

The Call

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Writing is such a — well, a crap shoot. Sometimes it seemed like my chances were better for hitting the lottery than having my book published, and some of the contest judges and most of the editors and agents I'd contacted seemed to agree. Yes, I took the "trite" and "melodramatic premise" comments personally, but I took the constructive comments about strengthening the internal conflict more seriously. And when a judge says you have a strong and distinctive voice, that's a good thing.

On the other hand, when a Silhouette editor rejects your book written for their Intimate Moments line, telling you on the basis of a one-page query that she's "looking for stories with strong emotional appeal, realistic characters, believable compelling conflict and an engaging writing style," it can put quite a dent in one's ego. Actually, it made me so mad I could spit. Other rejections I dealt with gracefully, but this one...

Since then I've had an agent tell me he loved my characters and my story, too. He was still reading **Love on the Run** when I received the call. For accuracy's sake, I have to say that "my call" was an e-mail from Wings ePress. "It is with great pleasure..."

I didn't scream or jump up and down like I thought I would. Instead, I took a deep breath — a very deep breath — and then read the rest of the e-mail which contained instructions to print out two copies of the attached contract. All I could think was... this is it. I did it. Someone, of obviously great taste and intelligence, wants to buy my book. My book!

When I opened the e-mail, it was 10 on a Friday night and too late to comfortably call anyone. Besides, I was too busy trying to understand the contract terminology.

But I wasn't all that calm. Yes, my heart was beating faster and my knees were a little weak — almost like really great sex. Honestly.

In fact, I'm still walking around feeling like I'm in love, and there's no real life hero on my horizon. So I guess I'm in love with my editor and my copy editor — especially my editor. We've since talked on the telephone, and it's a heady experience to have someone, who's supposed to know good storytelling, tell you she loves your book and the characters and how it kept her turning the pages and made her forget she was supposed to be editing.

I took most of the weekend to read over the contract. I had some questions and I e-mailed them to the editor. I received back the responses I wanted to hear. One of them concerned the use of a pseudonym. Somehow my real name just doesn't do it for me, nor does my maiden name which is longer than most books are wide. I can use a pseudonym, or not, and I retain the rights to it. I wanted to choose a name that would make it easy for my Internet friends and La Femme Nikita fan fiction fans to remember and find my book. After all, I've been answering to the name "Marie" for several years.

On Saturday morning, I called my best cyber-pal and my mother and e-mailed everyone under the sun. When my son came by to take me for shooting practice — that's another story — his response was typically male and laconic, "Cool." He may have asked about his million dollar inheritance, but I ignored that one.

I made a few announcements on the La Femme Nikita story boards — never too soon to promote. I also called the writer who first encouraged me to go for my dream. She was almost as thrilled as I was. "The first step in a great journey," she called it.

At work, everyone is so excited. I was honored at our department meeting with tulips, cupcakes and a Snoopy figurine that says World's Greatest Author. (Okay, so they're guilty of a little exaggeration.) Apparently, they knew all along that I would be published, even when I didn't. I'm going to be interviewed for the hospital newsletter which will be released closer to May 2002.

I'm impulsive, and yes, I signed the contract. I know that e-publishing is in its infancy, but I've embraced technology and I think the younger generation will embrace it more than our generation has. I confess I still want that book in my hand, and there is a print-on-demand option. However, I didn't take the step of signing the contract without some foreknowledge of the company. I had e-mailed privately with one of their authors, and I had seen them listed as the early publisher of a writer, Susan Vaughan, who also published one of the best Intimate Moments books I've read, *Dangerous Attraction*.

We're now into the copy edit process. Originally, the book was scheduled for publication in November 2002, but they had a spot open up in May 2002 and asked if I could have my revisions completed in time for *Love on the Run* to be published then. The word "no" wasn't in my vocabulary. I fired off an e-mail and accepted the May publication date. Normally I would have 30 days for revisions, but mine were done in three. Yes!

I think it's a tremendous advantage to have the opportunity to work with an editor and to go through the entire publication process. It will tell the next editor who considers my work that I've met deadlines and that I'm a professional. And hopefully, I'll sell some books in the process.

I have to say none of this would have ever happened without RWA and MCRW. I've learned so much and had access to resources that would've been denied me as a wannabe writer. But now I have to finish my third book and perhaps, even tame the wild runaway first book.