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Agent/Query Submission Central

~this week~

QUERY WORKSHOP #3

Your query third paragraph

- We'll review and evaluate:
 - email SUBJECT lines
 - revised query first and second paragraphs
 - query third paragraphs
 - Facebook techniques
- ongoing Q & A
- preview of next week's focus on red-flags and writing mechanics

THE QUERY THIRD PARAGRAPH~

IN REVIEW:

Each paragraph of your query has a specific purpose.

Paragraph #1:

Your first paragraph is written to “hook and hold” agent interest. This is done by introducing the core of your story core: who wants what, why, what stands in their way, and the terrible “or else” that could occur if the protagonist doesn’t get what they want.

BTW: The query first paragraph usually is the only one ever read. If the time-pressured agent doesn’t discover what they want to know, *immediately*, they’ll pass. This is why your first paragraph is the most important three to four sentences in your entire submission package. Write and re-write it to make sure it defines the core of your story:

- who wants what and why?
- what stands in their way?
- the terrible “or else” that can occur if they don’t get what they want?

Paragraph #2:

The second paragraph expands information revealed in your first paragraph. It also ends with a more “dire” tease than at the end of the first.

Curiosity about the story will propel the agent to keep scrolling and quick read your third paragraph, then move on to your synopsis which shows the full story arc, from beginning to end.

Most writers, in their first draft, pack the second paragraph with so much information it doesn’t allow sufficient space to expand the story or *reveal* more about the protagonist. The thoughts and emotions of your protagonist are much more important and appealing to the agent than a time-line of “this happened and then that happened.”

Your second paragraph needs to:

- reveal the identity of the antagonist or (situation) that blocks your protagonist from achieving their goal.
- focus on and reveal more of your protagonist's inner world as shown by their thoughts, words, and actions.
- include a brief description of the setting/place/era if appropriate.
 - For example: crusty-poison salt marshes surround the witches' castle.
- end with a tease that heightens the agent's interest so they'll wonder, "Hmmm, what happens?"

If you've written these first two paragraphs correctly, the agent will keep reading. At that point, you have captured their interest. They'll skim over your third paragraph, then read your synopsis to find out what happens and how the story is resolved.

We'll dive deep into the third paragraph during this workshop session, but first . . .

Questions submitted this week~

ONE: About formatting an agent-and-device friendly submission.

TWO: Where are transcripts and videos posted?

THREE: Why is it important to revise first pages for a submission package when your manuscript already has been polished and ready to go?

FOUR: Why do some agents offer to edit your work, for a fee while others offer revision suggestions but don't charge for it? Why the difference?

FIVE: What to use as a guide for a face-to-face (think elevator) pitch.

If you have questions, pop them into the chat box and I'll do my best to respond today, after the evaluations/critiques.

Your protagonist's inner world ~

You know more about the most important person in your story, the

protagonist, than anyone else on the planet. They first began as a thought, your thought. Then, when you wrote your story, you brought them to life. You named them, gave their personality quirks, personal issues, and a reason for coming to life: a purpose in participating in your story. Of course you know what makes them tick.

Your task, with the query, is to introduce the agent to the inner world of your protagonist. In order to do this, you absolutely must know what this being wants, and why. In other words, you must know your story core. And, be aware that it can shift and become redefined during the telling of your story.

This is why you reveal your story core: your protagonist's fears, hopes, dreams, desires and challenges up front in the query first paragraph.

Keep in mind that basic life needs for all sentient (feeling) beings include love, companionship, food, shelter, and safety. Doesn't matter if your protagonist comes from off-planet or the animal kingdom. This commonality, once brought into your query, will engage the agent and keep them reading.

While it is important to reveal a bit about your story arc, it's much more important to introduce the basic needs of your protagonist. What do they want? Why will anyone be interested enough to stick with them as they struggle against the opposition and triumph (or not) in the story resolution.

BTW: The query letter hints at the resolution, or what could happen if the protagonist doesn't get what they want. But the query doesn't tell all. Your story resolution is revealed in the synopsis.

