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Agent/Query Submission Central

Workshop #1 January 6, 2017

FOCUS:

- Story Core
- First paragraph
- First pages
- Agent Quest process

Opening Comments:

Focus, for Janet and Vicki, continues to be on the query 2nd paragraph, making sure it expands the story core and ends with a dynamite last sentence that makes the agent wonder, “hmmm, so what happens next.”

We’ll be discussing Doree’s story core and how changing it has impacted her query.

And, also, we’ll look at Doree’s revised opening page which she has rewritten in first person.

Linda will be sharing her agent quest, or we just might practice going through the process of agent research.

From Vicki

Story Core:

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

Born with cerebral palsy, Sadie is used to hiding. Taunted by her peers, they cruelly laugh at the “cripple geek” as she slithers by. Until Finn, a British exchange student, looks past 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 return for holiday, 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 enough pills to kill a giant, Sadie wakes dazed, with strange crystals in her lap, wondering why her suicide failed. Soon she comes face to face with her stalker, Devilia, a hand-sized fairy, prepared to attack her. Like Sadie, Devilia struggles to fit into a world where she doesn’t belong. A tentative 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 had been there for her. He reveals that he’s helping a mate sell “merchandise” so he can make money to visit her. Sadie perceives there’s more to Finn’s story than she’s being told. Sensing danger Sadie begs him to stop. His response is “no worries.” Sadie convinces Devilia to help Finn in person, and ASAP. Although terrified the cyberworld might kill her, Devilia agrees 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.

Revision suggestions.

About single vs double spacing. Beware of OLD information for snail mail, not digital submission.

Questions about crystals and Devilia poised to attack. Not clear about meaning or need to be in this query since crystals are not brought into the story. Neither is Devilia being anything but curious and mischievous.

Question: does she wonder if the fairy is in her mind. How does she view Devilia. Residual effect of the pills. Is she real or not. Paranoia of someone always watching her.

Nice to add in her reaction to Devilia. Was she the watcher. Sadie’s reaction. Creature she sees before her. Watcher. She wasn’t imaging it after all.

About slithers. Stumbling? Rocked by. Lurching. Swaying. Lurching gait.

Why is she afraid of the energy of the cyber world? Does it disrupt her “other worldly” energy? Disruptive force. Doesn’t meld well with electronics. Her magic is non compatible with electronics’ disruptive forces.

Comments:

Born with cerebral palsy, Sadie is used to hiding. Taunted by her peers, they cruelly laugh at the “cripple geek” as she slithers by. Until Finn, a British exchange student, look’s past 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 return for holiday (*specify what holiday and when*), 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 enough pills to kill a giant, Sadie wakes dazed, with strange crystals in her lap, wondering why her suicide failed. Soon she comes face to face with her stalker, Devilia, a hand-sized fairy, prepared to attack her. *Why?* Like Sadie, Devilia struggles to fit into a world where she doesn't belong. A tentative 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 had been there for her. He reveals that he's helping a mate sell "merchandise" so he can make money to visit her. Sadie perceives there's more to Finn's story than she's being told. Sensing danger Sadie begs him to stop. His response is "no worries." Sadie convinces Devilia to help Finn in person, and ASAP. Although terrified the cyberworld might kill her, *Add something about how touching computers shock or hurt or transform her. Make the case of why she is afraid of the cyberworld. Big scary electronic monster.* Devilia agrees 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.** POWERFUL.

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.

From Linda,

Homework was for agent research. Actually take the steps and begin to build your list, one agent at a time. No fudging. No kidding! Commit to clarity about who wants what and how. For practice:

FROM THE ATLANTA WRITING WORKSHOP: WD
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<https://atlantawritingworkshop.com/>

[https://atlantawritingworkshop.com/Kristy Hunter](https://atlantawritingworkshop.com/Kristy%20Hunter) at the Knight Agency.

Historical romance is one of the topics she’s seeking.

Scroll down the page to read:

From Maria at Carvainis Agency.

maria@mariacarvainisagency.com

To Elizabeth Copps, one of her agents. Discovered on the agency site. They are really looking to expand. Suggest putting her name on letter as: To: Elizabeth Copps (also humor)

Make a list of agents and why you are sending to them. Three. Know the path you’ve taken.

