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Agent/Query Submission Central

Workshop #4 -- January 20, 2017

Today our workshop includes an agent research report, introduction to an untapped resource (PublishersLunch), nitpicking on Janet's submission packet, and revisions from Vicki, Doree, and Tammy.

Plus, a successful query and the elements that made it so.

Writers in the "spotlight" today (Janet, Tammy, Vicki, and Doree) are members of agent/query submission central, all putting in heroic efforts to craft submission documents (query, synopsis and first pages) that will help them land agents to guide them through the publishing maze.

Workshop structure:

- Successful query and why it worked
- Agent research comments from Linda
- Revisions for Vicki, Tammy, Janet, and Doree

Time for a happy Dance!

Liz Graham, a four-week query intensive grad, writes "cozy" mysteries, similar in tone to "Murder, She Wrote." Introduced to a publisher who specializes in "cozies," Liz's query helped her receive a multiple book deal. Two already are published.



SUCCESSFUL query submitted to and accepted by agent Jessica Watterson:

Dear Jessica Watterson,

Family isn't just complicated, it's confusing. Especially when they aren't who they claim to be. Evie Gray is shocked to discover her deceased mother had a secret identity. And no, not one involving a cape, it's worse. Much worse. Her mom could've worn a tiara.

My comment: Nice phrasing. "Much worse," as a stand-alone sentence fragment, is a hook no agent (or reader) could resist.

In this modern day fairytale, Evie uncovers the past by diving into her future. Attending Oxford University, her mother's old stomping grounds, she meets a real life prince charming, Edmund. Although he's already attached, their friendly attraction proves a royal pain, especially since he's helping her unravel the clues her mother left behind in a series of letters. What really ends up unraveling is her heart. Evie realizes her mom's past opens doors she never thought possible. Will she be able to handle her mom's secret and the inevitable changes it brings? Will Edmund be able to weather this storm with her? Or will Evie decide being a "commoner" was easier and walk away from pomp and circumstance?

My comment: Play on words is clever. I want to read this story, even though, at this point, it's a bit long for a light-hearted romance.

My novel, *THE HEIR AND THE SPARE*, is complete at 93,000 words. Readers who enjoyed *Anna and The French Kiss*, and *The Princess Diaries* will enjoy my edgy take written for the new adult reader. I hold a bachelor's degree in journalism and communication from the University of Oregon. **This is my first novel and I'm seeking representation.** Please note this is a simultaneous submission. Per your submission guidelines I've pasted the first fifteen pages, a brief synopsis, and a bio.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

My comment: Definitely drop the sentence about “first novel” and seeking representation. That’s understood. Nice etiquette to inform the agent that this is a simultaneous submission. This feels like a breezy and fun book, even for readers who aren’t that hooked on the English Royal Family. Who wouldn’t want a crown and title? Another big PLUS is that humor sells. Readers hunger for it, especially when it’s good natured and involves a bit of romance as well. Novel length may become an issue, but at this stage, an interested publisher would snap this up and assign an editor to help the writer trim the text by 15 to 20k words.

First, a research report from Linda.

Shifting back to the agents at the Atlanta Writer’s Workshop, I was attracted to agent scout Jen Karback, who was looking for clients for all the agents at Fuse Literary Agency. When I looked at the agency, I discovered it had a blog, and the agency announced that they had hired a new agent who was looking for clients.

1. Margaret Bail of Fuse Literary Agency is not a young new agent. She has worked with other agencies and has several clients whose books she features on her facebook page. I copied the list of authors she mentioned and will take a look at their work to see if my novel interest her. Fuse’s blog also gives news on writing market trends and other helpful information. If Margaret turns out to be a bust, Fuse has other agents I could try, and I **can continue to read their blog.**

2. My second find is an agent at Trident Media Group. Trident is a large enterprise with massive international sales and agents who turn novels into movies. I found one agent there, Sarah Phair, who is young and has a short client list. Trident uses a submission form, but I can use my query letter. Trident is a long shot, but one worth taking,

I think. I will be looking at Ms. Phair's client list for a better sense of what she likes. Trident is a giant in the book industry. Super powerful.