If you don't fully understand the "why" of what your protagonist wants, it's impossible to write this in a query. Simply telling the story of "this happens and then that happens" does not work. Period. Never has. Never will.

The purpose of your query third paragraph is to reveal your title and word count. Your genre should be obvious because you have revealed it in the writing of your query first and second paragraphs.

THIS WEEK: query letter third paragraphs~

But first, nice work everyone!

Even though you may feel like you're swimming upstream, keep it up. You're learning something new, and as you work at mastering new skills, this will help you develop your submission writing muscles.

Give yourself credit for being willing to learn something new. The submission process is one that no writer can master without some coaching assistance from an industry pro (that would be moi).

My goal for all of you is to move from "telling" to "selling" and once you understand how to do this, off you go! Jump out of the Submission Central nest and introduce yourself to agents looking for clients who produce manuscripts they can sell to publishers. Happy trails to you!

This week, even though the focus is on the query third paragraph, we'll review subject lines, first and second paragraphs as well. Refining a query is best achieved over a several week period as you write and revise your synopsis and first pages are written and revised. Therefore, this revision of all your submission documents will be an ongoing process.

Homework evaluations:

from Lisa~

Who wants what and why? Kaye wants to remember her past.

What stands in their way? Failed memory.

What is the terrible or else that might occur if they don't get what they want? Murder will catch up to her.

SUBJECT line: Kay must remember her dark past to have a future.

Kay Smith, a victim of a suspicious car accident, awakens with only vague memories from her life. Hazy recollections and vivid, terrifying dreams about a **notorious** serial strangler leave her panicked about what her past may hold. While tracking down leads to reclaim her identity and life, Kay discovers she's being stalked by a murderer. With her life on the line, time is running out for Kay, who must remember her shadowy past before it catches up with her.

Kay turns to Nick Costa, a new friend and **the secret object of her smoldering passion**, to hide her from the killer hot on her trail. Safely tucked away, Kay is devastated to learn the shocking truth Nick's been hiding. He's a Secret Service Agent protecting her, Angela Lockhart, the missing First Lady, from **a lethal** White House conspiracy that left two young women dead. **Distressed about the rising body count that follows her every move, and fearful she may have played a shady role in the killings,** Angela sets out alone to uncover the secrets of her dark past and those she **suspects of plotting and executing murder**. It's a plan Kay knows is fraught with danger, with a high probability of meeting the same fate as her sister – dead at the hands of a **vicious** strangler and buried in an anonymous grave.

Lost & Found is a 89,000 word mystery/psychological thriller, the story of **an amnesiac** woman's desperate search for her identity amid a backdrop of violent murder, political intrigue, and lost love. It will appeal to fans of Linda Howard (Shadow Woman, 2013), PJ Parrish (She's Not There, 2016), and NBC's hit show, Blindspot (in its second season), all of which spin twisting tales of women struggling to piece together their forgotten pasts only to find their future's in deadly jeopardy.

Note: yellow highlights indicate spots where the reader stumbled.

WHAT WORKS?

Good job of explaining more about the story as it relates to Kay/Angela.
Nice use of powerful verbs: panicked, stalked, distressed, fearful, etc.

WHAT DOESN'T WORK?

Whoopsie! Major omission. Lisa's active in a well-known and highly regarded writer's group, The Sisters in Crime. In fact, she's led this group. This shows her determination to improve her story-telling skills and help others as well. Plus she has a great story with unusual hook. Lisa is the perfect client . . . **BUT** the agent will not know this unless she includes information about herself in her third paragraph.

Suggested revise to: "Lost and Found," my psychological thriller is complete at 89,000 words. Then add a comparison of similar titles, not the author's name. Remember, this is about you, Lisa, not them. And then, **jump into your experience** with Sister's in Crime as mentioned above. Also mention your involvement with critique groups, and attending/organizing conferences.

NOTE: if this is a first novel, the length *might* be a problem. As I've said before, first novels tend to run 65 to 70K. At 89K, this might cause an agent to wonder if the writer knows how to self-edit and trim extraneous information out of her manuscript.

