



## What No One Tells You About Getting Published

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**B**EFORE I WAS PUBLISHED I'd occasionally see interviews with writers on the telly. They did say things like 'Oh I never read reviews!' And I'd think naïvely to myself, *Why on earth not? Surely that's the best bit.* Perhaps, I considered, they were being coy.

These days, what with the internet and everything, people are keen to share their thoughts on everything from washing machines to vacuum cleaners to the local tyre fitter. And obviously, the last thing they read.

But occasionally you might be fortunate enough to get a personal comment direct from the horse's mouth. 'You wrote *that* book? Oh my God it changed my life! What a wonderful piece of literature! Will you sign it for me?'

Oh look — what's that coming over the hill? I do believe it's an anecdote.

I was at a party at my sister-in-law's house. A casual gathering with a buffet. As I clutched a paper plate and waited for my turn to choose from the delicious spread, she gestured to the man in front of me. A man who, I had already observed, had a clear predilection for cocktail sausages.

'Hey, Pete', she said. 'This is Martin. The one who wrote that book.'

He glanced at me as he gathered up several pieces of pork pie.



‘The sci-fi one with the green man on the cover?’

‘That’s the one.’

‘Oh, I know.’

He selected some sausage rolls.

‘I bought that. When I heard you’re a friend of Moira’s.’

I blushed slightly and glanced around to see who might overhear. I didn’t want to be too embarrassed by what this man was about to say. How he appreciated the complexity of the characters and admired my incisive socio-political commentary, the way I’d highlighted the problems and contradictions of our world through skilful juxtaposition against a far future setting. That my words had given him pause to consider the flaws in the society we have created, spoken to him at a truly personal level, and ultimately, changed – his – life.

I must admit I felt some anxiety. After all, I wasn’t used to such recognition!

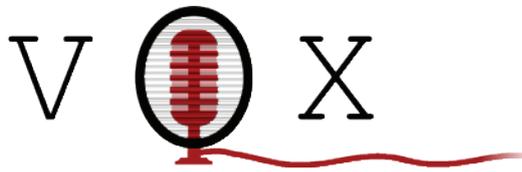
Not only that, but the splendid cheesecake at the end of the table was disappearing fast.

As he grabbed a handful of crisps he delivered what was quite possibly one of the most insightful and concise critiques of my work I have ever received.

‘It’s alright. You know. When you’re reading it.’

It’s possible, dear listener, that I may have slightly exaggerated the Birmingham accent. But only slightly.

From a punter who had actually taken the trouble to buy my book and



read it, this was a pretty positive remark. But being a writer, of course, what I took from this was:

*It's only afterwards that you realise how bad it is...*

And there we have it. What no-one tells you about being published is that not only might people read your work, one day you might actually meet them. And no amount of trifle will sweeten the truth.