

You'd think after having written dozens of books and getting thirteen of them published, I'd have all the confidence in the world in my writing. You'd be wrong. In fact, the longer I write, the more I doubt myself. One reason that's so is because of the nature of this business and how it keeps changing. Yes, there are the golden few who are consistently successful and have contract after contract handed to them with increasingly better terms. I hear about them, read about them on Publisher's Marketplace, but I'm not sure they aren't somewhat of an urban legend. Even Nora admits to moments of self-doubt when starting new projects. Amazing. You'd think the phemons in our writing world would be able to relax and admit they are talented and every book they write will be a guaranteed best seller. Not so.

Okay, so we know this is a tough business. I've whined about it here more than once. I'm scrounging for a contract right now and have decided to self-publish my next Real Vampires book. The thought terrifies me. I cannot understand how anyone would have the self-confidence to just write a book and put it out into the public eye. Without the scrutiny of the editorial team available in a publishing house? Come on! For years I've used my critique group, two very well-educated and talented women, who read my stuff and mark all over it, as my first readers. They always find things I simply don't see. They don't tell me how to write my book, but they do give me food for thought. I get notes like: this character wouldn't do that, or this section dragged for me, or is this scene necessary? So I sit and think about those things and frequently do a pretty major rewrite. That's before it will hit an editor's desk. She can have her own thoughts, something totally different from the critique partners' input. Of course she's reading it in one sitting. They get it one or two chapters at a time. After that editorial hazing, I fix it again and then a copy editor gets hold of it. I have comma issues, love to repeat myself and have a habit of ignoring my grammar check. More fixes. You see why I have a problem with confidence?

When I self-publish, I'll still have my faithful friends and critique partners, but I hate the idea of hiring a stranger to edit the thing. She won't know my series. This will be number eleven

with the same characters. I was blessed to have editors, copy and otherwise, who knew how to keep my series consistent. I have no confidence in my ability to do that. I'm too busy worrying about being funny, entertaining, and don't forget sexy. My latest review in a major magazine called my book "mild". I was highly insulted. My pair had sex early and often. But I guess compared to erotica, it was pretty straightforward lovemaking. Sigh. No whips, no ménage. What was I thinking? So any new series ideas I have will have to not only sizzle, they will have to steam. I am hesitant. Can I do that? Is it what my fan base wants? I have no confidence that I know which path to take.

So there you have it. An author with decades in the trenches is gnawing off her fingernails worrying about her career. And to make matters worse, newbies all around me are happily writing stories and throwing them up on the 'Net with feverish abandon. No confidence issues there. Don't they get it? What goes on the 'Net stays on the 'Net. Forever. I have the rights back for my first three books. I won't put them up as is. They need tightening, updating. Because my name will be on them. And I can't stand the idea that they might not be as excellent as they should be. There's that confidence thing again.

I hope you aren't a victim of the waffling willies like I am. Back when I started, I didn't hesitate to send things out to editors. I earned some rejections, some less than great scores from contests, but I was in the game. Now I'm wondering if the game is worth this stress. But leaving this venue isn't an option for me. I love creating stories and I love seeing my name on a book cover. And that's the bottom line. I will do almost anything, even bring out the whips in a future book, to get my work back into a book store. Because I want an editorial team again. Floating out here without a safety net is just too scary.

Gerry Bartlett's next book is *REAL VAMPIRES KNOW SIZE MATTERS*, book 10 in the series from Berkley Publishing, coming December 3, 2013. You can read more Perils articles and sign up for her newsletter at gerrybartlett.com.