



## Getting Published: What No One Tells You

---

Tamar Yellin

**N**O ONE TELLS YOU it will take so long. That instead of being hailed as a child genius (your first manuscript is sent to a publisher at the age of eight) you won't have a short story appear until you are thirty, and you won't hold your first novel in your hands until the age of forty-two.

No one tells you there are so many hoops to jump through. That before you can get a publisher you must get an agent, and that before you can get an agent it is a good idea to have a CV as long as your arm and a list of contacts, as the likelihood of being picked out of the slush pile is about a thousand to one (though you will, eventually, be picked out of the slush pile).

No one tells you that, having acquired an agent, you haven't got it made: that even a top agent from a well-established firm can send your book round all the publishers in London and get a resounding *No*. That even when you've written and rewritten to the best of your ability it could still be better, and that any number of admiring comments don't cut it when the answer is still *No*.

Nobody explains the mathematics of how, when 400 books are being published every week, the odds on getting yours into print seem to be something like those of winning the lottery.

Nor do they mention how, once you *are* accepted, there is still more work to do. Your editor wants a major rewrite. The title gets changed. Line by



line your words are queried, altered, polished. The cover is *nothing* like the one you visualised. You go along with it so as not to seem difficult.

At every stage, someone wants to contribute their twopence worth. Even the copy-editor adds a split infinitive.

With all this, no one needs to tell you what it feels like to hold your book in your hands for the first time. It's a dream come true.

But they never described how impotent you would feel afterwards. How all that you do in the way of publicity seems like a drop in the ocean. How rare it is to get noticed. How when you do get noticed, it isn't always in the way you hoped.

The praise makes you feel big-headed, and the criticism really hurts. You always focus on the latter rather than the former. It's just the way it is.

And then, a shower of prizes and shortlists might fall suddenly, out of nowhere; and for a brief, hallucinatory moment – always watching the size of that head, so that you can get through doors – you are living the dream.

But what nobody – *nobody* – tells you is that just when you think you have arrived, you can go back to square one. Rejection all round. You're nobody again. That's the world of publishing.

*Write for the love of it and for nothing else.* That's what they should tell you.