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Agent/Query Submission Central

Workshop #2 -- January 13, 2017

Today our workshop includes a streamlined method to use in agent research. We'll also discuss query letters in various stages of completion, and take a look at an almost-final version of a manuscript first page, revised to hook and hold agent attention.

Writers in the “spotlight” today are members of agent/query submission central, all learning to craft submission documents (query, synopsis and first pages) that will help them land agents to guide them through the publishing maze.

Workshop structure:

- Agent research and comments from Linda
- Query revisions for Vicki, Tammy, Janet, and Doree
- Review of Janet's first page.

BUT FIRST, a review of a successful query submitted to agent Barbara Poelle (from the Irene Goodman Literary Agency).

Dear Ms. Poelle,

I'd like to tell you about my latest mystery novel, UNTOLD DAMAGE (73,685 words). My comment: Barbara requests this information right up front, otherwise, place it in the third paragraph. And, unless requested, don't start with “Dear so and so,” just jump right in.

Mark Mallen had been a great cop, before he succumbed to the needle. Driven from the narcotics division and run off the force, Mallen's been surviving day-to-day in the gritty world of San Francisco's Tenderloin district. **My comment: sets the scene.** But just as if it looks like his life will end in addiction, Mallen learns that his best friend from his police days, Eric Russ, has been murdered and Mallen himself named as the prime suspect. The man hidden deep inside the addict is prompted to action, as Mallen sees an opportunity to redeem himself and re-emerge. **My comment: It's obvious that this writer is a story teller and understands writing mechanic basics. I want to know more about Mark who seems to be flawed but interesting: a good combination.**

However, staying clean turns out to be the least of his problems. As Mallen struggles to find Eric's killer, a couple of enforcers from his undercover days come after his head, along with a growing number of people that seem to want him dead the deeper he dives into the tangled threads of the investigation. When he finally comes close to unraveling it all, he discovers at its center something more dark than anything he could've ever imagined: the murder trail leads directly back to an ugly secret Eric never wanted anyone to know. **My comment: Good hook. I love ugly secrets, especially since I probably will come to like this protagonist (Mark), warts and all, and will want him to be successful in his quest to stay out of jail, find the killer of his friend, and deal with the ugly secret, regardless of what it is.)**

I am writing to you because I read on AgentQuery.com that you were passionate about mysteries. I am hoping that mine is one you could also feel passionate about. My short fiction has been published in various online literary journals, including Pindeldyboz, Cherry Bleeds, and Word Riot. I am also a produced screenwriter with another script currently under option. **My comment: although the production companies are not mentioned, this is OK in this instance since it** proves he can tell a story.

Thank you for your time.

FROM MOLLI: What makes this query so effective?

What is the story core?

Who is the story about? Mark

What does he want? Sobriety, **redemption**, solve killer of friend

Why? Stay out of jail.

What stands in the way? Drugs, addiction, fellow cops, ugly secret

What is the terrible "or else?" jail, death, addiction, failure.

ABOUT AGENTS~

Why are agents so important? Eyes for publishers. Sell your work so you can continue writing. Final editor. Judge your work.

Why are agents important to publishers? Weed out the crud. Dragons at the gate.

Why are agents important to you? What do they want from you? They represent you. Your voice to the publishers. Judge. Gatekeepers to publishing paradise (thanks James).

Old reliables for agent research:

<http://agentquery.com/>

Simple to use system that enables you to search for agents who seek projects in your fiction or non-fiction genre. Information given on the query and submission process is outdated and written for snail mail instead of email. Unclear about how often information is updated.

<https://querytracker.net/>

Offers videos to guide you through their process for searching and tracking your query submissions. System can filter according to your genre. May not be updated frequently. Information given about the query is outdated and written for snail mail instead of email.

Quicker, more efficient, and totally up-to-date process~

Instead of digging through querytracker or agentquery, go directly to agents listed as participants in writers' conferences sponsored by **Writers' Digest.**

Recent and upcoming conferences.

