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Agent/Query Submission Central

~this week 11-18-16~

Query & Synopsis

WORKSHOP #7

Welcome everyone, including those of you in our “audience.” The writers being evaluated today are members of Submission Central, determined to land agents. And, they’re well on their way.

You’re invited to comment, or ask questions, using the chat box.

ABOUT TODAY’S WORKSHOP~

Focus today includes:

- Progress comparisons: first queries vs latest versions
- Further defining of the Story Core
- How to tighten your query letter
- Synopsis refining/removal of repeated information

Up for evaluation, in order of appearance:

1. Janet
2. Carol
3. John
4. Doree
5. Vicki
6. Linda
7. Lisa

Story Core Reviews:

EXAMPLE from Emile:

Email SUBJECT line: Passion, profits, and psychopaths

Query first paragraph:

At the age of 16, Maisy Sloane endured 27 horrifying days at the hands of a psychopath who tortured and raped her, and murdered her best friend. Now 24, and a law student, she's laser-focused on discovering how her attacker evaded death row, despite the overwhelming evidence of guilt. But, when the arrival of taunting messages from her torturer rip open old wounds, they force Maisy to set aside plans of revenge and confront the ghosts of her past.

STORY CORE:

WHO is the story about? Maisy

WHAT does she want? Revenge

WHY can't she have it? legal schemes

WHAT is the terrible "or else" that could occur if she doesn't get what she wants? Past will overwhelm her

Past will overwhelm her. Or another psychopath is after her.

From Jenny's query for "Reinvention"

Email SUBJECT line: Sex, Lies, and Electricity

Clay, a reclusive, fifty-something engineer, prefers mechanical tinkering over interaction with humans. For ten years, he's been consumed by inventing a machine that will revolutionize energy production. Clay hermits in a remote cabin workshop, supported by his younger brother who brings groceries and helps him on weekends. When Robert is killed in an apparent car accident and someone breaks into the cabin and tries to steal the machine and severely damages it, Clay thinks himself into a paranoid frenzy. First the accident. Then the attempted robbery. He needs to run. But where? Can Clay locate safe haven, repair his invention, and sell the patent rights before unknown killers catch up with him?

STORY CORE:

WHO is the story about? Clay

WHAT does he want? Sell patent rights sell the patent. Repair and sell the patent.

WHY can't he have it? Bad guys. Someone is after it to destroy it.

WHAT is the terrible "or else" that could occur if he doesn't get what he wants? Wasted life? Unclear? He'll be killed. Machine also destroyed.

From Janet~

Her original query for "Glass Promises"

I am looking for representation and was very impressed with the authors you represent. My 98,660 word manuscript, Glass Promises, is a romance novel which deals with one's greatest strength and weakness—a family.

Grace Stone is the illegitimate daughter of a rich man's mistress. As a widowed college professor with a young child, she has worked hard to distance herself from her dead mother's lifestyle. She meets Beau at speed dating and he's the perfect guy for a fling. Unmarried. Likes kids. Not looking for commitment. But Grace's four-year-old daughter has other plans for the two of them. When the identity of Grace's unknown father is discovered, she is thrilled to finally have a biological connection to a

family—except she’s sleeping with one member and being maligned by another. To protect herself and her daughter, she makes two demands of Beau. Her ultimatum ends their relationship. When Grace is attacked and seriously injured, she and Beau learn that the bonds of family and the heart are in finding love, losing love, and risking love again.

Story core:

WHO: Grace Stone

WHAT does she want? Her goal is unclear.

WHY: wants to be different than her mom. Lonely.

WHAT stands in her way? Unknown. Unclear. Wants to not be like mom. Unclear.

The terrible “or else?” Unclear. Declarative last sentence don’t reveal how she learns this lesson about family. Lives alone for the rest of her life.

Results? # of queries submitted? Responses? Requests for manuscript? Lot of thanks no thanks. 20 sent.

Janet’s most recent query and synopsis:

WHO IS THE STORY ABOUT? Professor Grace Stone

WHAT DOES THE MAIN CHARACTER WANT AND WHY? She wants the love of a good man and the family she never had.

WHAT STANDS IN THE MAIN CHARACTER’S WAY? Her fear of heartbreak.

WHAT HAPPENS IF THE MAIN CHARACTER DOESN’T GET WHAT SHE WANTS? She remains a family outsider.

Email SUBJECT line (and book title): Glass Promises

Professor Grace Stone yearns for what has been missing from her life, a family of her own. As the offspring of her mother’s affair with a wealthy married man, Grace never knew her father. Her own husband was killed with his mistress shortly after the birth their daughter, Lily. Grief-stricken, she once again faced life alone. Four years later, Lily urges her to find them

a new daddy. Since Grace grew up with only her mother for family, she does not want the same lonely childhood for her daughter. She suppresses her fear of heartbreak to start dating. Grace meets Beau, a burly construction worker, who differs from the sleek, suave men she was attracted to in the past. They begin a steamy relationship fraught with landmines of pain from both of their past marriages.

Does this current version reveal the story core?

WHO is the story about: Grace

WHAT does she want? Family. family. Give her daughter a father.

WHY does she want it? Loneliness. Doesn't want Lily to grow up without a dad. Doesn't want to be alone.

WHAT STANDS in her way? Fear of being vulnerable. Fear of men, relationships, being hurt again. Vulnerability.

THE terrible "or else" No family for herself and for Lily. Not going to be happy alone. No dad for Lily.

