

## SUBMISSION SHOCK

by Sandy Bernstein, editor of Sour Grapes  
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As a newcomer in the small press business, I feel it's my God given right to complain - hence the name of my newsletter, "Sour Grapes." I've had lots of practice in the fine art of whining, it just comes naturally being a free-lance writer. But, I must admit the woes take on a different feel from the editor's side of the desk.

For years I've read editor's comments like: Send an SASE or else, no coffee stains on the manuscript, watch spelling and punctuation, fold pages together - not separately, and above all, follow the guidelines. These are some of the common gripes editors share. Until recently, I thought only stressed out editors made such overstated remarks. They must be singling out beginners. Published writers wouldn't be so unprofessional. I'll admit my share of mistakes, but even as a naive beginner I took

pride in my work. Doesn't anyone learn submission procedures? It's only common sense. Try explaining rules to a real beginner who thinks everything they write is golden. Surely their brilliant prose will blow the editor away, whether or not they follow the guidelines. I suggest new writers READ the trade magazines. Find out what it's all about before sending out.

Now that I've joined the ranks of small press editors, I can't believe some of the submissions I'm seeing. Horrendous! I recently received an envelope with writing all over it. There wasn't an inch to spare. I'm surprised it was delivered. I took a deep breath before opening this alien jigsaw puzzle. Inside were 3 poorly photo-copied pages of poems and essays with references scribbled off to the side. The text contained cross outs, check marks, underlines, typos and numbers running down the left margin. Was this a joke? It was difficult to figure who the author was - not that I really wanted to know. I scratched my head and looked around my office to see if I'd landed in the Twilight Zone. When I realised I was still sitting in my chair, I called my partner. She received the exact package, and she's at a separate address! What a complete waste of time. I should mention that on the back of this busy envelope was a statement that said we need not return or acknowledge. Of course there was no SASE. I still don't know if there was a point to this. Undoubtedly, it was the worse submission this new editor has seen.

We've had the typical problems too. But some mistakes are inexcusable, especially when they're from writers who claim to be widely published, listing professional publications. Shame! Some have such disregard for their work. It boils down to one thing - laziness. Or perhaps some take less pride in submitting to the small press. They should know quality is still important. Even a newsletter for disgruntled writers has its standards.

Ok, it's clear I'm suffering from submission shock, but I'll recover. I didn't realise I'd have to second guess the mentality of the writers out there. Not that it's as a surprise, after all, I've met all kinds. I can honestly say that every writer should do time as an editor and vice versa. There's something to be said for experience, albeit if only on a small scale. Perhaps the writer in me will have to find a solution for twisted editors and the writers who bend them out of shape. Nah - on second thought, I've had enough horror stories for one day. :)

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MOON SALOON~MOON SALOON~MOON SALOON

\*this is the drunken poet section\*

Note: This isn't really a section for the inebriated. We've named the poetry section after a saloon only because (thanks to the likes of Poe and others) the word "poet" is often considered synonymous with "drunkard". Not that I'm dissing Edgar, he's one of my favourites. :)