From Doree~

You wrote:

Story core: His life, his way.

Why: His mother’s acceptance of her disease and pending death

What: How can he work toward a future while fighting what he can't control.

The or else: Surviving his mother death in a confusing teenager's world

Core: Self Preservation

Subject: His life, his way.

Suggest you simplify this to clarify your story core:

Story core: (identifies what is to follow. Does not require any comments.)

Who is your main character? Levi.

What does he want? Status quo.

Why does he want it? the only way he thinks he can survive.

What stands in his way? Mom's choice.

What is the terrible or else that might occur if he doesn't get what he wants? Admission of failure resulting in suicide.

If you decide to change your story, then be sure you change your story core accordingly. Regardless, stay focused, 100% on the core elements of who, what why, why not and the "or else." This will help you stay on track.

Who: Levi Yokum

What does he want? Status quo?

Why: For security, peace of mind?

Why stands in his way?

The terrible or else: When you don't hone in on your story core and stick to it, your story wanders because your compass/map has shifted and doesn't help guide you.

Subject: His life, his way.

When seventeen-year-old Levi Yokum learns that his mother is dying, life goes from status quo to **erosion**. 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 denial, narcotics, and his fear of abandonment be his solution?

Levi's mother's decision to accept death over medical intervention triggers an avalanche of drastic changes in him. A septic spore of confusion, denial, and blame oozes out from the once gentle son and he builds a wall between them. After her death, he's thrown into his new world of reality, and her gift of education and support is no longer around, terrified, he has to rely 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?

(Same as end of first paragraph.
Plus, this paragraph is slight. Doesn't tell much about the story.
This traces to lack of clarity about your story core.)

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

doree.anderson.com (358)

SYNOPSIS: Currently Under Construction.

ONE EIGHTY ::: Here is my revised POV in Levi's words.

Chapter ONE

Bad news is that phone call in the middle of the night, not between second and third period class.

When my cell phone vibrated, I pulled it out of my pants' pocket and answered it. I do that. I space out checking the caller ID. My best friend says it's because I think I'm all that. Yeah, okay, maybe. So, after scratching my head, and concentrating on the voice, it knocks me over. The man on the other end is my mom's doctor.

He expresses the importance of having a conference with mom's family without spelling out a thing. I stripped the skin off my tires as I peel out of the high school's parking lot and drove to the hospital.

Yesterday, I flirted with the girl at the reception desk. I contemplated asking if she'd like to catch a movie. Maybe hang out for a few hours. But, as I'd dashed past her, her cuteness had morphed to a nightmare.

"There's no running in the hospital, Mr. Yokum."

I waved to her. Then, I dialed down my speed to a brisk walk. After two sets of stairs, I finally gave a slight squeal skidding into my mom's room. I walked over to her and kissed her on the forehead. "Hi. I wrestled alligators to get here, ma."

"Alligators? Ah, you really do love me, don't you?" She scrunched her nose up and winked.

"Next time, put in a request for bathing with piranhas, would ya? So, you couldn't wait to see your favorite kid, eh?"

"Oh honey, I'm sorry. I'd hoped this could have been put off until later today."

I shrugged. "No worries. I didn't have any tests."

She patted a hand against my face. I froze. Okay now that was new. "Uh, are you okay?"

After a quick shake of her head, she refocused on me? "Of course I am. Why?"

"Since when do you pat me on the cheek?"

"Why don't you sit down. Stryker's on his way. Then we'll talk with the doctor."

I sank down onto the small recliner provided for the patients. The stupid thing's tiny and doesn't even recline all the way back. Granted I'm six-foot-three and weigh around 200 pounds

during football season so any chair is usually on the tight side, but these are torture.

“Why are we including Stryker?” Granted, they’re engaged, but I still see light at the end of her escape tunnel. When there’s no I’m reply at look her way and cringe . Not from my question, but because I noticed the contrast between my mom’s white surgical bandage on her neck and her skin. She always tanned during the summer, but I’d never noticed that it faded to a yellowish color. It’s a good thing that Southern Utah had just stepped into its hot months so that she could fix her coloring.