Any extraneous info that could be deleted from this first paragraph? Child of an illicit affair, doesn't want her daughter to be raised fatherless. Tighten info on husband, it's enough to call him philandering and how she has faced life as a single parent ever since. Until four-year old Lily . . . Another sentence that feels repetitive is about how Grace grew up with only a mother. Nice phrase about landmines of pain . . .

Second paragraph:

At a ritzy charity event, Grace experiences her greatest nightmare. As a result of her uncanny resemblance to her dead mother, a brawl occurs. The humiliating incident leads to the revelation of her deceased father's identity and that of his living relatives. Grace rejoices in finally having the family she has always wanted. **But she must deal with the added complication of her newfound aunt being married to Beau's father. Mention a family secret here instead of the complication of step-this and that.** As she navigates the unfamiliar labyrinth of family dynamics, she learns that not all newcomers are welcome. Using all her resources, she campaigns to secure a future with her commitment-phobic new love as well as win over his hostile sister. If

she loses the battle, she and Lily will never realize their dreams of a husband, father and family. Now that she has seen what her life can be, Grace refuses to live without love and remain an outsider like her mother, the other woman.

GLASS PROMISES is a 72,000 word completed romance manuscript which 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 worked on the annual Coral Springs Literary Festival.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Janet Franks Little

www.janetfrankslittle.com

www.facebook.com/janetfl1

www.twitter.com/franks_little

Comments: Could last sentences from first and second paragraphs be revised to become questions which are more likely to result in continued reading to discover the answer to the question. Confused when relationships she has just discovered is revealed.

For Everyone:

Declarative sentences aren't as powerful in query letters as sentences that ask questions.

Nice job of purging "is" from your query.

SYNOPSIS

Professor Grace Stone grew up never knowing which of her dead mother's sugar daddies was her father. So she marries young to create a family of her own. Two years later, her philandering husband dies in the devastating tsunami of 2004. Alone with an infant daughter, she focuses on her education and being a good mother until four-year-old Lily begins to lobby

hard for a father. Despite her fear of men who make glass promises, Grace can't deny her child what she herself has yearned for all her life.

She tries speed dating but refuses **all the five-minute men**. When her car is totaled, Grace encounters one of the rejected dates?????. The chemistry between her and Beau sizzles. They quickly become intimate after he helps her buy a new vehicle. Appalled by her loss of control, Grace pushes Beau away after he makes a **joke about the cost of sex with her.????** He wins her **back. She shares with him the story of her parents and why his remark was so painful to her.**

They attend a premier Boca Raton fundraiser where one of her mother's former lovers accosts and humiliates Grace. From this frightening incident, she discovers a biological connection to Beau's stepmother. Everyone welcomes her into his family except his jealous sister, Gen, who considers Grace an illegitimate interloper. As the newest family member, Grace bears the woman's disdain until Lily is terrorized by Gen's daughter at a holiday event.

Fiercely protective as Lily's only parent, Grace questions her long-held desire for an extended family. Perhaps they were better off alone. Worried that she has no more solid standing with Beau than her mother had with her lovers, Grace pushes him for a commitment and to set boundaries with his sister. Her ultimatum forces their breakup when he is unable and unwilling to meet her demands.

Grace refuses to lose the man she loves and her newfound relatives. Both are too precious **to** her and Lily **to** not fight for them. She initiates a campaign using her PhD book smarts, her mother's tricks-of-the-trade, and even Lily's child-like ingenuity to secure a forever place in Beau's heart and in his family.

Comments:

Basically, this covers the needs of the synopsis and reveals the full story flow in a quick, and easy-to-read manner. Some captivating phrases

engaged my attention. Like: Grace can't deny her child what she herself has yearned for all her life. Intriguing last sentence will motivate the agent to keep reading to find out how Grace achieves her goal.

Overall clean up and tightening will bring this query and synopsis "ready to go" status.

"Natural reader" as read-back program. Google it.

From Carol~

Email SUBJECT line: Brother and sister caught in the "storm of the century."

Her query:

Georgie and her brother, who always seems to get sick, are downtown for the Armistice Day Parade. Their uncle is part of the parade and is to give them a ride home when the parade is over. A sudden snow storm comes up and the store where they are to meet closes. How will she find her uncle and if she doesn't, how will she get home?

The day had started out warm, so Georgie and her brother, Luke, are not prepared for cold weather. They have no money, and since they can't find their uncle, they must walk home to an empty house as their parents are at the hospital awaiting the birth of a new baby. After a long ordeal fighting the elements, they manage to get a free ride home on a streetcar only to find the electricity and phone service out in their cold home. On top of that, Luke becomes sick. Can Georgie figure out how to get the house warm, and what about Luke who becomes sicker by the minute?

"Georgie and the Armistice Day Blizzard" is a chapter book of 10,000 words. I 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 to the Minnesota chapter of the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators and

taught classes at the Loft Literary Center in Minneapolis. I belong to two critique groups, one in person and one on-line.

STORY CORE:

WHO is this story about? Georgie, age 12

WHAT does she want? To get her little brother, Luke, age 6, home and out of the elements.

WHAT stands in their way? The weather

What is the terrible OR ELSE that might occur if she doesn't get what she wants? She and/or her little brother could suffer from hypothermia and never make it home.

Comments from group. What works and what doesn't?

Good description sentence, storm of the century. Minor things that didn't work. Make it more desperate. Didn't feel great at the beginning but wanted to go anyway. Where is it taking place? Current time or decades before? Is this a small town?