- Oct. 28–30, 2016: [Writer’s Digest Novel Writing Conference](#) (Los Angeles, CA)
- Nov. 19, 2016: [Las Vegas Writing Workshop](#) (Las Vegas, NV)
- Feb. 11, 2017: [Writers Conference of Minnesota](#) (St. Paul, MN) published in CC
- Feb. 16–19, 2017: [San Francisco Writers Conference](#) (San Francisco, CA)
- Feb. 25, 2017: [Atlanta Writing Workshop](#) (Atlanta, GA)
- Feb. 26–March 3, 2017: [Writers Winter Escape Cruise](#) (conference/cruise departing Miami)
- March 25, 2017: [Michigan Writers Conference](#) (Detroit, MI)
- **April 8, 2017: [Philadelphia Writing Workshop](#) (Philadelphia, PA) published in CC**
- May 6, 2017: [Seattle Writers Conference](#) (Seattle, WA)
- **July 22, 2017: [Tennessee Writers Workshop](#) (Nashville, TN) published in CC**
- Aug. 18–20, 2017: [Writer’s Digest Conference](#) (New York, NY)

For example, here’s an agent attending the Atlanta Writers’ conference. <https://atlantawritingworkshop.com/>

Elizabeth Copps is a literary agent with Maria Carvainis Agency, Inc., and she is actively building her client list. She is seeking: In fiction, action/adventure, children’s, commercial, family saga, historical, horror, humor, LGBTQ, literary, middle grade, mystery, thriller, women’s fiction, and young adult. In nonfiction, she seeks humor, pop culture, and travel. [Learn more about Elizabeth here.](#)

Read her extended bio and then, if you’d like to submit your work to her, go to

<http://www.mariacarvainisagency.com/>

(Site is basic/no frills. Specific agent info is readily available on the conference website.)

Click on “Submissions” where you’ll find the email address for submissions. I’m not putting this here so you will go through the process to learn more about clicking and following links.

BACK TO RESEARCH, From Linda (who writes historical fiction)~

She comments: In general, I looked at the agent's comments, agency webpage, and her submission requirements.

Elizabeth Copps at Carvanis Agency

I researched this agent, also mentioned on the Atlanta Workshop site. I went to her profile at the agency site, repeating the process I'd used above. She gave a thorough explanation of what kind of writing she liked, and I think we might be compatible. I'll keep her on my list.

DO NOT SUBMIT TO TWO AGENTS AT SAME AGENCY AT THE SAME TIME.

Tamar Rydinski at Laura Dail Agency

While traveling through the Carvanis Agency website, I noticed a link to a Writer's Digest article written by Chuck Sambucino who maintains a Guide to Literary Agents . He will be a presenter at the Atlanta Writer's Workshop. He had an article, "Seven Agents Looking for Women's fiction." I looked at the list and researched the agents following the procedure above. I really liked Ms. Rydinski's comments on her agency profile, and I think she is a definite pick for my first attempt to get an agent. She doesn't look for particular genres, just a well-written novel with a terrific query letter.

DO NOT FEAR REJECTION. Reframe it as non-acceptance. It is not personal. It's all about business. You are either a good fit, or you're not. **PERIOD.**

Any questions or comments about agents before we move on to query revisions, which is an ongoing and vital aspect of learning how to write effective submission documents that get you what you want: agent, book contract, and shelf space at Barnes and Noble.

We'll begin today with revisions of Vicki's query 2nd paragraph.

It's ready for tweaks. THAT'S GOOD NEWS VICKI!!!

“Crooked”

Who is the story about: Sadie

What does she want and why: Sadie wants to be a normal teenager.

What stands in her way: Lack of self-esteem

What is the terrible or else: Suicide

Query:

Born with cerebral palsy, Sadie hides. Taunted by her peers, they laugh at the “cripple geek” whenever she wobbles by. Until Finn, a British exchange student, looks beyond her shyness. With Finn, Sadie finds laughter, learns to cheat at poker, and harmonizes on her original songs. When the school year ends Finn returns home. He vows to visit, but Sadie's convinced she'll never see him again. Sent to her grandmother's Catskill Mountain house for the summer, Sadie decides the isolated setting is the perfect refuge to end her life. But, in the forest, as at school, Sadie senses someone watches.