Plot Question: How does Kay know her sister was dead at the hands of a vicious strangler and buried in an anonymous grave? You need to reveal that she is one of the murder victims. If you end your second paragraph with new information the agent hasn't read before, this will raise questions. "Sister? Where did this come from?" Time-challenged agents will not go back to re-read anything that isn't clear. They'll "CLICK" the delete key and move on.

When Kay becomes Angela, be consistent with her new name. Doesn't make sense that she has a secret service guy at her disposal and yet sets out on her own to solve this murderous puzzle. Why? To protect the object of her passion? I don't buy this. Does Nick know she has to remain hidden, yet she sneaks away, certain she can discover the truth by speaking with her husband? Or, is she forced to this. Does something happen to Nick? Is it important that Nick is the subject of her smoldering passion?

FOR EVERYBODY:

Your third paragraph is the place to reveal title, word count, writing background and involvement in writing groups. It is NOT THE PLACE TO explain “about” your story or the compare it to a gazillion other similar books (not television). And yes, I over exaggerated, but three comparisons is too much. Max out at two. If you have to explain about your story in the third paragraph, you’ve obviously not shown and sold it in your first two paragraphs. If this is the case, the agent won’t read your third paragraph anyway, but will “CLICK” and send your submission to . . . arrgh . . . deleteville.

From Linda~

Story Core:

Who wants what and why? Wu Meichen wants the freedom to become a real partner to her husband so they can plan the future they both desire.

What stands in the way? In Chinese culture, a young married couple has the duty to comply with the plans their elders make for them. Young brides are expected to obey their husband’s mother without question. Meichen’s mother-in-law tries to prevent her son from forming a close relationship with his bride. Then Meichen and her husband are separated when the head of the family makes Chung go to America to work and help support the family in China. He can’t come home without permission. Five years pass, and Chung is still in America.

What will happen if Meichen doesn’t get what she wants? If she and Chung can’t get back together, their marriage is doomed.

Comment for Linda:

The request (from me) for one sentence descriptions of these issues has a purpose. Once you hone your story core down to three sentences, you know *exactly* where your focus must remain for the query and synopsis. As you write your query, you’ll draw on the words/phrases you’ve used in describing your story core. Plus, you’ll stay on track without bringing in

extraneous information that prevents you from revealing more what matters: Meichen story.

Linda wrote:

Newlywed Wu Meichen hates the Chinese traditions that dictate her actions and even the ideas she should believe. Although their marriage was arranged, Meichen falls deeply in love with her husband, Chao Chung. She wants him to accept her as a partner and give her a voice in his plans for their future, but her mother-in-law belittles Meichen and interferes at every opportunity to pull the couple apart. When the Chao family patriarch sends her husband to work in America, Meichen fears they'll be separated for years, perhaps for life.

Meichen's father-in-law sends her to a missionary school after her mother-in-law attacks her. While Meichen enjoys learning, she desperately hopes Chung can return for a visit, but no one tells her when that might happen. American laws are tightened to keep Chinese workers out; if Chung leaves, he may not be allowed to return to his job. After five years, she refuses to wait any longer. She defies Chinese tradition and her husband's family, traveling ten thousand miles, risking her life, freedom, and honor to join Chung. By the time she reaches his home, Chung's family has ordered him to divorce her. Meichen wants to stay and give their love a chance to grow, but she fears Chung will come to hate her if he disobeys his elders and they disown him. Can their marriage survive if they reject their native culture and try to live like Americans?

Unbound Woman is women's historical fiction complete at 90,000 words. It is set in China and America at the end of the nineteenth century. The book won first place in an ethnic novel contest sponsored by Romantic Times Magazine. I am a member of Romance Writers of America and Georgia Romance Writers, and I have attended many of their conferences and classes, as well as on-line classes presented by Margie Lawson. I also belong to a local critique group, Augusta Writers. Thank you for your time and consideration.

WHAT WORKS?

