
BEING DARED?

My friend Jeni was writing a book. Wow! Fabulous! I was very impressed. As a lover of books, I knew that it must take a lot of effort to create an original story. Naturally, I asked her how it was coming along. "Almost done", was her eager response. When will I get to read it was my next question, as we sat having a quiet cuppa amidst the hustle and bustle of a local café? It was then that Jeni asked me if I would read it and give her some feedback. I felt honoured that she would trust me with such an important task and very happy to do so.

At our next catch up and many of the subsequent ones, we could be found discussing the plot, characters and language of Jeni's book. It was set in South Africa, where she had lived before emigrating to England and prior to the start of our friendship. Then one day she showed me a newspaper article that she had brought with her. The Daily Mail were holding a competition to find first time, unpublished aspiring authors. She was planning to enter. The next two weeks Jeni was too busy to see me but instead would send me pages to read and comment on a regular basis as she made revisions of her book. These were duly returned promptly and then finally we got together for a quick cuppa about a month before the competition entry deadline.

Posted it off yet? I asked eagerly, fully anticipating an excited and positive reply. "No!" She almost snapped my head off with her quick fire response. But why not, I wanted to know.

"It's not ready." Came the equally terse retort. But it must be by now, Jeni, you've been working on it day and night for the past two week, was mine.

Then came the detailed explanation. To say that Jeni was upset was quite simply an understatement. She was distraught. Miserable and even angry. I just happened to be in the firing line. All my attempts to get her on an even keel once more were met with rebuffs.

"You have no idea how difficult it is to write a book!" "It's my baby and I want it to be perfect."

Very foolishly I tried to point out that no baby is perfect and that a publisher was bound to want to make changes to enable the book to be more saleable. That remark was met by a very stony stare and a reply

"You just don't understand. I dare you to try writing one yourself and see how you get on with it!"



AP BAZELEY

author 

Well, by now I was getting a bit hit under the collar myself. It was like waving a big red flag right under the nose of an enormous bull. I have always accepted dares. I would never let my “big boy” cousins think that I was too timid to have a go at whatever hare-brained schemes they had thought up. So I went home with the dare ringing loud in my mind. Valuing our friendship, I realised that she might well have a point and perhaps I should walk a mile or two in her moccasins then found myself climbing the stairs to the study bedroom. There I dug out from the files some of my old scribbling notebooks going back to my childhood days and sat down on the daybed to read through them for inspiration.

After a few hours I got out a new notebook and just began to write. In ten days I had a rough draft of my story. In a couple more I had tidied it up and then it was typed up in an edited form. My first novel was finished, I thought. So, it was put into the required stated format for entry and posted off. In other words, doubled spaced and in a brown jiffy bag and placed in the care of the Special Recorded guys down at my local Post Office.

You will want to know, did Jeni ever forgive my arrogance? Very graciously, yes. Are we still friends? Of course. Even though she is now living and working in Germany we still meet up every few months for our catch ups. Did either of us win the competition? Sadly, we did not!