2. At the site for the Historical Novel Society Convention, I followed a link to Folio Literary Management and found agent Annie Hwang's photo. I hope I don't seem racist when I decided a Chinese- American agent seemed a fortunate find. She is looking for fiction about minorities with a cultural element, strong female characters, and she likes historical backgrounds. (Although there are billions of Chinese, only 6% of the U.S. population is Asian, which makes them a minority in this country.) She mentioned a list of her favorite books which will give me a clue if she might like my writing style. More reading to do! I'm keeping my fingers crossed on this one.

3. **Comments:** Linda, "racist" is only a word, used with hundreds of others to limit our Freedom of Speech. As of today, it ain't no big deal. This woman feels like a gem of a find. Folio is a good agency. Don't be concerned about your writing style. It's solid. Annie Hwang is looking for stories just like yours. She will be sooooo happy to meet you! Final polish your query and synopsis and get in touch with Annie. BTW: Great research on your part. You win the **Sleuth du Jour GOLD STAR award!**

Don't allow anything (especially Linda) prevent you from launching your agent quest.

Valuable Resources for agent research

PublishersMarketplace – two versions of daily email newsletter.

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

One is "lite" and free.

The other is "delux" and much more detailed. Cost is \$25 per month. Detailed information about who did what and when, past history of

deals. Great place to research current industry who sells what and for how much.

PublishersMarketplace **New deals for January 18, 2017**

FICTION

Debut

NYT bestselling author of [OUTLAW PLATOON](#), Sean Parnell's BACKLASH, in which a clandestine operative tasked with finding a rogue agent with a stolen WMD, is faced with the one mission never addressed in his training -- How do you kill a friend?, to [David Highfill](#) at [William Morrow](#), in a significant deal, in a two book deal, by [Scott Miller](#) at [Trident Media Group](#).

Mystery/Crime

Author of [THE ALCHEMIST'S DAUGHTER](#), [DEATH OF AN ALCHEMIST](#), and [DEATH AT SAINT VEDAST](#) Mary Lawrence's next two books in the BIANCA GODDARD Mystery series, about an infamous alchemist's daughter and her desire to bring the mystical arts into the art of healing, to [John Scognamiglio](#) at [Kensington](#), for publication in 2018 and 2019, by [Fred Tribuzzo](#) at [The Rudy Agency](#). fredtribuzzo@gmail.com

Thriller

Stuart [Turton's](#) THE SEVEN DEATHS OF EVELYN HARDCASTLE, following one man's race against the clock to find a killer, but an astonishing time-turning twist means that nothing and no one are quite what they seem, to [Grace Menary-Winefield](#) at [Sourcebooks Landmark](#), by [Harry Illingworth](#) at [DHH Literary \(NA\)](#).

Author of [Pardon the Ravens](#) and [Wrong Man Running](#) Alan [Hruska's](#) IT HAPPENED AT TWO IN THE MORNING, about a brash young NY lawyer on the run with the arrogant daughter of a murdered NY business tycoon, to [Colleen Dunn Bates](#) at [Prospect Park Books](#), for publication in November 2017 (World).

Women's/Romance

NYT bestselling author Lauren Hawkeye's PLAYING DIRTY, about four sisters from the wrong side of the tracks, to [Ann Leslie Tuttle](#) at [Harlequin Dare](#), in a three-book deal, for publication in 2018, by [Elaine Spencer](#) at [The Knight Agency](#).

When you click on the agent's name, this opens a page of all their recent deals. This makes it easier to look at the titles and if you want to, read a bit into the book at Amazon.