Story is becoming more clear. More of Meichen's internal struggles for are revealed. This can be expanded. For example: how does she feel when she (and her mind) are freed from the oppressive demands of her traditional Chinese family? As Meichen sets out on her journey, how does she feel? How do her inner conflicts help her push forward, influence her to disguise herself as a man, and travel alone in a strange country?

WHAT DOESN'T WORK?

You've included quite a bit from your "story core" as written above in your query. It doesn't belong there. Revise your core story to one sentence of each issue: who wants what, what stands in their way, and the terrible "or else." Don't, in your query, bring in other issues that can spread your story thin and not leave sufficient room to delve into Meichen's inner world.

Suggest you focus on the cultural beliefs as the antagonistic force that works against Meichen. Instead of blaming her mother-in-law, even though this is in the story, focus on the bigger picture of cultural pressures to adhere to the "way things are." Continue revealing Meichen's inner world. Her fears at leaving her country to seek out her husband in a strange country.

Tighten your third paragraph for impact so it flows smoothly and encourages the agent to skim over it and keep on reading.

For example:

Complete at 90,000 words "Unbound Woman" won first place in an ethnic novel contest sponsored by *Romantic Times Magazine*. I belong to the Augusta Writers and am an active member of RWA (Romance Writers of America) and Georgia Romance Writers and have studied, on-line, with Maggie Lawson. (Only mention Maggie if she is well known.)

Thank you for your time and consideration.

from Carol~

SUBJECT line: Fairies and Pixies. Enemies Forever. Time for Change.

Who is this story about? Shaylee

What does this being want? Peace and friendship between two different groups. Or is it about friendship?

What stands in their way? Dad who is the king.

What is the terrible or else that might occur if they don't get what they want? She will lose, forever, a dear friend. Parental wrath, to a child, isn't as important as a best friend. Unless Dad, when really angry, throws people into dungeons. Think like a kid. What is the worst thing that can happen to a youngster?

Fairies and pixies have been enemies since time began. Secret friends, Fairy Princess Shaylee and pixie Brott, want to change that with a plan to let both kingdoms know what they call, "A New World: Fairies and Pixies together forever." When Shaylee's father, the king, finds out about this friendship, he forbids her from ever seeing Brott again. Will they figure out a way around this or will the two realms continue to be enemies forever?

One day when Shaylee is out riding her pony, she hears Brott calling out for help. She knows she must obey her father and not have any contact with him, so she turns to go back home. But Brott's cries get more intense. Will she listen to her heart and go to Brott, or disobey her father's command and suffer his wrath?

"Fairy Princess Shaylee" is a short chapter book of 2600 words. I have been writing for children for over 30 years and have sold more than two dozen stories and articles to a variety of magazines including Highlights for Children, Girl's Life, the Writer Magazine and am the author of seven children's books. I was a writing mentor for, and have given presentations and speeches for the Minnesota chapter of the Society of Children's Book

Writers and Illustrators. I won both a Granny Award and the Wacky Dream Contest from Stories for Children Magazine. I taught classes at the Loft Literary Center in Minneapolis and lofted many students on their way to publication.

WHAT WORKS? Much more clear presentation about this story.

WHAT DOESN'T? I'm still not clear about your story core. What does the Princess want more than anything? To maintain her relationship with Brott or cease hostilities with the pixies? Be clear about this.

What happens if she abandons Brott in his moment of need? What is that need? Will he perish or? How she handles this situation with Brott reveals everything about the Princess. You need to show/tell this at the end of your second paragraph.

Comment from group. What will happen in re dad's wrath. Why does she fear her father?

For example: If the princess deserts her best friend in his moment of need, will she cause his death? Is this worse than having to deal with an angry parent?

You want the agent to wonder, "Hmmm. What happens next?"

In re your third paragraph:

As written, your third paragraph is 10 lines. Your first and second paragraphs total 11 lines. Hmmm. What's out of balance?

This query contains more information about the author than the story. That doesn't work. Carol can trim the comments about herself, and include only the most important. Eliminate as many uses of "I" as possible.

Here's that paragraph, with yellow highlights about what is necessary to include.