After swallowing a handful of pills, Sadie wakes, dazed from her failed suicide. More unnerving, an unseen entity plays Beatle songs on her iPod, and sends strange sparks to her computer, but Sadie believes it's her own paranoia seducing her to insanity. Soon she comes face to face with her stalker, Devilia, a suspicious hand-sized fairy. Like Sadie, Devilia struggles to fit into a world where she doesn't belong. A curious friendship evolves, and before school starts Sadie agrees to allow Devilia to live with her in the city. Although Devilia promises not to leave Sadie's room, she disobeys. On a field trip to the Natural History Museum Devilia lures hundreds of butterflies to land on Sadie, lifting her long skirt to reveal her disability. The event becomes a viral sensation. Humiliated beyond despair, Sadie feels even more of a freak. But Finn thinks it's cool, and confesses how much he

wished he'd been there for her. He reveals that he's helping a mate sell "merchandise" so he can make money to visit her. Intuition tells Sadie Finn is not telling the whole story. She begs him to stop. He responds "no worries." Sadie convinces Devilia to go help Finn ASAP, the Internet being quickest way to reach him. Electronics don't mesh with Devilia and a computer is the biggest monster of them all. Terrified the cyberworld might kill her she agrees anyway, and conjures powerful fairy magic to email herself to Finn. Sadie waits and waits, but hears nothing from Devilia, or Finn whom she messages endlessly. Finn is gone. Devilia is gone. And without them in her life, Sadie wants to be gone as well.

My YA novel, "Crooked" is complete at 75,000 words. I'm a member of SCBWI, attend writers' conferences and workshops, and have participated with a writer's group since 2004, including writing partners.

I appreciate your time and interest.

Time for nitpicking. This is almost completed. Good work!

Born with cerebral palsy, *Sadie hides behind long skirts*. Skirts tie in with butterfly issue mentioned later in the query. Taunted by her peers, they laugh at the "cripple geek" whenever she wobbles by. Do they taunt or snicker? Until Finn, a British exchange student, look's beyond her shyness. With Finn, Sadie finds laughter, learns to cheat at poker, and harmonizes on her original songs. When the school year ends Finn returns home. He vows to visit, but Sadie's convinced she'll never see him again. Sent to her grandmother's Catskill Mountain house for the summer, Sadie decides the isolated setting is the perfect refuge to end her life. But, in the forest, as at school, Sadie senses someone watches. *This first paragraph works.*

After swallowing a handful of pills, Sadie wakes, dazed from her failed suicide. Delete: *More unnerving*, An unseen entity plays Beatle songs

on her iPod, and sends strange sparks to her computer. *At first/but Sadie believes it's her own paranoia seducing her to insanity, until*

(Note: sentence about paranoia is not necessary. You can move from sparks to her computer right into meeting Devilia, a curious, hand-sized fairy.)

Soon she comes face to face with her *watcher/stalker*, Devilia, a *suspicious/curious* hand-sized fairy. Like Sadie, Devilia struggles to fit into a world where she doesn't belong. BEING A LONE FAIRY IN A HUMAN WORLD. *Would like a bit more info here. One more sentence about how this is shown rather than just told* A curious *why is it curious?* TENUOUS friendship evolves, *and before school starts* Sadie agrees to allow Devilia to live with her in the city *once school begins*. Although Devilia promises not to leave Sadie's room, she disobeys. On a field trip to the Natural History Museum Devilia lures hundreds of butterflies to land on Sadie, lifting her long skirt to reveal *her twisted legs. disability.* The event becomes a viral sensation. Humiliated beyond despair, Sadie feels even more *like/of* a freak. *Be clear that he is emailing or texting her.* But Finn IM's "YOU'RE COOL. WISH I'D BEEN THERE." thinks it's cool, and confesses how much he wished he'd been there for her. He reveals that he's helping a mate sell "merchandise" so he can *buy a plane ticket/make money to* visit her. Intuition tells Sadie *that* Finn is not *telling/revealing* the whole story. She *begs* him to stop. He responds "no worries." Sadie *begs/convince*s Devilia to go to *DISSUADE help/how???* *(use her magic to influence him?)* Finn ASAP,

the Internet being quickest way to reach him. *Not necessary to say this.*

Electronics don't mesh with Devilia and a computer is the biggest monster of them all. Terrified the cyberworld might kill her she agrees anyway, and conjures powerful fairy magic to email herself to Finn. *The computer monster, and electronics in general, aren't incompatible with Devilia's energy. Although terrified she'll die in*

cyberworld, Devilia conjures powerful fairy magic and emails herself to Finn.