This agent's 13 deals from the last 12 months:

Digital: Fiction:
Women's/Romance

NYT bestselling author [Cathryn Fox](#)'s DEMOLISHED and LEVELED, the first titles in a new series about the Blue Bay Crew family construction business, where the employees are most well-known for the work they do in the bedroom, to [Holly Ingraham](#) at [SMP Swerve](#), in a two-book deal, by [Elaine Spencer](#) at [The Knight Agency](#).

Posted: January 17, 2017 at 9:50 p.m. Eastern



Fiction:
Women's/Romance

NYT bestselling author Lauren Hawkeye's PLAYING DIRTY, about four sisters from the wrong side of the tracks, to [Ann Leslie Tuttle](#) at [Harlequin Dare](#), in a three-book deal, for publication in 2018, by [Elaine Spencer](#) at [The Knight Agency](#).

Posted: January 17, 2017 at 9:30 p.m. Eastern |

Revision evaluations~

from Janet

SUBJECT LINE: Glass Promises (279 words)

The pressures of single motherhood are multiplied for Professor Grace Stone when her four year-old daughter, Lily, demands she “find her a daddy.” Despite a persistent fear of rejection, Grace begins to date. She meets Beau, another victim of a cheating spouse, but is

reluctant to pursue a relationship with him. Is the possibility of love worth the cutting pain of glass promises?

Grace knows this heartbreak too well as an orphan and the offspring of an illicit affair. She is/WAS happily married (or so she thought) when her husband and his mistress are/WERE killed weeks after Lily's birth. But she falls into Beau's passionate embrace spurred by a strong PHYSICAL attraction. ~~to him.~~ At a ritzy charity event, Grace's uncanny resemblance to her dead mother INTRODUCES HER TO RELATIVES SHE DIDN'T KNOW EXISTED. causes a brawl. The humiliating incident introduces her TO HER deceased father's living relatives. GRACE BELIEVES HER ~~Believing her~~ days of longing for a family are over, UNTIL complications arise when SHE DISCOVERS her lover is ~~now~~ a step-cousin. Beau's hostile sister, Gen, refuses to accept his relationship with Grace or welcome the "bastard" into the family. Then Lily is terrorized by Gen's daughter in an attempt to drive the newcomers away. Although mounting family pressures result in ~~an~~ estrangement FROM with Beau, Grace is determined to secure a place in his love-scarred heart. Will her efforts succeed or will she and Lily be forced to soldier on as a lonely family of two? GREAT!

My 68,000 word completed romance, GLASS PROMISES, won third place in the 2016 Royal Palm Literary Award competition. I'M/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:

Professor Grace Stone's unknown father and philandering husband BOTH/~~were men who~~ made glass promises. A widow with an infant daughter to raise, Grace obtains her PhD in record time. Four years later, she has a tenured position, close friends, and a mortgage-free home. Life is good—until Lily BEGINS TO LOBBY RELENTLESSLY

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. Weeks later her car is totaled in a freak construction accident. Grace encounters Beau, one of her rejected five-minute dates and the owner of the RESPONSIBLE company responsible. After he assists Grace with the purchase of a new vehicle, they become intimate—in her garage—on the trunk of his car. GREAT! Appalled by the loss of control she has exercised for years, Grace shuts down the relationship. HOWEVER, Beau's patience and genuine feelings for Lily compel her to give him another chance.