When Stryker Winston walks into a room, everyone knows it. I smell him. He wears loud perfume. Mom and her girlfriends say that it’s because he carries himself so well. He’s tall, dresses sharp and commands his audience. He’s a salesman, I think he’s supposed too. My problem is, I’m always on guard or waiting for something to happen, I don’t know what, when ever he’s around.

He almost mimics me to a tee when he approaches my mom. He leans down and kisses her on her forehead and then asks her how she feels.

“So much better now that you’re here.”

Excuse me while I put my finger down my throat and pretend that I’m choking. Immature, for sure, but then, I’m sixteen. Stryker’s smiles at her, the type that doesn’t quite reach his eyes. “I’m a little tired, babe. I just gotten home from a sales meeting in Arizona when I received your Doctor’s phone call. Will this take long?”

“No sweetheart, I just wanted you to have an update. This way you can ask any questions and have the benefit of receiving the answers straight from the horse’s mouth. Sort of speak.”

Stryker’s turned my way so I grinned up at him.

"Is that the only chair?" he asked.

I shrugged. "Seems like."

"Well, you're a kid, get out of it and give it to me."

"Yeah, no. Get your own. I'm already sitting here."

“Gentlemen, please. It’s a chair. Stryker, Levi’s been sitting here only a short time.”

Stryker looked ready to explode but must have thought better of it. Instead, he bent down next to me, and growled. “It’s obvious your mother neglected teaching you manners.”

I didn’t answer because it would take caring, and I didn’t.

Stryker returned, pushing a large recliner that I figured he’d stolen from somebody’s office. It was way too nice for a patient’s room.

Missing your own manner’s much, moron. I glared at Stryker as he placed his chair so that it would be on the other side of my mother’s bed. Which meant with the layout of the small room, I had to move my chair over by the doorway. Real special douche!

"Oh good, I see the family is all here." Dr. Stempson’s words pulled me out of my mental whining. "I have your blood results, and the markers from your biopsy, Camille."

"Is it what I expected? Has it returned?" Mom asked.

My bottom lip fell. “What? Wait” I shifted my eyes from her to him, and back to he. "Markers? You—you expected? I’m so confused. Wasn’t this about the tumor against her carotid artery and everything went splendid?"

“This is from some blood work that they did when I went in for my oncology follow-up. It was done prior to this hospital stay. So, honey, they did a biopsy last night and sent it to pathology.”

"Let’s review her results and then work on a course of action, son." The doctor offered in a soothing tone.

A voice that skittered up my back like a spider and jumped down my throat, silky strings of webbing wrapping around my insides.

Son? My blood boiled. "Fine, please. I apologize for my intrusion, not!"

Dr. Stempson cleared his throat.

Mom tilted her head at me and gave me the pithiest eyes I’d ever seen. I rolled my own back at her.

"We’d like to do another liver biopsy. I know that we’ve gone with a double mastectomy as well as chemo and radiation

before. Although attacking it with both methods might lengthen your quantity of life, it's not a guarantee." Dr. Stempson nodded. His words were disheartening. Levi felt like he'd been dropped into a tub of hot tar and he needed to figure out what was going on. What in the hell were they talking about? His mom sighed. A long and deep sigh that caught the full attention of everyone. "I'm not going to do anything this time." "What?" The question came from the men. My voice, being the loudest.

"First, can I get this spelled out in English? I'm new at this." Stryker demanded before he performed a concerned pacing routine.

"I apologize." Dr. Stempson gave CJ a peculiar glance. I felt like the suction cups of an octopus were sticking to every organ inside me and pulling them up to my throat. Any second now, I was going to cough my innards, out. Yah doc, I wanted to raise up my own middle finger in the air. Me too.

"They've found cancer on my liver." Mom spoke out clearly. "And you're not going to do anything about it?" I snapped my mouth shut only to keep the nausea from breaking loose. Mom sat up with her hands folded, one on top of the other in her lap. A small smile on her lips. "If you remember, Levi, I was so sick the last time that I prayed that I could die. I lived in hell. You worried yourself to damn near nothing. Surgery before radiation and that zapped me. It left me drained. I couldn't work. I couldn't do a damn thing. I had to rely on you for everything.

