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Menu

## You Have the Wrong Person

December 8, 2017 / [Jenna Glatzer](#) / [No Comments](#)



It was, without a doubt, the craziest email I'd ever received.

"We wanted to know if you'd be interested in writing Celine Dion's authorized biography."

I stared at the screen, dumbfounded. Me? Of all the thousands of authors they could have picked, me?

*They made a mistake, I worried. They have my résumé confused with someone else's.*

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Although I had experience writing articles for magazines, I didn't have much book-writing experience. I'd written three picture books for the educational market and edited an anthology of success stories from people who'd [overcome anxiety disorders](#). I'd also just finished ghostwriting a book with a reality TV star, but it hadn't been published yet, so the editor who contacted me couldn't have even known about it.

There seemed to be no possible way this made sense, but I wasn't about to ask what they were thinking until after the contracts were signed. As soon as the signatures were inked, though, I did. "So, why me?"

"Her team really wants a writer who can convey Celine's warmth. We think you two would be a great match. We read an article of yours about a man raising funds for breast cancer research, and that's the tone we're looking for," she told me.

That article was a little newspaper insert about hometown heroes. I'd been paid maybe \$200 for it. In no way could I have imagined that such an unassuming article would be the ticket that enabled me to work with one of the best-selling music artists of all time. It's the stuff of fantasies—like actors who get "discovered" at a school play.

# Less *experience* doesn't necessarily mean less *talent*. Just because you might not have the best credits in the room doesn't mean you're not the right candidate for the job.

Indeed, I felt discovered—and terrified. I'd just recently [overcome agoraphobia](#), and when I agreed to write the book, I knew it meant I was going to have to fly across the country from New York to Las Vegas to meet with Celine. I thought I might find some confidence before the first trip. Instead, I had a breakdown the night before I left.

Not only was I [contending with the fear](#) of panic attacks resurfacing on the plane, but I was about to enter a world that was way out of my comfort zone. My shoes were from Payless. The recording device I used was a cheap cassette recorder from Radio Shack. I was in my 20s and felt like my voice sounded much younger. I knew that Celine and her husband, Rene, had approved me based on my articles, but I had grave concerns that perhaps no one had told them I'd never done a "big" book like this before. What would I say if they asked about my other books? (*Here, check out this one I wrote for fourth graders about the exploration of the moon!*)

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Talk about impostor syndrome. This wasn't unfounded paranoia; I really felt like I was sneaking into the Oscars.

I didn't sleep that night. I cried. I considered calling the publisher and canceling, but somehow I forced myself onto the plane. On the flight, I tried to talk sense into myself about why I deserved to be there.

Every person who has a stellar résumé didn't have a stellar résumé at one point. Ralph Lauren was a clerk at Brooks Brothers. After six years of trying, George R.R. Martin wasn't making a living as a writer and got a job as a teacher. George Clooney played mostly small, supporting TV roles for nearly 20 years before his breakthrough in *ER*. Even Celine herself was once just an entertainer at her parents' piano bar in Quebec.

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I tried to see myself as someone who had earned this chance, and in doing so, I recognized a few things I was doing right:

- **Meeting deadlines:** In freelance fields, when there's no boss looming over you, you have to [be disciplined](#) enough to keep on track. Even if it meant pulling all-nighters, I was someone editors could count on.
- **Over-researching:** I worked hard to become an expert on any topic I wrote about, which meant doing more in-depth research than would ever appear in my articles. When I interviewed someone, I had already read everything I could get my hands on to make sure my questions were informed.
- **Collaborating:** I had no problem [accepting criticism](#) and addressing rewrites.
- **Getting the small jobs done right:** Regardless of pay, I gave it my all on each assignment, going over my words repeatedly to ensure I was turning in work that would make my editors' jobs easier.

Over the course of my then-seven-year career, I had focused on paying my dues and hadn't taken many [bold actions](#) to move myself to a different lane. I wasn't actively promoting myself for things like celebrity work because I didn't think it was within my reach yet.

Working with Celine changed so much for me.

Within just a few minutes of meeting her, I felt at ease. She has a strong maternal quality, and was quick to offer a hug and a kind greeting. I was supposed to take just one trip to meet with her, but after we spent a couple of nights sitting on the floor of her dressing room until everyone but the security guards had gone home, she asked if I would come back—again and again.

## After seven years of dedicated work, I knew this was the solid ground for the rest of my career. It was exactly where I was meant to be.

By my fourth trip, we were sharing snacks, singing songs and exchanging *I love you's*. I understood her. She felt like a [longtime friend](#), and when it came to writing the book, the words flowed easily. I'd joined fan groups to find out what they wanted to learn about Celine, and in the book, I answered their questions and provided glimpses of her life that I felt sure hadn't been written before. The editor had been right. We were a terrific match, and it was one of the best experiences of my life.

To top it off, everyone was happy: Celine and her team, the editor, the publisher and eventually the fans. It also marked the end of my impostor syndrome. After seven years of dedicated work, I knew this was the solid ground for the rest of my career. It was exactly where I was meant to be.

*Related:* [4 Ways to Overcome Impostor Syndrome](#)

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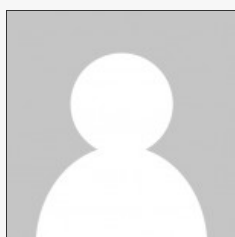
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All I can hope is that the ability to push through the incredible discomfort of 'I don't know' will be a good ability to have.

## Jenna Glatzer



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