"Fairy Princess Shaylee" is a short chapter book of 2600 words. I have been writing for children for over 30 years and have authored seven (7)

children's books and have sold more than two dozen stories and articles to a variety of magazines including "Highlights for Children, Girl's Life, and The Writer Magazine." I was a writing mentor for, and have given presentations and speeches for the Minnesota chapter of the SCBWI and have taught classes at the Loft Literary Center in Minneapolis. and Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators. I won both a Granny Award and the Wacky Dream Contest from Stories for Children Magazine. I and lofted many students on their way to publication.

BTW: Remember your goal is to show your writing experience and motivate the agent to skim through your third paragraph, eager to read your synopsis and find out "what happens?"

from Doree~

SUBJECT line: Opioids...Can you hear me now?

What does Levi want? Life without changes.

What stands in his way? Mom is dying.

What is the terrible "or else" if he doesn't get what he wants.

Disillusioned? Lose his only family. Might have to grow up. Accept that life changes and he can adapt . . . if he wants to.

Doree wrote:

Levi Yokum plans to be Coriander High's first drafted football player by practicing the summer before his senior year. Excited but then more concerned for his mother, CJ when she announces that she has cancer, again. Only this time, she's not interested in any form of intervention. Conflict turns to mutiny in Harmony Ville.

Levi Yokum and his mother, Camellia Josephine (CJ) have always been close. Anything that could affect their little family, they've handled as a team. Now that Levi's seventeen and a junior in high school, they've been studying Levi's choices for college. With only another year left, Levi's eager to spend their upcoming summer studying campus'. Until, he notices his

mother's enthusiasm has dwindled. When he questions her, she explains that, even though they won her war over breast cancer, the disease has metastasized to her liver. Levi figures that after chemo and radiation, they'd be successful again. Instead, Levi is devastated when she declares that she's decided to forego any form of medical intervention. Brokenhearted, a new Levi emerges. His world becomes a roller coaster of arguments, slamming doors, and late night crying jags. Coming home late cut up from fistfights...not football practice, using offensive language to provoke others. A bout of tough love educates Levi into the realization that his actions won't change his mother's fate. Needing to dump the anvil off his shoulder, it's time to grow up. He should be showering her with devotion during her final moments. Researching patients and their passing, Levi learns that the pain can become unbearable. Fearing his mother's experience may be horrific, he steals a few opioids. He squirrels the ten tiny pills away in his closet, 'just in case' her need arises. Except now, he's hearing strange subliminal messaging going off in his head. Could they be luring him? Are they calling for his addiction or death?

Turn is a completed Young Adult manuscript of 54,500 words. Readers who have enjoyed books like *Fault In Our Stars*, *Thirteen*, and *Crazy*, will enjoy *Turn*. I am a full-time writer. I began my writing career in journalism and worked for years as a reporter with the Salt Lake Valley Journal covering the Granite School District. I have won the Editor's Choice Award and have had several articles requested by other publications. I've been writing novels full-time since 2009. In 2011, I held the Vice President position for Utah's Chapter of the Romance Writes of America. In 2012, I was their president. I am also a member of the League of Utah Writers in their Infinite Monkey's and their Oquirrh Chapters as well as a member of the Absolutely Write group of Ogden, Utah. I also participate in two critique groups. Please visit my blog at doreelandersonwriter.wordpress.com.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

WHAT WORKS? Subject line works. Make it grammatically correct.

Opioids . . . can you hear me now?

WHAT DOESN'T WORK?

465 words is too long for a query. Your query needs to be refocused to reveal more of Levi's inner world. Inclusion of "back story" about Levi's football dreams, etc. does not work in a query letter. Instead, reveal some of this as you show and sell the emotional issues of your protagonist, Levi.

What is your story core? By *not having this* at the top of your homework (as requested), I'm unclear about the bottom line for Levi. Does he want to be with mom for his entire life? Or does he want to save her from pain as she makes her transition? Or, is being drafted for the football team his goal? Or locating the best college? Your query bounces around from topic to topic without specifying Levi's main goal and showing his inner world as he acts and reacts to getting what he wants.