Honey, I've been through this twice. And both times, I'd been assured that it was clear, only to be told that, 'Oops, sorry, those little buggers hid and turned up elsewhere.' This time there is no easy fix. Besides spreading, liver cancer has a poor survival rate no matter what type of treatment is administered. I'm not leaving this world in poverty and you, living out on the streets because the medical team thinks that trial and error at a horrific cost is the right way to go."

Listening to her describe her time with breast cancer took me back. Moments worse than others. I recalled crying behind my bedroom door so she wouldn't hear. So, at that moment, yeah, I guess I did understand her. But, there's also when she got stronger. Why wasn't she thinking about then?

"Mom, we're older now, wouldn't medicine and technology have developed since then?"

"They are doing some excellent things these days," Dr.

Stempson jumped in. "Yes, But Levi, your mother has a rare and rapid form of liver cancer that has attached itself to several areas. Although there is a chance, Camille, that if Levi's a match, we can take some of his liver and implant it in you. The liver is a fantastic organ and can replace itself. If we were then, to concentrate on radiation for the other areas, there may be a chance that you could survive."

"Take it. Take whatever you need. It's yours." I interrupted.

Who wouldn't jump all in if they had an opportunity to keep their mom alive. Totally awesome, right? I could save her.

"Levi, you wouldn't be able to play football this coming year. No practice." his mother stopped him.

"So?" I snapped.

"She's right, Levi. No strenuous activity. I wouldn't be able to release you." Dr. Stempson agreed.

"Mom, football is a game. You're my mother." Why was she fighting me?

"Levi, you're not a match, besides he can't guarantee it would be successful, and football is your chance at a scholarship. Your future."

"Mom, nothing is more important to me than saving your life." I couldn't see through the wall of tears. (Tears welled up in my eyes.) Why wasn't she listening. What the hell?

"Levi, honey, the money would drain us. Besides, you're . . ."

"Levi?" This time, the doctor's voice had carried over everyone's. "I'm sorry I brought it up, You and your mother aren't a match. I should have read further into her chart."

"Why the hell not?" I hiccupped.

"Because, your mother has AB Negative blood. You, son, are a B positive."

An unstoppable trail of tears raced down my cheeks, I whipped my head toward Stryker. "We haven't heard anything from you."

My comment: Nice job with your first draft of first person. How do you feel about it?

Question: If mom has a boyfriend, doesn't Levi have someone to turn to for guidance? Or support? Or? This is a bit confusing since the query focuses on how alone Levi

First 350 words need to grip and motivate the agent to keep on reading. It begins the moment he finds out. No preface. She's dying. And won't fight it medically. This is a heck of a shock for a teenager.

Less description and more emotion will hold the reader's attention. Otherwise, it's not clear you are going and the opening lines sound like back story instead of the moment Levi's story begins.

Question/comments?

He needs to her out of her death wish. Can he? He needs to figure out how to convince her that his needs are more important than her choice of death.

From Vicki: about step dad. Is this another obstacle he has to face, the possibility of another adult in his life.

Same situation with her mother. Trying to encourage her to fight to see grandson grow up. Never said about me. Did try to say about the rest of the family. You're

Doree: bring up about how this impacts mom and dad. What about Christmas, or vacations or ?? Graduation celebrations.

From Janet

SUBJECT LINE: Glass Promises

Professor Grace Stone is an orphan and the offspring of an illicit affair. She revels in the birth of her newborn daughter and is happily married (or so she thought) until her husband and his mistress are killed. Four years later, the pressures of single motherhood are multiplied with Lily's demands to "find her a daddy." Grace suppresses her fear of heartbreak and begins to date. Attracted to Beau, another victim of a cheating spouse, they begin a steamy relationship.

