

THE PERILS OF BEING PUBLISHED—Professional Jealousy by Gerry Bartlett

You ever hear someone congratulate a writer on her new success, then turn around and mutter “I hate her.”? Oh, come on. We’ve all done it. You’ve worked hard, why couldn’t it have been you getting the contract, hitting the list, signing with the dream agent? Well? But what does jealousy do for you? Sucks the life and creativity right out of you, friend. So that when you get home from the lunch or the meeting and sit down at your own computer, you’re suddenly in doubt. What if I never sell, never get another contract, never hit a list, never get an agent? Why am I wasting hours of my life when I could be at MacDonald’s drive-thru getting a Big Mac and fries so I’ll feel temporarily better? Or maybe a pint of Ben and Jerry’s soothes your pain.

Whatever, it’s all self-destructive and wrong. I have a good friend who has hit the New York Times. Who makes twice the money with her writing (oops, make that three times) than I do. Am I jealous? No. Because we are so close I see exactly how hard she works to make those books worth the big bucks. She has no real life away from her computer. When it’s time for a book to release, she’s terrified. If a book bombs, what will happen with the next contract? It’s one thing to ask for a little more money each time, but we never want to have our advances cut. That signals a downward spiral, a death spiral, that could mean we’re headed toward a new pseudonym and the long claw upward again. Pressure? You bet. Am I jealous of it? No freakin’ way.

And then there’s the actual writing process. I can speak to this. I’m on number six in my REAL VAMPIRES series. I feel like I have to make each book better than the next. I’m sure my editor expects it too. And my fans? They read and reread the books that have come before endlessly. If I make a mistake, I get an email. Not only do I have to have a central character who they love stay true to herself, but hot love scenes, a mystery plot, action and, hello?, humor. No pressure there. Am I whining? How dare I? I have a contract. There are writers out there jealous of me. Oh, yeah? Do I have a contract for a book seven? No. Will I get one? No idea. Let’s wait for the numbers on the one out now, that’s number five. And, sorry, but you got a lousy print run because of the economy and booksellers not ordering like they used to. Still jealous? That’s okay, I can live with that.

I’ll make my point and shut up. It’s this: Don’t waste time stewing about other writer’s successes or gossiping and gloating over another writer’s failures. It’s bad karma. Take care of your own career. Write your book. Be glad when someone succeeds. Good karma. Support your local pubs. More good karma. Behind every successful author is hard work, dues paid and luck. Jealousy never got them a single break. Think about it.

Gerry Bartlett is celebrating the February release of REAL VAMPIRES HATE THEIR THIGHS from Berkley Publishing. Go to her website, gerrybartlett.com, to find out more about her fan sites and her REAL VAMPIRES series.