Set up is clear, but Georgie's anxiety isn't readily evident. Build tension by revealing more about her feelings of responsibility for her little brother, and how her stress builds as bad becomes worse and by the time they reach home, he's obviously ill and the house is cold, and becoming colder. As written, it feels a bit slight to become a book.

Plot Question: Even if the store closed, wouldn't the uncle have come to retrieve them if they waited for him outside? Set up could change a little to give Georgie more of a challenge. They agree to meet him in the parking lot where he's left his car? But, the blinding rain/show confuse her as to exactly where the parking lot is located. Storms don't gather that fast? Tornado? Or, ice storm. Sticky snow? They get lost. Uncle can't find them. Panic sets everybody in tail spin. Bigger town. Or they go with Uncle to larger town, don't know how to find him or get home? Streetcars? In today's world.

From John

John's original query:

When he comes to on a picnic table with no memory of the past, he struggles with the uncovering of who he is and searches for the answer to where the fifty thousand dollars in his pocket came from. There is also a strange medallion on a silver chain around his neck, that later connects him to another dimension where Michael the Archangel helps guide him with his purpose in this realm, which due to an accident, he has forgotten.

STORY CORE:

Who is the story about? Unknown he. No name may or may not work. Profusion of he.

What does he want and why? Know who he is. Remember what happened. How he got there. About the money in his pocket. Would 50K fit in a pocket? Money belt.

What stands in his way? Memory loss. Amnesia.

What is the terrible or else that might occur if he doesn't get what he wants? Unknown. Unknown.

John's CURRENT query first paragraph

Email SUBJECT line: He can't remember if he's a victim or a criminal

Jack Crane awakes on a park bench in the rain with a large gash on his head and a fragmented/**jumbled** memory. It's like his thoughts were dropped in a wire Bingo basket and spun around at high speed, completely out of order. There is a brief memory of shooting someone, being shot himself, a spirit being named Michael and something about a mission to clean-up corruption. After a short hospital stay, he fears what he may have done before being wounded. For now, his mission will have to be put on hold until he understands it more. He'd like to remember all of his past, but if it could get him killed, maybe not remembering is better. For now, he asks, "Am I a victim or a criminal?"

Who is the story about: Jack

What does he want and why? To remember if he's a good or bad guy. Remember his past.

What stands in his way? His memory is scrambled. Amnesia.

What is the terrible or else that might occur if he doesn't get what he wants? The corrupt people he came to destroy may kill him first if he doesn't figure things out. Can get killed.

Question: Does everyone know what a Bingo basket is?

Current query 2nd and 3rd paragraphs:

His identity is further questioned when it's found he has a money belt with fifty grand in cash, and he's not sure why. As memories are stitched together in time, his fears increase. Snippets show the money in the belt belonged to his loan shark boss who is part of his mission. When his car, which was missing, is dragged from the river, a body is found in the trunk with another fifty grand. He vaguely remembers how this money belonged to a drug dealer's boss, another part of his mission. He's convinced both will be looking for their money and not concerned about his health. Jack's life abruptly changes when he's placed in the line of fire and missed ten times at close range. It's then he discovers he's different from others. He can perform supernatural feats when needed, and at other times he has no powers at all. Will he be able to use his powers if the gang leaders come around for their money or will he be helpless and alone?

My novel, "CAN TWO WRONGS BE MADE RIGHT?" is complete at 55,000 words. I've spent most of my technical career in the newspaper and publishing industry. I have been published in several magazines. I'm a member of a writers' group, and in the process of organizing a group of first-time writers.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

John' current synopsis:

Jack's doctor says his prognosis is 50/50 of ever remembering events in their correct order. What he does remember places him in a position where two different crooks are after their money which he carried. He has no idea what they look like or when they will come, but he's sure about one thing,

they are not going to let **one hundred grand** slip through their fingers without a fight. Should he give the money back or run for his life?

Over the next few months, bits and pieces chain together into coherent thoughts. Some thoughts show Jack's not like other people. He's visited by an angelic being named Michael who explains how Jack, like himself, is from another dimension, sent here to help clean up a loan shark operation and drug ring. For now, due to Jack's memory situation, his mission is put on hold. Jack's struggles further intensify when he meets Susan, a woman who says she's his lover and he has feelings for her that he cannot explain. She has Multiple Personality Disorder and a missing husband. There's a possibility she's the murderer. He thinks of running, but to where? He may run right into the arms of the two guys looking for their money.

As he grows closer to Susan, he learns how her husband mysteriously disappeared. After some investigation, he finds the missing husband's car buried behind the barn with two bodies inside. On confronting Susan, she admits how it was Jane, her alternate personality, who actually pulled the trigger when she found the husband and secretary in bed together. Jack fears he may be Jane's next victim.

Jack makes friends with the local Sheriff and tells him the truth about his situation. The Sheriff, Tom Tuttle, arranges a meeting between each of those looking for their money and the monies are returned. In exchange, the gangsters pledge not to retaliate. Jack isn't 100% sure they mean business, but what other choice does he have?

Although he gave his word, the former loan shark boss, named Skidder, wants him dead because he's afraid Jack might know too much. When Skidder bursts into the kitchen with an automatic rifle, catching Jack and Susan by surprise, Jane materializes, in human form with a shotgun in hand, shooting the boss in the chest. Michael then appears in a bright light which surrounds Jane and assures Jack that all will be well in the future. Michael and Jane fade away as the light grows dim. Jack and Susan are left alone to explain how this body, full of holes, ended up in their driveway.