At a ritzy charity event, Grace's uncanny resemblance to her dead mother causes a brawl. The humiliating incident leads to the identities of her deceased father and his living relatives. Complications arise when she is not welcomed by one new-found member and sleeping with another, her cousin Beau. But it is Lily who suffers when Grace is labeled a bastard. The little girl is later terrorized by another child in an effort to drive Grace from the family. Is the drama and struggle worth it, especially when Beau is forced to choose between her and his hostile sister? Grace initiates a campaign to find a pathway into his love-scarred heart. She must win acceptance from the entire family for both her sake and Lily's. Will Grace succeed or suffer another landmine of pain and loneliness?

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.

Synopsis: not read. Focus on the query first.

Professor Grace Stone's father and husband were men who made glass promises. Her unknown father was one of her dead mother's married lovers. Grace's husband was a philanderer.

When she is widowed with an infant daughter to raise, Grace obtains a PhD in record time. Four years later, she has a tenured position, close friends, and a mortgage-free home. Life is good—until Lily lobbies hard for a daddy. Despite fears of vulnerability and rejection, Grace cannot deny her child the love of a father.

She reenters the world of man-woman relationships with speed dating. A few weeks later her car is totaled by a steel beam and Grace encounters the owner of the company responsible. Beau is one of her rejected five minute speed dates. He meets sweet, precocious Lily and is captivated by the little girl. After Beau assists Grace with the purchase of a new vehicle, they become intimate—in her garage—on the trunk of his car. Appalled by the loss of control she has nurtured and exercised for years, Grace shuts down the relationship. Beau's patience and genuine feelings for Lily, compel her to give him another chance.

At a premier Boca Raton fundraiser, a man with Alzheimer's mistakes Grace for her mother. The frightening incident discloses the identity of her dead father and a biological connection to Beau's stepmother. Grace is welcomed into the family by everyone except his sister, Gen, who views her as an illegitimate interloper. Gen's marital problems and dislike of Grace creates an estrangement with Beau and the family. When Grace professes her love, Beau reveals the emotional scars inflicted by his ex-wife and an inability, or unwillingness, to risk love again. Much like her mother as the other woman, Grace becomes an outsider with her lover and their mutual relatives. With no hope of a future commitment from Beau, she ends the relationship.

She and Lily are invited to the family's Thanksgiving dinner. Grace worries about what Gen might say or do and what will happen when she sees Beau. Although there is some tension and awkwardness, the get-together goes well until Lily is terrorized by Gen's daughter. Afterward, Grace questions her long-held desire for an extended family. Despite the holiday drama, she still loves Beau and her warts-and-all relatives.

Grace initiates a campaign to win Beau's love. Using her intelligence and her mother's tricks-of-the-trade she appeals to Beau's masculine desires with flirtations and food. Grace supports Gen as another woman survivor of marital infidelity and wins her grudging acceptance. On Christmas Day, Lily cries when Beau gives her a new bike because "only daddies give bikes to little girls." They have a heart-to-heart talk where Lily uses child-like ingenuity on her Mr. Beau. The next day he sets out to convince Grace he loves her and is ready for a future together. At their wedding, Grace and Beau make steel-clad promises to cherish each other forever.

Chapter 1 (372 words)

"Whoa, Dr. B! Did you hear the boom?" A male student stopped Grace as she exited the English department. "Your Beemer's been beamed."

A sonic-like detonation had shaken her office window thirty minutes ago. Grace moved past the student and hurried outside. 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. Grace choked down a snort of hysteria as she skirted milling spectators and headed to the curb. Her dead husband's babe-mobile was impaled with the biggest phallic weapon of destruction she'd ever seen.

The fireman who sprayed a chemical around the car shouted and backed away as the girder swayed in a sudden gust of wind. From a cluster of hard-hatted workers one man sprang forward and climbed into the crane 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 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. “Can you tell me where Dr. Black-Stone works? Is he in that building?” He pointed to the door she had exited.

“I’m Dr. Black-Stone.”

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

Meanwhile, the hero of the moment exited the crane. With long strides toward the men, he shouted, “Where the hell is Joe? He should have been watching that beam.”

A heavyset worker in a belly-strained shirt spoke. “He’s getting the professor who owns the BMW.”

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

Joe halted with Grace behind the group. “Here’s Dr. Black-Stone.”

The boss spun around and cocked his head at her. He frowned. “Gigi?”

