

A non-writing friend asked me that question the other day. How was my writing going? Now you know he didn't want to hear my whine about waiting for my editor to respond to my proposal or the frustrations of self-publishing. He wanted some kind of inside scoop from the glamorous world of the published author. Yeah, right. Like how I'd stayed up till 1:30 trying to get the chapter I was working on to hang together? Doubt it.

Instead of the reality of lying sleepless wondering if the twenty years I've put into my writing career had been worth it, I gushed about the exciting fight scene I'd just written. He was riveted. This was good stuff. We had a laugh imagining that my two paranormal characters were based on him and his boss. He's slight, the boss is massive. The fight would have been over when the boss man landed on top of my computer geek pal. Hah. Hah.

Yes, it's different when you're talking to your non-writing friends. That's why I treasure my time with my buds who are in the business and understand what I go through on a daily basis. I met my critique partners at a chapter meeting. When people ask me why I still go to those monthly local gatherings (and I belong to two chapters), I have a ready answer—I love the company of writers. I get energized just by being surrounded by fellow sufferers. And the featured speaker, even if she's talking about something I've heard before, usually has a nugget of info in her speech that makes me think.

Published authors are dropping out of RWA by droves. Self-published authors who don't like the new parameters for membership are taking their toys and going home. I'm sad about that. I may be something of an extrovert now, but I wasn't born that way. I like the isolation of creating my stories or I wouldn't have stuck with it all these years. But, hey, it's not healthy to just molder away in your cave without outside stimulation. You need to reach out and not just into cyberspace. I don't count that as getting human communication and interaction. Texting,

emailing. Sorry, that's fake. And can be false advertising. That's why I don't respond to all those men on Facebook who like my smile and want to meet.

No, you need to get with other writers face to face now and then. And what better venue than a writing club? Oh, was that politically incorrect? Sue me. I call it like I see it. Some of you reading this are going to be upset by the new membership guidelines and are going to be falling into the limbo of associate member. Who cares? I will still speak to you even if you never get past chapter three in your work in progress. Or you may have finished your book but are terrified to send it out. I can relate. Been there, done that. Keep coming to meetings and maybe we'll help you find your courage or a way to start something new that you *will* send out. There's a group dynamic that can give you strength and help you find your path. Is it to publication? I hope so.

But don't be fooled. Or rushed into "throwing something up on Amazon" just to get that voting membership. Once your name is on a work, it will stay there forever. Oh you can take it down later. But someone, somewhere has read it, will remember it and have judged it. Make sure it's as good as it can be. I slaved over my stories for YEARS until I managed to get published. No, make that DECADES. I cried, gave up, started over and took some harsh criticism. But all that paid off in the end. If you don't have the stones for that journey, *adios*.

But if you do, I hope you'll reach out to fellow authors. Come to chapter meetings and get what you can out of an organization that I owe my career to. It's been a long and successful one. So how's my writing going? Fine, thank you. How about yours?

Gerry Bartlett is the author of the bestselling Real Vampires series. Watch for **Real Vampires Say Read My Hips**, coming soon at e-retailers everywhere. You can connect with her at gerrybartlett.com, on [facebook.com/gerrybartlett](https://www.facebook.com/gerrybartlett), or [twitter@gerrybartlett](https://twitter.com/gerrybartlett).