Comments: If this is Jack's story, he needs to resolve the problem. But, I'm not clear exactly what that is besides memory loss, which he seems to resolved. When Michael appears, as does Jane, the power goes to them, with Jack left holding the bag for the murder of Skidder. Doesn't that put him in as much jeopardy as before?

Is this more than one story?

Stick with Jack? Distrustful of everyone he meets.

What is the major plot line.

History of submissions: Sent 100. 60 replies. All "doesn't fit what we're looking for."

Bookbuzz.com

Survey Monkey to discover what readers liked about the book. Might alter how you write your query/synopsis.

From Doree~

Email SUBJECT LINE: Opioids . . . can you hear me now?

When seventeen-year-old Levi Yokum learns that his mother is dying, life goes from sturdy to erosion??? Security to???? known to unknown. As she fades, Levi battles his own reality. He has to shed his youthful outlook and prepare to live without his mother's guidance and security. His anxiety leads him to make irrational decisions. Will a handful of narcotics he's squandered away be his solution?

Story Core:

Who: Levi

What do they want? Family His mother to live.

Why: Present doesn't want to have to grow up yet.

The "or what else?" Death Kill himself instead of another option.

Question? Will this first paragraph motivate the agent to keep on reading?

(And congrats Doree, you accomplished the goal of one-work responses to the story core questions. Helped me realize that one-word brevity may not be a great idea in this situation. Thanks!)

Second paragraph:

Levi Yokum's plans are a fun last summer with his mother before he's college bound. A family of two, their relationship has always been strong. So when he learns that she's fallen ill with cancer, he considers it a **detour, not the end**. At the age of seven, Levi helped her as she went through chemo and radiation therapy. He held her hand and gave her moral support with every step of the way. He has no doubt that as a team, this outcome could be the same. She disagrees. Levi refuses to grasp the magnitude of her disease. He accuses her of surrendering, that her decision is to leave him **destitute and alone**. The tension turns their home into a **war zone**, and him into an odious young man. He begins a quest to understand her rationalization. Instead, an interest explodes at the OxyContin he finds. The sight of his mother's deterioration finally breaks through to him. He realizes that her death is inevitable. His narcotics, he's learned can offer her a gentle passage to eternal sleep. Or he can use the pills to end all his mind saying???? problems.

Completed at 54,500 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 the SCBWI, Society of Children's 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
doree.anderson.com (358)

Comments:

Unclear what “mind saying” means. 2nd paragraph needs to be trimmed. Not so much about being a team in the past, but about being a team in the future.

They beat it in the past, intend to beat it in the future.

SYNOPSIS: “One Eighty”

Paragraph ONE:

Seventeen-year-old Levi Yokum's discussing girls, low cut dresses, and boobs with his best friend, Ryan Holt when he receives a call. His mother, Camelia Josephine (CJ) Yokum's co-worker notifies him that his mother's left work early, ill. Levi hurries home to find her sick with a severe migraine. A test reveals a small tumor against her carotid artery. The surgery goes well.

Paragraph TWO:

CJ's post-op appointment uncovers a rare form of liver cancer. He believes with intervention, and life can return to normal. Since his mother's radical mastectomy eight years prior, she'd been declared cancer free. CJ and the doctor try to explain to him the severity of the diagnosis. Levi flat out states that he won't except her decision to die at home. He expects her to fight.

Paragraph THREE:

Fear twists around his heart. Levi's concern shifts their relationship into a roller-coaster of arguments and heartbreak. Instead of asking questions, he pushes her, making demands that she seek intervention. Her bouts of pain provide him the anger he uses against her. Yet, he's the one taking pictures and squirreling memories away. Constant nausea flirts inside him every time he watches her breathe. His chest hurts, his heart catches at the offensive words he shouts, but doesn't stop. Anguish turns to quarrels. He storms out, unable to restrain his childish antics.

Paragraph FOUR:

During one dramatic exit, he meets Malea Tebow, a motherless schoolmate. While talking, she validates his pain, but won't justify his anger. She

encourages him to stop the derailment with his mother before the opportunity passes. Determined to mend the rift between them, Levi takes over his mother's care. He squanders (steals) some narcotics left in her room. Too soon, her timeline rapidly declines. Levi is prepared to assist in her pass over with the pills. Levi's blessed to be there when she starts mumbling nonsense. He takes her hand. She tells him that she loves him. She turns her head aside and dies. He lifts her into his arms and gently rocks her, begging her not to die, it's too soon, along with his words of love.

Paragraph FIVE:

With OxyContin in his pocket, he takes a bottle of alcohol to the cemetery and drinks himself into a stupor at the base of his mother's grave. He fails his first attempt at suicide. A few days later, Ryan catches him during another attempt. When he realizes he doesn't want to die, it may be too late. The pills have taken control over his mind. He asks Tawnya Holt, Ryan's mother, and Levi's legal guardian for help. With therapy, he learns control.

Comments:

Synopsis structure flows logically until paragraph four. Don't bring in a character not mentioned before since she doesn't seem to play a continuing role, at least not in this synopsis. At one point, a while back, there was mention that the pills call to him, or played tricks with his mind? Is this still in the story? Introduction of characters with their full names, is not necessary in the synopsis. Tawnya Holt can be identified as Ryan's mother. He learns control? Control of what? And how does that make him less suicidal. Need to spell it out clearly as the story resolution.

Comments: More, in synopsis, about his internal struggles. Antagonist is death, dealing with it.