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

Comments:

SUBJECT LINE: Glass Promises

Professor Grace Stone is an orphan and the offspring of an illicit affair. She revels in the birth of her newborn daughter and is happily married (or so she thought) until her husband and his mistress are killed. Four years later, the pressures of single motherhood are multiplied with Lily’s demands to “find her a daddy.” Grace suppresses her fear of heartbreak and begins to date. Attracted to Beau, another victim of a cheating spouse, they begin a steamy relationship. This is not a tease, it’s a statement. Can you revise to read like a question?

LAST WEEK YOU WROTE:

Professor Grace Stone yearns for a family. As the offspring of an illicit affair, she never knew her father. Grace has a newborn

daughter and is happily married (or so she thought) when her husband and his mistress are killed. Four years later, the pressures of single motherhood are multiplied with Lily's demands to "find her a daddy." Grace suppresses her fear of heartbreak and begins to date. Attracted to Beau, another victim of a cheating spouse, they begin a **steamy/passionate relationship. Will Grace risk future love despite the landmine of pain she suffered in the past?**

I SUGGESTED A FEW shifts of information from the first to the second paragraph which is very light.

Professor Grace Stone thought she was happily married until her husband and his mistress died in a car accident weeks before the birth of her daughter. Now four-years old, Lily lobbies for a "daddy." A product of an illicit affair, Grace never knew the identify of her father. Despite fears of betrayal, she begins to date lusty and love-damaged Beau, until . . . then tell **how she discovers she's been sleeping with a family member/cousin/relative.** Ask in a question?

THIS WEEK, how about a radical cut of all this back story and placing it in your second paragraph.

- Focus on Professor Grace Stone
- Raised by a single parent, never knowing her father.
- Betrayed by her husband, Grace is raising a child alone.
- Lilly lobbies for a daddy.
- Still feeling vulnerable, afraid of being hurt.
- Meets Beau, lusty and love damaged as well.
- Their attraction and love grows, until
- She discovers he's a member of the family she never knew existed. **OMG she's sleeping with her cousin.** Introduce cousin aspect as a question.

END OF FIRST PARAGRAPH.

This will keep the agent reading.

Place the back story into your second paragraph to flesh it out.

SECOND PARAGRAPH

At a ritzy charity event, Grace's uncanny resemblance to her dead mother causes a brawl. The humiliating incident leads to the identities of her deceased father and his living relatives. Complications arise when she is not welcomed by one new-found member and sleeping with another, her cousin Beau. **These two do not go together. Can you separate and make this paragraph stronger, longer, and more enticing?** But it is Lily who suffers when Grace is **labeled a bastard.** The little girl is later terrorized by another child in an effort to drive Grace from the family. Is the drama and struggle worth it, especially when Beau is forced to choose between her and his hostile sister? Rather than walk away from the promise of a loving relationship and a daddy for Lily, Grace initiates a campaign to find a pathway into **his love-scarred heart.** She must win acceptance from the entire family for both her sake and Lily's. **She continues to feel hesitation. Will she succeed or suffer another landmine of pain and loneliness? Is it a landmine or future of loneliness? How can you revise to make this stronger?** What's at stake here? What could happen? Make the agent want to find out more. Not with declarative statements, but with a powerful "or else" this could happen. Will she make it work, become part of her family warts and all?

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Synopsis: Did not review this. Stay focused on your first paragraph.

Professor Grace Stone's father and husband were men who made glass promises. Her unknown father was one of her dead mother's married lovers. Grace's husband was a philanderer. When she is widowed with an infant daughter to raise, Grace obtains a PhD in record time. Four years later, she has a tenured position, close friends, and a mortgage-free home. Life is good—until Lily lobbies hard for a daddy. Despite fears of vulnerability and rejection, Grace cannot deny her child the love of a father.

She reenters the world of man-woman relationships with speed dating. A few weeks later her car is totaled by a steel beam and Grace encounters the owner of the company responsible. Beau is one of her rejected five minute speed dates. He meets sweet, precocious Lily and is captivated by the little girl. After Beau assists Grace with the purchase of a new vehicle, they become intimate—in her garage—on the trunk of his car. Appalled by the loss of control she has nurtured and exercised for years, Grace shuts down the relationship. Beau's patience and genuine feelings for Lily, compel her to give him another chance.