At a premier Boca Raton fundraiser, THE QUESTION ARISES ABOUT HER MOTHER'S FIRST NAME a man with Alzheimer's mistakes Grace for her mother who was once his mistress. The frightening incident reveals her family connection to Beau's stepmother. MISTAKEN IDENTITY, ACCIDENTALLY GRACE DISCOVERS HER FAMILY IDENTITY AND HER FATHER'S IDENTITY AND THIS LEADS TO DISCOVERING FAMILY MEMBERS SHE'D NEVER MET. PROBLEM: SHE'S RELATED TO BEAU AS A STEP-COUSIN. Grace is thrilled to have living relatives, except FOR THE FACT THAT her lover is now a step-cousin. But it is Beau's sister, Gen, who regards Grace as an illegitimate interloper. DELETE THIS SENTENCE. Gen's marital problems and hostility force Beau to pull away from Grace. AS THEY DISCUSS A FUTURE, BEAU REVEALS He reveals the emotional scars inflicted by his ex-wife and HIS FEARS/DISCOMFORT ABOUT RISKING LOVE AGAIN. an inability, or unwillingness, to risk love again. With no hope of a future commitment, although still in love with him, Grace is heartbroken when the relationship ends.

When she and Lily are invited to the family's Thanksgiving dinner, Grace worries what will happen WITH when she sees Beau. Although there is some awkwardness, the get-together goes well until Lily is terrorized by Gen's daughter. (BRIDGE) SHE WONDERES IF ITS

WORTH IT XXXXXX Despite the holiday drama, Grace FEELS has a strong attachment to Beau as well as her warts-and-all relatives. She initiates a campaign to win his love and his sister's acceptance.

Using intelligence and her mother's tricks-of-the-trade, she appeals to Beau's masculine desires with flirtations and food. Grace also provides support to Gen WHOM SHE DISCOVERS IS A WOUNDER/HURT/OR ANGRY SURVIVOR/VICTIM OF MARITAL INFIDELITY. as a woman survivor of marital infidelity. On Christmas Day, Lily cries when Beau gives her a new bike because "only daddies give bikes to little girls." Grace's efforts, with a little help from Lily, are rewarded when Beau professes his love and an ironclad promise for a future together.

OPENING PAGES

Whoa, Dr. B!" A male student raced toward the English department just as Grace headed to the exit. "Your Beemer's been beamed."

"What are you talking about?"

He panted and pointed outside. "You gotta check it out."

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

Then she saw it.

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

Grace choked down a snort of hysteria as she skirted milling spectators and headed to the curb. A fireman who sprayed a chemicalS around the car shouted and backed away as the girder swayed in a gust of wind.

From a cluster of hard-hatted workers, one man sprang forward and climbed into the crane's cab with nimble grace. He lowered the beam toward the upturned front bumper. Metal screeched as the BMW collapsed under the weight.

Another worker in a hard hat intercepted Grace when she crossed the street. "You have to stay back, Miss." With his hand on her elbow, he turned her around. "Do you know the name of the professor who owns the BMW?"

"Black-Stone."

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

"I'm Dr. Black-Stone."

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

Meanwhile, the quick-thinking hero descended the crane's cab. With long strides toward the men, he shouted, "Where the hell is Joe?"

"He's getting the professor who owns the BMW."

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

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

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

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

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

MY COMMENTS: Let her rip Janet. Start submitting and get going on your next novel!

From Vicki

TITLE: Crooked

Born with cerebral palsy, Sadie hides HER DISABILITY behind long skirts. Taunted by her peers, they torture the “cripple geek” whenever she wobbles by. Until Finn, a British exchange student, look’s beyond her shyness (OR DOES HE LOOK BEYOND HER PHYSICAL CHALLENGE/DISABILITY/SENSES THE WHOLE PERSON?) With Finn, Sadie finds laughter, learns to cheat at poker, and harmonizes on her original songs. When the school year ends Finn returns home. He vows to visit, but Sadie’s convinced she’ll never see him again. Sent to her grandmother’s Catskill Mountain house for the summer, Sadie decides the isolated setting is the perfect refuge to end her life. But, in the forest, as at school, Sadie senses someone watches.

After swallowing a handful of pills, Sadie wakes, dazed from her failed suicide. An unseen entity plays Beatle songs on Sadie’s iPod, and sends strange sparks to her computer. Soon she comes face to face with her watcher, Devilia, a mischievous, hand-sized fairy. Their LONLINESS paths/WANTS/EMOTIONAL NEEDS are similar as Devilia, a fairy in THE human world, and Sadie, AN OUTSIDER ~~lonely mortal in~~ a cruel teenage world, only want acceptance. GREAT REVISION SENTENCE. A tentative friendship evolves.

