, it does not. It focuses on complaints — publicists, publishers, party invitations (lack of), editors and of course...earnings.

Don't expect a relationship with an editor who cares or even knows that much about you. She (usually a she) will be friendly, *gushing* even. She will be your new best friend. Then she will disappear.

Personnel in publishing are on a sort of carousel. Round and round they spin between different posts, different publishers. One of my best editors (we did one book and spoke of others) actually left the country. The last



author who had an editor, dedicated and knowledgeable, friendly and available, has long since left the building.

To succeed in publishing, you will have to have perseverance. You will have to be pushy. You will have to be talented.

And it helps to be lucky.