

Part Three

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*Winning the Hearts of  
Editors*

By Rowena Kuo



## Chapter 21

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### *Introduction to Winning the Hearts of Editors*

**M**y older brother holds the claim as my very first client. Five and a half years between us, we arrived in this country with him in first-grade at the age of six, and I had just turned one. Because he understood very little English, he repeated two early grades and struggled throughout school. He did not enjoy reading at all. My parents worked double shifts, and my grandmother, who spoke no English, raised us as my parents worked during those first rough years. My grandmother and I learned English together, watching daytime soap operas and Harry Caray on the Chicago Cubs while my brother battled through school.

Although I hate to admit it, I owe my love for stories to daytime TV. Think about daytime TV for a moment. My grandmother's favorite soap opera started production in 1963, and continues to this day. That means the writers for that show must hold the interest of the audience continually in order for the show to remain on air. So, too, should authors hold that mindset and vision to stand the test of time for their work to become immortal.

I have a theory that memory begins at language acquisition. I learned to read and write at an early age. I love books. I remember the

first time my parents took me to a public library, and I thought I had been raptured. I raced up and down the aisles and ran my hand along all the book spines. My family must have thought I'd gone insane. I would say that to be an editor, one has to first love reading. I propose that to be a good writer, one doesn't have to be a good editor, and to be a good editor, one doesn't have to be a good writer. What unifies excellent writing and editing is to be a prolific reader, understanding how words flow together and in what combinations those words have the greatest impact.

When my brother reached high school, he asked me to help him with creative writing, essays, and term papers. He studied hours and hours just to achieve a passing grade. I never knew a more diligent and driven student than my brother. He recognized his weaknesses and used his strengths to overcome those weaknesses. Never one to procrastinate, if he had a paper due at the end of the semester, he would have a rough draft to me the first week. If I had a paper due at the end of the semester, I would wait until the night before the due date and stay up writing, only to have it printed five minutes before class started. I would still get the A, but my weakness centered around procrastination.

I jeopardized my health and killed countless brain cells just by lack of sleep while my brother fought hard to stay healthy and keep every single brain cell he had because, according to him, he needed every single one to survive. So we struck a deal. I would help him get the A, and he would help me with pacing my homework. This arrangement lasted throughout our high school and college careers. Whenever he received an A for a paper, he would treat me to dinner with his friends. Me, a high school kid hanging out with college kids. I have the best brother in the world.

Only after he graduated college did my brother admit to me that he didn't always get an A. One time, a college professor asked him to stay after class. The professor had compared my brother's in-class writing to the paper he turned in from home and confronted him about plagiarism. My brother confessed that his little sister edited his

writing and presented the professor a stack of all his rough drafts with my red-pen edits. Impressed by my brother's hard work, the professor did not expel him and had no problem with my brother having an editor, but she insisted he must cite the editor. Because he didn't cite me from the beginning, a B would be the highest grade my brother would achieve for the paper. My brother had treated me out to dinner with his friends anyway, as if he had received an A.

But what did that teach me? We as editors must be careful not to edit out author's voice. Since then, I have worked for the development of authors and screenwriters to perfect their art. I speak from my own experience in the publishing industry, and although I can't promise you will get published, I hope that if you never give up, there are no barriers to achieving your dreams.

When it comes to editors as gatekeepers to publishing, let's first discuss the various types of editing services and how authors can maximize this knowledge on the road to publication.

## **Wrapping it Up**

What unifies excellent writing and editing is to be a prolific reader, understanding how words flow together and in what combinations those words have the greatest impact.

- **Takeaway One:** Editors must be careful not to edit out author's voice.
- **Takeaway Two:** If you never give up, there are no barriers to achieving your dreams.