At a premier Boca Raton fundraiser, a man with Alzheimer's mistakes Grace for her mother. The frightening incident discloses the identity of her dead father and a biological connection to Beau's stepmother. Grace is welcomed into the family by everyone except his sister, Gen, who views her as an illegitimate interloper. Gen's marital problems and dislike of Grace creates an estrangement with Beau and the family. When Grace professes her love, Beau reveals the emotional scars inflicted by his ex-wife and an inability, or unwillingness, to risk love again. Much like her mother as the other woman, Grace becomes an outsider with her lover and their mutual relatives. With no hope of a future commitment from Beau, she ends the relationship.

She and Lily are invited to the family's Thanksgiving dinner. Grace worries about what Gen might say or do and what will happen when she sees Beau. Although there is some tension and awkwardness, the get-together goes well until Lily is

terrorized by Gen's daughter. Afterward, Grace questions her long-held desire for an extended family. Despite the holiday drama, she still loves Beau and her warts-and-all relatives. Grace initiates a campaign to win Beau's love. Using her intelligence and her mother's tricks-of-the-trade she appeals to Beau's masculine desires with flirtations and food. Grace supports Gen as another woman survivor of marital infidelity and wins her grudging acceptance. On Christmas Day, Lily cries when Beau gives her a new bike because "only daddies give bikes to little girls." They have a heart-to-heart talk where Lily uses child-like ingenuity on her Mr. Beau. The next day he sets out to convince Grace he loves her and is ready for a future together. At their wedding, Grace and Beau make steel-clad promises to cherish each other forever.

Chapter 1 (372 words)

"Whoa, Dr. B! Did you hear the boom?" A male student stopped Grace as she exited the English department. "Your Beemer's been beamed." It's more dramatic if this kid races into her office to declare about the car.

A sonic-like detonation had shaken her office window thirty minutes ago. Grace moved past the student and hurried outside. Campus security cruisers blocked the street. A fire truck rumbled in the faculty parking lot. Do you really need this history?

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. Grace choked down a snort of hysteria as she skirted milling spectators and headed to the curb. Her dead husband's babe-mobile was impaled with the biggest phallic weapon of destruction she'd ever seen.

The fireman who sprayed a chemical around the car shouted and backed away as the girder swayed in a sudden gust of wind. From a cluster of hard-hatted workers one man sprang forward

and climbed into the crane cab with nimble grace. He lowered the beam toward the upturned front bumper. Metal screeched as the BMW collapsed under the weight.

Another *construction* worker (in a Charvet Crane 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. “Can you tell me where Dr. Black-Stone works? Is he in that building?” He pointed to the door she had exited.

“I’m Dr. Black-Stone.”

His eyes widened. Without a word, he spun *back* around and propelled her toward (back to the scene of) the accident.

(Meanwhile,) the hero of the moment exited the crane. With long strides toward the men, he shouted, “Where the hell is Joe? He should have been watching that beam.”

A heavysset worker in a belly-strained shirt spoke. “He’s getting the professor who owns the BMW.”

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

EXPLANATION OF WHO Beau is. All guy. All business.

Joe halted with Grace behind the group. “Um . . . boss, this is Dr. Black-Stone.”

The boss spun around and cocked his head, frowning as he peered into her face. (at her. He frowned.) “Gigi?”

Would love a bit of sexy description of Beau, the eyes, the muscles, his height, and a stubble of a beard.

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

Next week: Clarify Homework:

Linda, Make a list of 3 agents, why you chose them, and the path you took to find them.

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

Janet, revise first and second paragraph of query and make some changes to first chapter, some cutting and adding more description of Beau.

Vicki, Change description of how Sadie walks. Clarify what is happening when she awakens. Clarify what devilia's fear is of the computer.

Tammy, Story core and first draft of a query. Put on fb page and be sure to click on publish.

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.

[CLICK HERE](#) for more information about the monthly program. Stay as long or as short as you need.

Regardless,

Write on! May the words be with you.

Bye.