Suggest you include your story core, as requested, at the top of your homework submission for next week.

And, stick with the formula of placing your story core in the first paragraph, ending with a tease.

Second paragraph reveals more about Levi's inner world as he struggles to achieve his goal. Show his emotions and feelings about mom's impending death. End with a tease that makes the agent wonder, "Hmmm, so what happens next?"

Comments: He has stolen his opioids from mom's stock. Just in case mom needs more than morphine at the end.

YOUR THIRD PARAGRAPH:

Since you want the agent to quick skim your third paragraph in their haste to read your synopsis, revise this paragraph to trim it.

For example:

Complete at 54,500 words, "Turn" will appeal to readers of "Fault in our Stars" and "Thirteen." My background includes xx years as a reporter for the Salt Lake Valley Journal. For seven (7) years, I've been an active member (and past vice-president), of the Utah RWA (Romance Writers of

America), and participate in the League of Utah Writers and Absolutely Write, as well as two critique groups.

(**NOTE:** *never invite* the agent to leave the page to read your blog. You want them to stay with you and move on to your synopsis, and then your manuscript. This is much more important than reading your blog.)

Thank you for your time and consideration.

FOR EVERYONE:

ONE:

It often happens that, in the process of crafting your submission documents, you discover a plot or structure flaw. This may require a revision. So, in that sense, when you drill down to your story core, you are self-testing the validity of your story structure.

TWO:

The greatest challenge for all writers, is to shift from “telling” to “selling.” Most of you don’t have much experience selling your skills and your work. It probably makes you uncomfortable. And yet, you have to learn this. And you can.

I’ve worked with hundreds of writers who have learned to write submission documents that prove they are what every agent wants: writers with saleable manuscripts.

From Vicki~

SUBJECT LINE: It followed her to school one day, breaking all the rules.

Who wants what and why?

What stands in their way?

What is the terrible or else that might occur if they don't get what they want?

Vicki wrote:

Born with cerebral palsy, Sadie's tangled walk is scrutinized with every step she takes, and no longer can she bear the cruelty of her peers. To add to her pain, the only friend she has ever known left for London. Sadie's convinced she will never see him again. When she is forced to spend her summer in the Catskills, she decides it's the perfect refuge to stop her fragile heart from beating forever. Yet Sadie wonders if something is stalking her in the woods.

Watching her every move, a malevolent and envious fairy is obsessed with Sadie. While Sadie senses an unnerving presence, she tells herself no one is staring at her; her imagination is just playing tricks on her. Pills seem to be the easiest and most painless way to exit the world. She swallows a handful of pills, waiting for them to kill her, but wakes with crystals in her lap instead. Fear mounts as this invisible thing terrorizes her. But fear is good, for her emotions haven't been stirred in a long time. When Sadie comes face to face with Devilia, she must take a deep look into herself. Curiosity propels her to find out what this magical creature is. As Sadie opens her heart, life becomes unbearable in ways unfamiliar to her. In a mad race against time, Sadie learns the true meaning of love and loss. Should her life end or is it time to begin living?

My YA novel, *Crooked* at 90,000 words, is a story that needs to be told in a time when disabilities in young people are often unaccepted and misunderstood. I am a member of SCBWI, and have been in a writing group for many years. I live in New York City and am the mother of a sometimes "crooked" young adult who tells me my fairy should be an elf. However, I stick by my "fairy" tale.

I look forward to sharing my work with you.

WHAT WORKS? Subject line does the job.

Vicki is on the brink of figuring out her query. She would benefit by reviewing her story core to keep Sadie's story from wandering away from

the core of what it is that Sadie wants.

I strongly suggest, Vicki, that you write your story core, one sentence for each issue of want/obstacle/terrible ‘or else’ and make sure that your query second paragraph sticks to this outline. Stay focused on Sadie.

Include your story core with your homework submission next week.

WHAT DOESN'T WORK?

Suggest you revert to your first paragraph from last week. The emphasis here is on watching, not stalking. I've edited this version.