WHEN/Before school begins Sadie allows 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, causing them to land on Sadie, and lifting her long skirt to reveal her bent **CROOKED**/TWISTED legs. The event becomes a viral sensation. Humiliated beyond despair, Sadie feels even more like a freak. Finn IMs or is it IMs "How cool! Wish I'd been there." He ~~then~~ reveals that he's helping a mate sell "merchandise" so he can make money to visit her. Intuition tells Sadie THAT Finn is not telling the whole story. She begs him to stop. He responds "no worries."

Sadie convinces Devilia **to go to** DISSUADE Finn PERSONALLY. **ASAP. The computer monster, and electronics in general, are incompatible with Devilia's energy.** Although terrified she'll die in cyberworld, Devilia conjures powerful fairy magic and emails herself to Finn. Sadie waits and waits, but hears nothing from Devilia, or Finn whom she messages endlessly. Finn is gone. Devilia is gone. And without them in her life, Sadie wants to be gone as well.

COMMENT: Remove the declarative statement "computer monster and electronics in general . . ." Sadie begs Devilia to dissuade Finn, INPERSON. ASAP. Incompatible with the digital world and terrified it will disappear her, Devilia agrees to travel, via email (IM) to Finn. She conjures up powerful fairy magic and disappears in a SPARKLE flash of energy. Sadie waits and waits, but NO RESPONSE. NONE. EVEN THOUGH SHE MESSAGES FINN ENDLESSLY. 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.

Nitpicking thought: Sadie waits to "hear?" Can you hear email or text? Or do you receive a message, or some kind of response on your device? Might be nice to repeat the word nothing twice. Then you've repeated gone twice, adding a third comment in re Sadie.

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 WRITERS’ GROUP AND WRITING PARTNERS SINCE 2004. ~~writer’s group since 2004, including writing partners.~~

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND CONSIDERATION. I ~~appreciate your time and interest.~~

My Comment: Synopsis here you come.

From Tammy

Subject line: Trouble Trouble Murder in Double

(say what? Is there a comma missing? Or ??)

My comments: Tammy, you are in the midst of straightening out your query, with some additional work needed as you hone in tightly onto the reason for writing your story. You have some very large concepts that need to be tightened to help you write your query first paragraph in such a way that it reveals the entire story core and presents tension that will keep the agent reading.

Story Core:

Hone in on the wants and needs and determine where your tension is so you can build it into your query.

Who is my main character? Dr. Olivia Greyson

What does she want? She wants to heal emotionally from her past trauma and live without fear.

Why does she want it? So that she can return to her former profession with confidence and take back her life. Do you mean live without fear?

What stands in her way? SELF FORGIVENESS Her inability to forgive herself for letting her team down and putting herself in a situation where she was outsmarted and became the victim. **Question:** was anyone killed in that situation? Does she feel guilt? IS SHE CAUSES A DEATH, OR TWO, THIS MAKES HER GUILT DEEPER. OR THEY SCREWED UP AND MISSED CAPTURING THE KILLER.

What is the terrible or else that might occur if she doesn't get what she wants? If she doesn't face the past and let go of her fears she will never recover the confidence she needs to fully trust her own instincts which could impair her ability to profile and ultimately endanger the lives of innocent people. Say this in 10 words or less. Will she or a friend be murdered?

KILLER WILL GO FREE? SHE WILL BE BE KILLED. WE LIKE THIS ONE. IF SHE DOESN'T STOP SERIEL KILLER, SHE WILL BE NEXT. Or, ONCE SHE GETS ON THE TRAIL OF THE SK, SHE WILL PLACE HERSELF NEXT ON HIS/HER VICTIM LIST. ESTERMINATION LIST.

