

Agents, Editors, and Publishers

By Holly Lisle

You gotta have a good agent if you're going to write full time. No quibbles, no waffling, no 'maybe I'll jump first and get one later.' And when I say good agent, I mean one who loves your work, is enthusiastic about your career and your prospects, can see you doing more and bigger things than you're doing right now.

Even if your spouse doesn't believe in you, your agent has to. I'm lucky. I have a spectacular agent, and he told me that if I wanted to keep selling I was going to have to write bigger books, and he beat me over the head until I figured out what he meant by bigger books, and he tirelessly read drafts and outlines until I came up with something that worked—and then he sold the project for more money than I'd ever made before. (I was a nurse, so we're not talking fortunes here, but the deal he got me was damned nice and was a show of faith in the project on the part of the editor and publisher who bought it, too.)

You have to have a good agent. Then you have to listen to what he tells you. You have to act on his advice.

You have to work and re-work and be willing to admit that no matter how many books you already have out there, you don't know everything. If you do that, your good agent will hook you up with a good editor, who will read what you've written and tell you how to fix it. Once again, listen. Learn. Follow advice.

If you have an accessible publisher, he'll give you advice, too, but most publishers are invisible. I had one who was accessible, and he was great—I got some story ideas from him,

and did a few books where he pitched the idea to me, and I found him willing to listen when I pitched ideas to him, too.

It was very personal, and a fun way to work. Now my publisher is a name on a masthead and I'll probably never meet him. If your publisher is involved in your books, enjoy the fact. If he isn't though, don't worry about it. A good editor and a good agent are all you need.

Except for...

Doing the work >>

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