Born with Cerebral Palsy, Sadie's tangled walk attracts attention. No matter how much of herself she tries to hide, she's aware of being watched but never is approached. To add to her feelings of isolation, the only friend she has ever known has moved to London. She may never see him again. When Sadie's sent to her grandmother's isolated Catskill Mountain home to spend the summer, she decides it the perfect refuge to end her life. But, there, as at school, Sadie senses someone is watching her.

Your second paragraph needs to reveal Sadie's inner world. It's never a good idea to throw in issues/phrases that aren't explained as they relate to your protagonist.

Sadie meets Devilia. How? If she's invisible, how does Sadie meet her? How can they have a face-to-face meeting? What does Sadie feel, how does she react when she becomes aware of Devilia's presence.

Also, your third paragraph from last week is more powerful. You wrote:

My YA novel “Crooked” is complete at 90,000 words. A member of SCBWI, I have participated in writing groups for xx years. My husband and I live in New York City with our sometimes “crooked” young adult, and my muse, a wire-haired dachshund, Clancy.

COMMENT FOR EVERYONE:

Don't tell *about* your story in the third paragraph. Or why it's necessary to comment, as Vickie has, that “. . . is a story that needs to be told in a time when disabilities in young people are often unaccepted and misunderstood.” Your query is not the place to bring up social issues.

Instead, *show* these in the telling of your story. Use the first and second paragraphs to show and sell the issue you want to address as it relates to your protagonist. Sadie's inner world, her alienation from others, self-consciousness, twisted walk, desire to hide, etc. show her outer world and reveal the anguish she feels internally.

Always, make your story telling as compelling as possible, revealing your protagonist's inner world. Create the potential that they will expand their world, move beyond limitations, and/or make some important shift in who/how they are by the end of the story.

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS? Subtle. To show instead of tell. Through the actions of the protagonist. Dialogue often works to “show” your story. As do actions. For example: As Sadie begins to fall asleep in the forest, she feels someone is watching her. She may look around, wonder where this someone may be? But, she nods off before locating the source of scrutiny. This isn't a revision, and not a very good one at that. But you get the point.

Questions that have come up this week~

ONE: How to format your submission to be agent-and-device friendly submission.

Most agents request that writers cut and paste their query, synopsis, and a specific number of manuscript first pages.

Although your manuscript, as written, might be double spaced, this is not how you want to email your submission documents.

In the old days, submissions were snail mailed. Pages to read. Today, everything is emailed, and read on a variety of different screens, from desktop to laptop to smart phone.

Plus, the system that delivers your email may shift the text around, change the font, and create all kinds of issues that translate into a submission that is difficult to read, and therefore . . . isn't!

For the moment, while you are mastering the submission documents, use whatever spacing is comfortable for you. Use Georgia as your font. Easy to read. A bit larger than Times Roman, and has the serif (foot) at the bottom which makes it easier to read than a sans serif like this.

Courier, like the dinosaur, is extinct. Give it up! It telegraphs that you are stuck in Jurassic Park and resistant to becoming digitally-enabled.

Formatting your submission documents will be discussed, in great detail in a future workshop.

TWO: Where are transcripts and videos posted?

Go to www.getpublishednow.biz and click on the “on-demand” tab.

THREE: Why is it important to revise first pages for a submission package when your manuscript is polished and ready to go?

Your manuscript first pages need to be written for one person: the agent. Not the book browser, but the agent. Writers tend to pack their first pages with back story. Explaining the setting and the situation and introducing the protagonist and so on.

Any agent who has read your query and synopsis and has scrolled to you first pages is engaged, and knows a bit about your story. You've captured their attention. Congratulations. They want to read your manuscript to determine if you are the writer they've been looking for. Do you have the writing skills to have completed a manuscript? And, even more important, do you know how to begin your story.

Keep in mind that a story begins the moment that something happens. This something forces your protagonist into external or internal action. They must act. Now.

Write your first pages so the agent will want to keep reading because the story begins right up front. They don't have to scroll on and on and on to find out what the heck is going to happen and who is involved.