How/when did this murder sequence become personal?

The Shakespeare Murders:

Former criminal profiler, Dr. Olivia Greyson, made an impetuous mistake two years ago, resulting in a near-fatal experience at the hands of a psychopath. Disgraced and traumatized, Olivia left to pursue a quiet life of academia but, Olivia's existence is anything but peaceful. Nightmares taunt her days impeding her progress to normalcy. When her former mentor calls to invite her back into this dark world her struggle oscillates between her desire to return to the career she loved and the role her unremitting anxiety might play. Is this opportunity what Olivia needs to move on or will fear cripple her

judgement and prove disastrous by putting herself and those close to her in peril?

SHE MAY NOT BE READY TO GO BACK. But she has to because . . .

COMMENTS: First paragraph needs to be tight, focused, and present your story core quickly.

Olivia is haunted by nightmares.

Called back into the world that has caused her angst.

Will she do this to heal herself? Or will she do this and harm others? Or lose her life. Or will she do this to settle an old score?

Was she involved in the first two Shakespeare murders? Left unresolved? Killer is back to settle a score. Why?

Ten years ago two women were found murdered within a week of each other. The murders never solved. Now he's back. Another woman brutally murdered and like the previous two, he left a quote from a Shakespeare play clutched in her hand. If precedent holds Olivia understands she has little time before he casts his next victim. She agrees to set aside her fear ~~and race to Florida to~~ join the hunt for the elusive Shakespeare Killer. With each HOW MANY AND WHERE? gruesome murder Olivia's nightmares of her own traumatic experience, send her backtracking through repressed memories making it impossible for her to focus. The decision to concede and walk away is halted when the killer's next victim is someone close to her team. OR IS IT HER? To save her she must reclaim confidence in her ability to profile and trust her once intuitive instincts. Will Olivia work through her past failures in time to rewrite his twisted play or will the curtain fall on Shakespeare's next heinous act? NICE ENDING SENTENCE.

BUT, necessary tension is not yet here. There must be a compelling reason for Olivia to step back into her former world. She must do this! Why?

LEAVE THIS FOR NOW.

The Shakespeare Murders is a _____ word crime thriller/mystery. My background is in scientific research. I've co-authored several peer-

reviewed articles. PUBLISHED WHERE? I'm attending the 2017 Killer Nashville conference and will enter this work in the competition for the 2017 Claymore award. NOT CLEAR IF MENTIONING FUTURE COMPETITION IS IMPORTANT AT THAT POINT. I am also an active member of a writer's critique group. Thank you for your TIME AND consideration
Tammy Desjarlais

HOMework IS TO REVISE STORY CORE, TIGHTEN, AND WRITE FIRST PARAGRAPH: THREE SENTENCES. NO FAIR MAKING THEM EACH 30 WORDS LONG.

Next week:

No class/webinar on Friday.
Critiques will be done on Facebook.
Here's how to do this:

Open the document that has been submitted. Cut and paste it, then go back to the discussion thread, and cut and paste the document in here, use this to edit.

Please post your homework by the 25th, Wednesday noon.

Here's the process as I've demonstrated on our Facebook page. Suggest that each of you post your comments on your own discussion thread instead of everyone using the same discussion or editing on the same documents.

HOMework:

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

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

Janet, if you would like some comments on your final query, synopsis, and first page submission, we can all look again. Nitpicking to help you make this perfect. Then, please share your research process .

Vicki, we'll discuss your synopsis revision.

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

And to our audience~

Thank you for being with us. We'll be back with the Friday class/webinar on February 3rd.

If you'd benefit from being a member of our group, please consider joining. Take advantage of a special price when you join agent/query submission central: pay for two months and receive the third at no charge. More information about the program is on my home page at www.getpublishednow.biz

That's it for today. Make it a great day!

Bye for now.

Molli