From Vicki~

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

Store core:

Who wants what 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 for “Crooked”

Born with cerebral palsy, Sadie's tangled walk attracts attention with every step she takes. The real Sadie hides from the world, for people only see a cripple when she slithers by. Except for her one friend, Finn, who has moved back to London. Sadie's convinced she'll never see him again. Sent to her grandmother's isolated Catskill Mountain home for the summer, Sadie decides it is a perfect refuge to end her life. But in the forest, as at school, Sadie senses someone watches her, once again.

Story core:

Who wants what 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

After swallowing enough pills to kill Jack's giant, Sadie wakes from her suicide attempt. She is devastated that she is still on this earth. And why does she have crystals in her lap. Did her stalker save her? When Sadie comes face to face with her culprit, she is stunned. A mischievous fairy, Devilia, has been watching Sadie's every move. Sadie's suicide plans are put on hold, for she is intrigued enough to stick around and find out what happens next. She takes Devilia to Manhattan. But the volatile fairy complicates Sadie's life to the fullest. On a field trip, Devilia causes a miraculous incident, with Sadie as the centerpiece. Overnight Sadie becomes a “viral” Internet sensation, her bare legs reveal her her disability on display to the world. Much to her horror, her bare legs are revealed to the world. She emails Finn, and he answers how magical she looks. Sadie doesn't see it that way, for she is even more of a freak. She is ready to rid herself of Devilia for good, until she learns that Finn's life is in danger. Sadie persuades Devilia to help rescue him. In a critical moment, Sadie learns the true meaning of love and loss. Can Finn be saved? Or will Sadie go back to death as her only option to escape a future of loneliness.

My YA novel Crooked is complete at xx words. I have been a part of a writers' group since 2004, attended conferences and workshops, and am a member of SCBWI. I live in Manhattan with my husband and am the mother of a "sometimes" crooked young adult. I also live with a wirehair dachshund, Clancy, my muse.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Synopsis of "Crooked"

Scrutinized all her life, Sadie hides her palsied walk under long skirts and her true self from the world. Only one person sees the real Sadie. Finn, an exchange student from London, lived with Sadie and her mom the past school year. He returns home, and Sadie is distraught Why? Will she be alone and lonely like she was before Finn came into her life. Sent to the Catskills to spend her summer with her grandmother, her only option is to end her life.

A mischievous fairy, Devilia, thwarts Sadie's suicide. Lost and jealous, Devilia wanders, and unlike Sadie, she longs to be noticed in this world in which she has no place. Devilia also is lonely because she is different that the humans in her world. As their lives intertwine, Sadie slowly begins to escape the darkness that had consumed her and finds she has an impassioned desire to help Devilia. As the infantile Devilia overcomes her jealous nature and starts to trust Sadie, a cautious alliance eventually leads to a friendship fraught with complications.

Sadie emails Finn about Devilia. He doesn't believe her, until Devilia makes a shocking appearance via the Internet, busting Finn's computer. Finn gets an inkling of the trouble the fairy can cause, and mails her back to Sadie. Their summer adventure has begun although they are continents apart. Without Sadie, Finn is lost, his impulsive nature drawn to trouble. Unknown to Sadie, Finn hangs out with a drug dealer. Sadie tries to adjust as caretaker of a fairy, telling Devilia she can live in Manhattan if she promises two things; no magic and remain invisible in public. Devilia breaks promises. In school, the fairy violently protects Sadie from bullies.

Sadie fights back as well, and acquires a new confidence. But she is terrified of what Devilia is capable of.

On a field trip to a museum, hundreds of butterflies cover every inch of Sadie, and all because of Devilia. Television stations want to hear her story. Her grades are failing, cruelty debilitates her once again, and Sadie is worried about Finn. She convinces Devilia to travel to London and investigate. Devilia is critically injured protecting Finn. With drug money, Finn flies to New York and meets up with Sadie in a desperate attempt to save Devilia. But the fairy vanishes. Finn has guilt because of his poor choices, and Sadie regrets not caring for Devilia responsibly.

Broken hearted, Sadie must appear on national television. Sadie stands up for Devilia, exposing the fairy's existence and for the first time, accepting her own. A near death experience brings Devilia back. Sadie is elated. On a Manhattan rooftop, Sadie and Finn kiss. Devilia lights the sky with shooting stars, ready for her own journey. Finn returns to London. He is sent to boarding school to get his life on track. Sadie plans to visit for the holidays. Proudly, Sadie tells Finn she is in a play and has to wear tights, her legs visible to everyone. An unhidden Sadie is ready to conquer the world.

Comments:

Structure is much improved, and yet, needs to be clarified and tightened. This story is about Sadie, what she feels, how she comes to accept her disability, not fitting in, and how she expands her inner and outer world. Nice parallel could be drawn between Sadie and Devilia and Finn, all feeling out of place in their worlds at one point, and how, with Sadie as their pace setter, find where and how they belong. This can be incredibly powerful.

FOR EVERYONE:

Show more and tell less. Straight explanation about anything is much less powerful than showing it through Sadie's actions, reactions, thoughts, feelings etc.

For example, in this paragraph, I've highlighted every "tell" and suggest, as a practice, to revise all to "show" through Sadie.