More about this in a future workshop and/or in my first-page tutorial available at [MolliMart](#).

FOUR: Why do some agents offer to edit your work for a fee while others offer revision suggestions but don't charge for it? What's the difference?

The role of the agent is to sift through submissions to locate saleable manuscripts that they can introduce to publishers. Period. Their responsibilities are not to edit your work, or to sell you an editing service.

When an agent has read your entire manuscript, they may offer suggestions about what could be strengthened, revised, etc. These suggestions are made on the basis of experience in the business.

When any agent suggests that your manuscript would benefit from line editing, for a fee, RUN in the other direction. You're being set up to obligate yourself to pay for services that support the agent who may not have any contacts in the business, and will never introduce your project to a legitimate publisher, but instead, keep you on the hook to pay and pay and pay for editing services to "polish your work" so it can be sold (for big bucks) to a publisher. This scam runs throughout the industry. Don't fall for it.

FIVE: Lisa's preparing for some face-to-face pitching with agents at an upcoming writer's conference. She asked about how to prepare. I suggest using your query as the basis for agent pitches. Especially the core of your story.

For example, Lisa could begin with: "my story is about Kaye, who awakens from a car accident and can't remember who she is. As she struggles to regain her memory, she becomes vaguely aware that she's being stalked, and to stay alive, she has to remember her past, and quickly."

Then, take a deep breath and wait for the agent to nod, or ask a question, or signal for you to continue.

Your goal is to engage their interest and answer their questions about your story. Remember, they're looking for clients. They want to know what you have to offer them. Help them discover you're the writer they want to represent!

Got a question?

Submit it with your Homework and I'll address it in our next workshop.

(If you're not a Submission Central member (yet), [CLICK HERE](#) and submit your question via the Contact Page on my website.)

The next Submission Central workshop meets Friday, October 28. 1PM Eastern.

This workshop will focus on writing mechanic issues, including “red-flag” words and phrases that can label you as a writing “rookie” and your work as not being worthy of publication. Yikes! No writer wants that.

We'll play “Markup with Molli,” a writing exercise that identifies adverbs, adjectives, weak nouns and verbs, and marks red-flag words and other issues you'll want to locate and revise out of your submission documents (and manuscript as well).

BTW: Share this exercise with your critique group. They'll enjoy learning to identify writing mechanic issues that are holding them back.

Submission Central members will receive your workshop “participation link” as you have for this workshop.

HOMEWORK DUE WEDNESDAY, Oct 26, noon, includes, in this exact order:

YOUR email SUBJECT line~

YOUR STORY CORE:

- Who wants what? Why do they want it?
- What stands in their way?
- What is the terrible “or else” that may occur if they don’t get what they want?

REVISIONS of:

- Query paragraphs.

BTW:

The November workshops expand to include the synopsis along with on-going query revision. Regardless of *when* you join Submission Central, your homework always will be evaluated, even if you’re playing catch up with query letter drafts.

You’re invited~

Thank you to those of you who have attended this workshop today, but aren’t yet members of Submission Central. I hope you’ll join us.

PS: The introductory rate for Submission Central is \$37 per month until January 1st. What do you get?

- four weekly workshops
- weekly one-on-one evaluation from me
- tutorial of the month
- private Facebook group access 24/7 for Q&A.

Pay month to month. Stay as long or as short as you want.

[CLICK HERE](#) to read more about the AgentQuery Submission Central program and access the PayPal button.

Catching up~

You can review the video(s) and read the transcripts, on-demand, to catch up. [CLICK HERE.](#)

Or, if we're working on the synopsis, but haven't written a query, fine, start with the query. Use my query tutorial and jump right in. Move through the query, week by week, until you've mastered it. And, if the workshops are focusing on synopsis, first pages, or submission protocol, etc., watch these as well as you work at your own speed.

I'll help you, as will members of the group who have progressed beyond where you may be at the moment.

Thanks to all of you for being here today.

Write on! May the words be with you!

Molli