Sadie waits and waits, but hears nothing from Devilia, or Finn whom she messages endlessly. Finn is gone. Devilia is gone. And without them in her life, Sadie wants to be gone as well

My YA novel, “Crooked” is complete at 75,000 words. I’m a member of SCBWI, attend writers’ conferences and workshops, and have participated with a writer’s group since 2004, including writing partners.

I appreciate your time and interest.

From Tammy – Query first Draft

Who is my main character? Dr. Olivia Greyson

What does she want? She wants to heal emotionally from her past trauma.

Why does she want it? So that she can return to her former profession with confidence.

What stands in her way? Her ability to forgive herself for losing control of a situation and becoming the victim

What is the terrible or else that might occur if she doesn’t get what she wants? If she doesn’t face the past and let go of her fears she will never recover the confidence she needs to fully trust her own instincts.

Tammy wrote:

Dr. Olivia Greyson is a successful Psychology Professor at Georgetown and a celebrated author of True Crime. Her two year hiatus from criminal profiling is disrupted when her former mentor, Sergio Frost, calls to invite her back into the world of murder and mayhem. Her eagerness to accept his offer is tempered by anxiety manifested by her impetuous behavior two years prior. Olivia’s near-

fatal experience at the hands of a psychotic serial killer has forced her into submission and rendered her emotionally compromised. The lack of trust in her own judgment has kept her isolated from the world of crime fighting. Will her past dictate whether Olivia is ready to accept this life-changing opportunity? Or will the temptation to return prove too powerful to decline?

When Olivia is informed that quotes from various Shakespeare plays are found clutched in the hands of three murder victims, spanning a decade, she agrees to set aside her fear and return to the job she once loved. With the assistance of a complicated computer program designed to analyze literary clues and a newly compiled team of diverse agents, Olivia races to Florida to join the hunt for the elusive Shakespeare Killer. As the investigation progresses Olivia is forced to relive her own nightmare vicariously through the gruesome murders she's been called to solve. As the killer moves closer to her team Olivia must cope with dissension from the lead detective on the case which accelerates her struggle to reclaim confidence in her ability to profile. Will Olivia persevere and work through her past failures in time to save one of her own? Or will the curtain fall on Shakespeare's next heinous act?

The Shakespeare Murders is a _____ word crime thriller/mystery. My background is in scientific research. I've co-authored several peer-reviewed articles however this is my first attempt at writing fiction. I plan to attend the 2017 Killer Nashville conference and enter this work in the competition for the 2017 Claymore award. I am also an active member of a writer's critique group.

Thank you for your consideration

Tammy Desjarlais

My comments:

Great first draft Tammy. You've got a handle on the structure. Revision will help you hone in more on the threat, give your reader a

reason to care about Olivia, and focus more tightly on the rush to find the killer.

From group: So, what is this story about? And what's the terrible or else?

Who is my main character? Dr. Olivia Greyson

What does she want? She wants to heal from her past emotional trauma. **How does this impact her?**

Why does she want it? So that she can return to her former profession. Is that enough?

What stands in her way? Her ability to forgive herself for losing control of a situation and becoming the victim. *Not clear about this. Why does she blame herself. And is this a complicated way of saying that "a clever murderer" is what stands in her way? SHE PUT HER TEAM IN JEOPARDY.*

What is the terrible or else that might occur if she doesn't get what she wants? If she doesn't face the past and let go of her fears she will never recover the confidence she needs to fully trust her own instincts. *Is this the terrible or else, or is she at peril? If she fails to get over herself, or find the killer quickly, will she become the next victim? STAY WITH TEACHING OR GO BACK TO THE FBI OR NEVER DO THIS AGAIN. WANTS TO GET INTO THE FIELD. INABILITY TO EVER DO THIS AGAIN VS HER FAILURE IN THE FIELD IN THE PAST.*