After swallowing enough pills to kill Jack's giant, Sadie wakes from her suicide attempt. She is devastated that she is still on this earth. And why does she have crystals in her lap. Did her stalker save her? When Sadie comes face to face with her culprit, she is stunned. A mischievous fairy, Devilia, has been watching Sadie's every move. Sadie's suicide plans are put on hold, for she is intrigued enough to stick around and find out what happens next. She takes Devilia to Manhattan. But the volatile fairy complicates Sadie's life to the fullest. On a field trip, Devilia causes a miraculous incident, with Sadie as the centerpiece. Overnight Sadie becomes a "viral" Internet sensation, her disability on display to the world. She emails Finn, and he answers how magical she looks. Sadie doesn't see it that way, for she is even more of a freak. She is ready to rid herself of Devilia for good, until she learns that Finn's life is in danger. Sadie persuades Devilia to help rescue him. In a critical moment, Sadie learns the true meaning of love and loss. Can Finn be saved? Or will Sadie go back to death as her only option to escape her life of loneliness.

Comment: Is his life in danger, or is he about to make a decision that will cause his life to be in danger? What's going on?

MAJOR CLUE FOR EVERYONE:

If your text is filled with "is" verbs, you are "telling" instead of "showing." When you tell, you declare something to be. But this is information only. You leave the reader to figure it out on their own. To imagine (if they want to) how your protagonist acts or reacts.

Your responsibility, as a story teller, is to show this. Show how your protagonist acts, reacts, thinks, and feels. This reveals more of their inner world and invites your reader inside.

Exercise: Search for "is" in your query and synopsis. How many times does it appear? Revise most of these and replace them with more powerful verbs.

Note: “Is” has been used approximately 29 times in Vicki’s query and synopsis. Most can be revised

From Linda~

Story Core:

Who wants what and why?

Wu Meichen wants freedom to control her own future.

What stands in the way? Chinese cultural traditions

What will happen if Meichen doesn’t get what she wants? Her husband will go to America, and they may be separated for years until he’s allowed to return.

(Note: I’ve yellow highlighted weak verbs and unnecessary words/compound sentences.)

Query:

Newlywed Wu Meichen hates the Chinese traditions that dictate her actions and thoughts. Although their marriage was/is 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 his/their future. But Chinese tradition demands all family members obey the orders of the oldest male who’s responsible for the family’s welfare. When the head of the family sends Meichen’s husband overseas to work, she is devastated, fearing he’ll be gone for many years while she faces a lifetime of waiting.

Meichen’s father-in-law sends her to a missionary school after her mother-in-law attacks her. While she enjoys learning, Meichen never stops longing for Chung. Months pass, then years. Meichen has no comfort except the few letters her husband sends, his Chung’s photograph, and memories of their short time together. In the fifth year, Meichen’s sorrow turns into anger and then rebellion. If her husband can’t come home, she’ll find her way to him. When she reaches San Francisco, the family patriarch is furious. He tries to send Meichen back to China. She disguises herself as a boy and crosses America by train. Meichen rejoices when reunited with she sees her

husband Chung again, but she soon learns there is more trouble ahead. Her husband has been ordered to divorce her or his family will disown him. Without love, Meichen sees no point in living. But will her husband still love her when he remembers her rash actions caused the loss of his family? Can Meichen find a way to make peace with her in-laws and stay with her husband?

Comment: I revised the last sentences of this paragraph:

Chung has been ordered to divorce or face being disowned by his family. Meichen fears he no longer will love her if her rash actions cause the loss of his family. Can she find a way to make peace with her in-laws and remain with her husband? (My bad: overload of pronouns)

Complete at 80,000 words, “Unbound Woman” won first place in an ethnic novel contest sponsored by Romantic Times Magazine. I belong to the Central Savannah River Area Writers and am an active member of RWA (Romance Writers of America) and Georgia Romance Writers.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Third Draft of Synopsis

On her wedding day, Wu Meichen becomes a member of the Chao family. They are all strangers, even her husband, Chao Chung. As a new bride, she is on the lowest level in this large family’s hierarchy, and under the thumb of her hyper-critical mother-in-law. Chung does his best to protect Meichen from his mother’s malice.

The head of the family sends Chung to America, perhaps for many years. Meichen panics, but Chung tells her he must obey First Uncle. Her father-in-law sends her to a missionary school where she is occupied by her studies and safe from her mother-in-law. She makes friends with Li Biyu, her teacher. But even Biyu can’t cure Meichen’s impatience. After five years, Meichen decides to go to America and join Chung, and she convinces Biyu to go with her.

Oldest Uncle seizes her in San Francisco, outraged by her disobedience. He arranges her return to China, but she slips away and boards an east bound train. First Uncle telegraphs an ultimatum: Chung must divorce his wife, or the family will disown him. Four weeks later, Meichen reaches Chung, and he can't bear to reject her after her courageous journey. Chung is wracked with guilt, and she tolerates his unpredictable behavior as best she can. During an argument, he tells Meichen he kept her only for sexual pleasure and he is ashamed he abandoned his family. With her heart crushed, Meichen agrees to a divorce.

She joins Biyu, who speaks at churches to raise money for Chinese girls' schools. Meichen discovers her power as a speaker when she brings in impressive contributions. Soon, she realizes she is pregnant, but keeps speaking until Biyu guesses her secret and insists she return to her husband. When Meichen arrives home, she learns Chung is on the way to China to remarry.

Chung abandons his journey and returns home. He secretly watched Meichen speak and was awed when she mesmerized the audience. She is the wife he wants. He and Meichen write First Uncle reminding him that Chung might be unable to reenter America if he leaves, and he'll lose the high salary that supports his relatives. First Uncle wants the money. He forgives the couple and restores them to the family. (373 words)

Comments: What works?

What doesn't work? Overuse of pronouns throughout. Suggest revision.