Tammy wrote:

Dr. Olivia Greyson is a successful Psychology Professor at Georgetown and a celebrated author of "True Crime." Her **two year hiatus** from **criminal profiling** is disrupted when her former

mentor, Sergio Frost, calls to invite her back into the world of murder and mayhem. Her eagerness to accept his offer is tempered by anxiety manifested by her impetuous behavior two years prior. Olivia's **near-fatal experience at the hands of a psychotic serial killer** has forced her into submission and rendered her emotionally compromised. The **lack of trust in her own judgment** has kept her isolated from the world of crime fighting. Will her past dictate whether Olivia is ready to accept this life-changing opportunity? *Or will the temptation to return prove too powerful to decline? Do you mean will she jump back into the biz before she's ready? Why does this matter?*

FIRST PARAGRAPH NEEDS TO SHOW THE STORY CORE AND SAY IT AND LEAD THE AGENT TO THE NEXT PARAGRAPH.

When Olivia is informed that quotes from various Shakespeare plays **have been** are found clutched in the hands of three murder victims, spanning a decade, she agrees to set aside her fear and return to the job she once loved. Good sentence. Explains her return. But, would be more effective if it were two more powerful sentences, like:
Don't say what is obvious. Of course she has been informed. Jump right into the murders. The murders have occurred over the past ten years. Each victim is found clutching a Shakespeare play.

With the assistance of a complicated computer program designed to analyze literary clues and a newly compiled team of diverse agents, Olivia races to Florida to join the hunt for the elusive Shakespeare Killer. **As** the investigation progresses Olivia is forced to relive her own nightmare vicariously through the gruesome murders she's been called to solve. SHOW IT. WHAT HAPPENS. **As** the killer moves closer to her team Olivia must cope with dissent from the lead detective on the case which accelerates her struggle to reclaim confidence in her ability to profile. Unclear about this. *What does the lead detective do and how does this impact her?* Will Olivia persevere and work through her past failures in time to save one of her own? Or will the curtain fall on Shakespeare's next heinous act?

Who is “one of her own?” Is her team, or is she in danger? Need more tension here. Team leader is gruff, not supportive. She feels stifled, and not able to expand her own theories. Energy going to fight with him.

What happens where she reawakens old wounds? Show instead of tell. Nightmares, sweating, sleepless nights?

Question about story. What makes this investigation so pressured? A ten-year span and only three murders isn't threatening. Or were there more? Is one of her team next on the hit list? Or is she? IS THE ISSUE THAT THERE WILL BE ANOTHER ONE TO MAKE IT A DUO.

You have the core here, but suggest you redefine it to add tension. Time element. Why is it so tight?

What is your subject line (for your email to agents?) up to 10 words that capture attention and ensure your query is opened.

HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF. To be or to be repeated. To be or be dead. To be dead or not to be. **To be murdered or not to be.**

The Shakespeare Murders is a _____ word crime thriller/mystery. My background is in scientific research. I've co-authored several peer-reviewed articles **however this is my first attempt at writing fiction.** *Never say this. Let your story be so fascinating it doesn't matter if this is your first or your 15th.* **I'm attending** plan to attend the 2017 “Killer Nashville Conference” and enter this work in the competition for the 2017 Claymore award. I am also an active member of a writer's critique group.

Thank you for your consideration
Tammy Desjarlais

PANIC ATTACK TO OPEN

Subject line: DOUBLE DOUBLE TOIL AND TROUBLE

From Janet –query tweaks and first paragraph

SUBJECT LINE: Glass Promises (289 words)

The pressures of single motherhood are multiplied for Professor Grace Stone when her four year-old daughter, Lily, demands she “find her a daddy.” Despite a looming fear of rejection, Grace begins to date. She meets Beau, another victim of a cheating spouse, but is reluctant to pursue a relationship with him. Is the possibility of love worth the cutting pain of glass promises?