For example, Linda wrote:

He and Meichen write First Uncle reminding him that Chung might be unable to reenter America if he leaves, and he'll lose the high salary that supports his relatives. First Uncle wants the money. He forgives the couple and restores them to the family.

Revision concept:

Chung and Meichen remind First Uncle that American immigration policies have changed. Chung might be unable to reenter the country after returning to China to re-marry. This will end financial support to the family. First

Uncle desires money more than revenge and restores Chung and Meichen to the family.

Comment: Child bride. Good to mention.

From Lisa (last minute submission)

Who is my protagonist? Kay Smith, a victim of a suspicious car accident, struggling with amnesia.

What does she want? To remember her past and reclaim her identity.

What stands in her way? A severe, forgotten psychological trauma past blocks her memory.

What will happen if she doesn't get what she wants? A deadly stalker will kill her.

Email Query Subject line: The new First Lady runs from a deadly political conspiracy.

Kay Smith is lost and alone, battling amnesia and a choice—whether to look for her dark past and the tragedy that sent her fleeing her life, or run from it. But when Kay learns she may have led a less-than-innocent life, and a deadly stalker follows her every inquiry, she fears she could be the next to die. Can Kay remember her dark past before it catches up with her?

Kay takes refuge with a new friend, a man she fell for at first sight, Nick Costa, her comatose roommate's daily visitor. From him she learns the shocking truth about her past and the reason Nick seems so strangely familiar. She's Angela Lockhart, the missing wife of the president-elect, the latest target of a secret, high-level conspiracy that left her sister, Amy, and a young intern dead. Nick's her lead Secret Service Agent, working desperately to keep her hidden from the power players he suspects are out to kill her. The few memories that subsequently emerge leave Angela confused, emotionally distraught. A recurring nightmare weighs Angela down with shady suspicions about her complicity in the murders. When a radio newscast reveals three more people have been killed in her wake,

Angela's guilt reaches a tipping point. She escapes Nick's custody, determined to stop the bloodshed by confronting those she suspects of murder. It's a bold move Angela 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.

LOST & FOUND is complete at 88,000 words. It would likely appeal to fans of Norah Wilson, Linda Howard, and Anne Stuart, all of whom have spun twisting tales of women struggling to piece together their forgotten pasts only to find their futures in deadly jeopardy. Over my thirty-year career as an organizational psychologist, I've published scholarly papers, edited newsletters, and written columns and articles on topics related to K-12 education and parenting. I'm serving my second-term as President of the Sisters in Crime Atlanta Chapter, and am an active member of Mystery Writers of America and the Atlanta Writers Club. I honed my writing skills with Continuing Education classes, webinars, and conferences, and professional critiques. (369 words)

A brief synopsis and a copy of LOST & FOUND follows this letter. Snail mail comment is outdated.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Lisa Malice, Ph.D.

770-973-0996 (home/office) 404-915-2805 (cell) delete???

www.LisaMalice.com

www.Facebook.com/Lisa.Malice.3

Comment: Makes more sense if Nick is the Good Samaritan who brings her to the hospital. A “just happened to be visiting person in other bed” is a “bear comes out of the woods and eats the bad guys” situation. It's too convenient to be real.

It *will appeal* is stronger than “would likely appeal.” Awkward phrasing of your comp sentence. Clarify more quickly.

Lisa wrote: It would likely appeal to fans of Norah Wilson, Linda Howard, and Anne Stuart, all of whom have spun twisting tales of women struggling to piece together their forgotten pasts only to find their futures in deadly jeopardy.

Revised: It will appeal to fans of Norah Wilson, Linda Howard, and Anne Stuart, who craft twisted stories about women as they struggle to piece together their pasts, only to discover futures filled with jeopardy.

Plus, the length of your first novel, at 88K, along with an overwritten and confusing query and synopsis, may prevent you from landing an agent. Overwriting is an agent's nightmare. Even if the writer, like you, has a great vocabulary and storytelling skills. Odds are that are this issue runs throughout your manuscript which is 18K words too long for a first-time novelist.

For everybody:

Agents are time pressured. They look for reasons to reject work that may not be ready for "prime time." Don't give them cause to make that decision about your work.

LOST & FOUND Synopsis

Surrounded by doctors and nurses, Kay Smith feels lost and alone in the private D.C.-area hospital where she's recovering from a coma. The victim of a suspicious car accident, she has no memory of her past life. There's only one thing Kay is sure of—she can't go to the authorities for help, can't go home. Not until she can recall the psychological trauma blocking her memory. Only then will she be able to decide whether to **embrace her past or run from it.**

Frustrated, chasing one dead-end online clue to her life after another, Kay can't even confirm her name. An online news story about a Jane Doe left comatose after a car accident is her best lead. But confirming her identity as Jane Doe is anything but easy. Jane Doe has disappeared from the small Virginia hospital where she was treated after her accident. Calls with three people connected to the case force Kay to sift through a confusing maze of

questionable medical records, shadowy characters, and police theories linking Jane Doe nefariously to the Good Samaritan who rescued her. A vivid, recurring nightmare about a serial strangler leaves Kay panicked, convinced that she's running from a brutal murderer in her hidden past. When she learns two people were murdered in the wake of her inquiries, Kay realizes someone is stalking her, and fears she could be the next to die.