Grace knows this heartbreak too well. She is an orphan and the offspring of an illicit affair. Weeks after Lily’s birth, her husband and his mistress are killed. But Grace’s strong attraction to Beau pushes her into his passionate embrace. At a ritzy charity event, Grace’s uncanny resemblance to her dead mother causes a brawl. The humiliating incident leads to her deceased father’s living relatives. Complications arise when she is not welcomed into the family by one member and sleeping with another. Despite Beau being only her cousin by marriage, the connection adds a new wrinkle to their already tenuous relationship. But it is Lily who suffers when Grace is labeled a bastard. The little girl is terrorized by another child in an effort to drive them from the family. Beau is then forced to choose between Grace and his hostile sister. Determined to win him back, Grace seeks a pathway into his love-scarred heart. Will her campaign succeed or will she and Lily be forced to soldier on as a lonely family of two?

This 67,000 word completed romance, titled GLASS PROMISES, won third place in the 2016 Royal Palm Literary Award competition. I am a member of the Florida Writers Association, Romance Writers of America, Florida Romance Writers, Coral Springs Writers Group, and an assistant chairperson for the annual Coral Springs Literary Festival.

Nitpicking comments:

The pressures of single motherhood are multiplied for Professor Grace Stone when her four year-old daughter, Lily, demands she “find her a daddy.” Despite a *looming/ongoing/persistent* fear of rejection, Grace begins to date. She meets Beau, another victim of a cheating spouse, but is reluctant to pursue a relationship with him. Is the possibility of love worth the cutting pain of glass promises?

(Nice!)

Grace knows this heartbreak *too well, as an orphan and the* offspring of an illicit affair. Weeks after Lily’s birth, her husband and his mistress are killed. But Grace’s strong attraction to Beau pushes her into his passionate embrace. At a ritzy charity event, Grace’s uncanny resemblance to her dead mother causes a brawl. The humiliating incident *leads/introduces her to* her deceased father’s living relatives.

Suggestion: Revise this section so it flows better and is easier to read and comprehend. Complications arise when she is not welcomed into the family by one member and sleeping with another. *Awkward. Revise the sentence structure.* Despite Beau being only her cousin by marriage, the connection adds a new wrinkle to their already tenuous relationship.

For example: Believing her days of longing for a family are finally over, Grace is horrified to discover that her lover, Beau, is her step cousin. His sister protests their relationship and is unwilling to welcome Grace (the bastard) and child into the family.

But it is Lily who suffers when Grace is labeled a bastard. *(why? Have to explain this if you say it.) ITS LILLY WHO SUFFERS WHEN SHE IS TERRORIZED BY HER NEWLY DISCOVERED COUSIN.* The little *girl/she* is terrorized by another child in an effort to drive them from the family. *Make this make better sense. This is still awkward*

Beau is then forced to choose between Grace and his hostile sister. FAMILY PRESSURES PULL BEAU AWAY FROM GRACE AND BUT IS DETERMINED TO SECURE/SEEK A WAY/SEARCH FOR A WAY INTO HIS OR A PLACE IN HIS LOVE-SCARRED HEART. THIS WORKS!!! OR lock away a place into his lover-scarred heart.

No longer valid. Determined to win him back (*where did he go?*), Grace seeks a pathway into his love-scarred heart. *Revise this sentence so it makes sense.*

Will her EFFORTS (campaign) succeed or will she and Lily be forced to soldier on as a lonely family of two? Poignant. *Nice ending. The reader will care and be curious as to what she does, which you explain in your synopsis.*

My /This 67,000 word completed romance, *titled* GLASS PROMISES, won third place in the 2016 Royal Palm Literary Award competition. I am a member of the Florida Writers Association, Romance Writers of America, Florida Romance Writers, Coral Springs Writers Group, and an assistant chairperson for the annual Coral Springs Literary Festival.

Chapter 1 (416 words)

“Whoa, Dr. B!” A male student *ran/raced* into the English department just as Grace headed to the exit. “Your Beemer’s been beamed.”

“What are you talking about?”

He panted and pointed outside. “You gotta check it out.”

Grace hustled past him and swatted open the double doors. Campus security cruisers blocked the street. A fire truck rumbled in the faculty parking lot.

Then she saw it.

The obelisk of an I-beam rose into the air. A chain attached one end to the long arm of a tower crane. A second, shorter chain dangled in the wind. The girder had pierced the middle of her BMW and folded it upward like a taco. Her dead husband's babe-mobile was impaled with the biggest phallic weapon of destruction she'd ever seen.

Grace choked down a snort of hysteria as she skirted milling spectators and headed to the curb. A fireman who sprayed a chemical around the car shouted and backed away as the girder swayed in a gust of wind. From a cluster of hard-hatted workers one man sprang forward and climbed into the crane's cab with nimble grace. He lowered the beam toward the upturned front bumper. Metal screeched as the BMW collapsed under the weight.

Another worker in a *Charvet Crane/not important to give his company name. Confuses the reading.* hard hat intercepted Grace when she crossed the street. "You have to stay back, Miss." With his hand on her elbow, he turned her around. "Do you know the name of the professor who owns the BMW?"

"Black-Stone."

"Is he in there?" He nodded to the building ahead of them.

"I'm Dr. Black-Stone."

His eyes widened. Without a word, he spun and propelled her back toward the scene of the accident.

Meanwhile, the quick-thinking hero descended the crane's cab. With long strides toward the men, he shouted, "Where the hell is Joe? *He should have been watching that beam. This is unnecessary.*"

A worker yelled back not necessary. "He's getting the professor who owns the BMW."

“Goddamn it!” The man joined the other hard hats “Why couldn’t the four-eyed, pencil-necked nerd have a Kia or Escort? This is a fucking disaster.”

“Uh, Boss.” Joe halted with Grace behind the group. “This is Dr. Black-Stone.”

The boss spun around and cocked his head. He stood over six feet tall, tanned, and muscled. Thick dark brows arched above golden eyes. Cropped brown hair furred his head and stubble darkened his cheeks and chin.

He frowned as he peered at her. “Gigi?”

She forced a smile at her tenth rejected speed date. “Hello, Beau.”
GREAT ENDING!

From Doree in re first and second query paragraphs.

Story Core: His Life, his way.

Who: Levi Yokum

What does he want? He wants to maintain his status quo.

Why does he want it? He feels it’s his only way to survive.

What stands in his way? His mother’s choice.

The Or Else: Failure will end in Suicide

Core: Self Preservation

When seventeen-year-old Levi Yokum learns that his mother is dying, his world goes from status quo to dust. He’s an only child of a single parent and believes that he can’t survive without her, yet she’s convinced death is her best option. A septic spore of confusion, denial and blame oozes out from the once gentle son and he declares a war of irrepressible indifferences between them. As she fades, Levi lashes

out against her, his friends and all those he's placed, now as enemies, outside the wall he's built around himself. He finds a bottle of freedom from pain and loneliness and pockets them. Will his bottle of pills unburden him, while leading him toward a catastrophic decision?

Levi Yokum and his mother are mapping out college campuses to visit during the summer. With everything lined up, Levi is concerned when his mother explains that, due to Lung cancer, she'll be unable to travel. Levi considers it a detour. His mother's been through cancer and survived. When she announces that death is preferable, it triggers an avalanche of drastic changes in Levi. Their relationship takes on a rollercoaster ride of exchanges. A few gentle words of wisdom, several shouted fits of anger, but more than most end with the slamming of a door. After her death, he's hurled into a solitary world, terrified, and relying on his adolescent mind. With alcohol and drugs so easily available, no questions asked, will suicide be his own self preservation and **land him in a box beside his mother?**

Completed at _____ words, "One Eighty" will appeal to readers of "Fault in our Stars" and "Thirteen." My background includes three years as a reporter for the Salt Lake Valley Journal. For seven years, I've been an active member (and past vice president and president) of the Utah RWA (Romance Writers of America) and participate in Society of Childrens Books Writers and Illustrators, the Utah League of Writers and Absolutely Writers as well as two critique groups.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Doree Anderson

Comments:

As written, there is very little difference between your first and second paragraph. The first does not fulfill the need to present your story core to motivate the agent to keep on reading.

Story Core: His Life, his way. Drop this as a part of your story core.