Kay takes refuge with a new friend, a man she fell for at first sight, Nick Costa, her comatose roommate's daily visitor. From him she learns the shocking truth about her past and why Nick seems so familiar. She's Angela Lockhart, wife of the president-elect. Nick's her lead Secret Service Agent, the Good Samaritan who rescued her, the force behind confusion surrounding Jane Doe. He's been hiding Angela from the world and three men he suspects in the disappearance and murder of Angela's twin sister, REPEAT Amy, and a young intern—her husband, William, his chief of staff Abel Devlin, and his henchman, Felix Jager. During a trip down Memory Lane, Nick confesses Amy was the love of his life. The news leaves Angela ashamed of her feelings for Nick, plagued with doubts about her fidelity to William, and worried she may have put her husband's campaign before the safety of the two murdered women. Back on the road???? news reports of a triple murder fills Angela with guilt. Unwilling to put any more lives in jeopardy while she lays low, Angela escapes Nick's protective custody. She drives off alone, determined to confront William and learn the truth behind the murders. It's a bold move that Angela knows is fraught with danger, with a high probability of meeting the same fate as her sister, the young intern, and the records clerk—dead at the hands of a vicious strangler.

Angela arrives at her family's Lynchburg, Virginia estate and hides in the mausoleum to await William's arrival for Amy's private internment. Shielded from a late night visitor inside Amy's casket, Angela gets locked in. As her oxygen supply dwindles, Angela is visited by her dead sister and released from the unwarranted guilt haunting her soul. In that moment, Angela's memory returns, revealing the truth of her dark past. The casket opens and she comes face-to-face with her sister's killer, William. He confirms Angela's worst fears, the reason she fled her life. She is Amy, an unwitting player in the cover-up of Angela's death, killed days before the election during a fight with William over his affair with the murdered

intern. Duped into believing her sister had suffered a nervous breakdown, Abel Devlin had conned Amy into faking her own disappearance in order to assume Angela's identity and keep William's hopes of winning the presidency alive. Locked inside the mausoleum with three murderers, Amy knows her only chance of survival is a diversion that alerts the Secret Service agents standing guard outside. In the ensuing chaos and struggle, Amy fends off an attack by Abel Devlin, incapacitating him seconds after he claims credit for a string of strangling deaths, including Angela. Felix Jager empties his gun trying to shoot Amy. When the smoke settles, both Felix and Abel are dead. Amy and William are the only two left alive with knowledge of the murderous conspiracy and Amy's true identity.

In the aftermath, Amy is left with an agonizing choice—spill everything she knows about the string of tragic events that started with the murder of a pregnant intern, or keep quiet and resume her life as Angela. It's a choice that pits Amy's desire to reclaim her life with Nick against her need to protect Angela's two young daughters from the shame and horror of their father's role in their mother's death. In the end, she forces a compromise on William. She chooses to remain Angela and keep their dark secrets from everyone but Nick. In exchange, William promises to resign the presidency, give Amy a quick divorce and custody of the girls. A year later, William is in prison on corruption charges. The FBI has closed the case on the serial strangler, pointing the finger at **Abel Devlin with Felix Jager as accessory**. Amy is married to Nick, happy as the mother of Angela's girls with a baby boy on the way. She has found what she lost, content to live her life as "Angie," the best of both herself and her sister.

Comments: Memories shrouded in guilt.

You have repeated a great deal of information that appears in your query. Instead, use the synopsis to tell more about your story, specifically about Kay/Amy's inner world, how she feels during this confusing and life-threatening story.

Keep the focus on your protagonist and do not go into every detail of the story. You want the agent to become interested in Kay/Amy and to wonder how the heck she became ensnared in this situation. This is what will

motivate the agent to read your first pages to discover if your story begins with a bang and makes them want to know more.

NEXT WEEK:

Who is available?

What would help you most that does not require homework evaluation?
Cold readings? Q & A?

NOTE:

The new subscription cost is \$57 per month and includes monthly tutorial. Everyone (including John) who joined in September will be grandfathered in at \$37 per month beginning in January. (This does not include tutorials.) In December I'll email you the PayPal link to join at \$37 per month for as long or as short as you need.

Platinum subscription, \$137 per month, includes monthly one-on-one document and/or progress evaluation.

In the December 2nd workshop you'll learn a self-editing Search and Mark process to locate writing mechanic issues (like overuse of "is, was" and more).

December workshops continue to focus on story core, query, synopsis, and add something new, your manuscript first pages (350 words).

If you want a jump on self-editing tips and first page revision, both are covered in these tutorials available at [MolliMart](#):



In closing~

To those of you in our “audience,” thank you for joining us. There will be a limited workshop transcript posted on the public “on-demand” page at www.getpublishednow.biz.

If you’d like to receive the full transcript and video of every Friday workshop, delivered to your inbox within 24 hours after the webinar, you can subscribe for automatic delivery, at a super low rate of \$17. Information about this new subscription program is posted on posted on the “on-demand” page of my website.

Would you benefit from receive weekly evaluations of your submission documents in our Friday workshop? Or access to Q & A, and discussions between Submission Central members on our private Facebook group?

These benefits (and others) will help you learn what you need to know in order to land an agent who will help you navigate the publishing maze. Join us! [CLICK HERE](#) to read more about the AgentQuery Submission Central program.

Regardless of when you join Submission Central, if we’re working on the synopsis, but you haven’t written a query, no problem. Begin with the query. Use my query template and jump right in. Move through the query, week by week, until you’re comfortable with the format. Regardless, if the workshops are focusing on synopsis, first pages, or submission protocol, etc., join in regardless of where your focus is placed.

Really truly, the query is the document that must be written first because it forms the basis for the synopsis and structure of your manuscript first pages.

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. See you next week.

Write on! May the words be with you!

Molli