The story core is the sum total of five questions. Period. It's who, what, why, why not, and the terrible or else. That's it!

Who: Levi Yokum

What does he want? He wants to maintain his college-bound status quo.

Why? Assure a happy future.

What stands in his way? Impending death of his mother.

The terrible or else: Suicide

Core: Self Preservation Drop this, not part of the listing for your story core.

Doree wrote:

When seventeen-year-old Levi Yokum learns that his mother is dying, his world goes from status quo to dust. He's an only child of a single parent and believes that he can't survive without her, yet she's convinced death is her best option. A septic spore of confusion, denial and blame oozes out from the once gentle son and he declares a war of irrepressible indifferences between them. As she fades, Levi lashes out against her, his friends and all those he's placed, now as enemies, outside the wall he's built around himself. He finds a bottle of freedom from pain and loneliness and pockets them. Will his bottle of pills unburden him, while leading him toward a catastrophic decision?

Suggest you revise your first paragraph so it's crystal clear about the core of this story. Three crisp sentences.

EXAMPLE:

High school student, Levi Yokum applies for a football scholarship as he maps out his future: college, graduate degree,

marriage, family, and grandchildren for his mom (a single parent). Neat, tidy, and stable. He's unprepared for the news of his mother's inoperable cancer which shatters his picture of "happily ever after."

Doree: write this in your own style. Keep it short and tight. Then use your second paragraph to set up the situation. Near the end of this paragraph, show/tell about his attraction of the escape offered by opioids. **Keep the sentence about landing in a box beside his mother.** That is powerful!

Levi Yokum and his mother are mapping out college campuses to visit during the summer. With everything lined up, Levi is concerned when his mother explains that, due to Lung cancer, she'll be unable to travel. Levi considers it a detour. His mother's been through cancer and survived. When she announces that death is preferable, it triggers an avalanche of drastic changes in Levi. Their relationship takes on a rollercoaster ride of exchanges. A few gentle words of wisdom, several shouted fits of anger, but more than most end with the slamming of a door. After her death, he's hurled into a solitary world, terrified, and relying on his adolescent mind. With alcohol and drugs so easily available, no questions asked, will suicide be his PATH TO INNER PEACE/FEELINGS OF SAFETY/BEING IN CONTROL/HAPPINESS OR WILL BE SUICIDE BE HIS DRUG OF CHOICE AND LAND HIM . . . own self-preservation THIS MAY BE UNCLEAR and land him in a box beside his mother?

NOTE: Make it clear that he wants the same peace of mind and surety he experienced when he was college bound with a neat and tidy future laid out before him. He was happy. No problems. No boulders in his path. Then his world fell apart.

KEY WORD IS SIMPLICITY. FOR FIRST PARAGRAPH! EXPAND THE STORY IN YOUR SECOND.

Completed at _____ words, "One Eighty" will appeal to readers of "Fault in our Stars" and "Thirteen." My background includes three years as a reporter for the Salt Lake Valley Journal. For seven years, I've been an active member (and past vice president and president) of the Utah RWA (Romance Writers of America) and participate in Society of Childrens Books Writers and Illistrators, the Utah League of Writers and Absolutely Writers as well as two critique groups. Thank you for your time and consideration.
Doree Anderson

Next week:

Linda, bring us up to date on your agent research.

Doree, Redefine story core. Revise first and second paragraph.

Janet, tweak to clarify in your query.

Vicki, tweak to **finish** your query.

Tammy, revision two: Clarify by showing more and telling list.

And to our audience~

Thank you for being with us. If you'd like to become an active member of this weekly class/webinar, please join us. Become a member of Agent/Query Submission Central and benefit from weekly evaluations of your work, no matter whether it's the query, synopsis, first pages, or your agent guest. You'll also enjoy access to our "members' only" Facebook page.

A plus to membership is the on-demand availability of both the class transcript and video to keep you moving and writing and submitting your work for evaluation.

I'm offering, a special price when you join agent/query submission central: pay for two months and receive the third at no charge. More information about the program is on my home page at www.getpublishednow.biz

That's it for the day. Off you go. Make it a great day! Write on! May the words continue to be with you.

Bye for now.
Molli