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Agent/Query Submission Central

~this week 12-9-16~

First Pages 101

WORKSHOP #10

Welcome everyone, including those of you in our “audience.” I’m Molli Nickell, THE Publishing Wizard. I had planned to open with a few words about “futzing,” an activity all writers engage in, non-stop.

Then I changed my mind and thought we’d all enjoy a “happy dance” opportunity to celebrate with Liz Graham, a query-workshop graduate. Liz writes “cozy” mysteries, similar in tone to “Murder, She Wrote.” Introduced to a publisher who specializes in this genre, Liz bypassed the agent process, presented her query, and received a multiple book deal.

Liz Comments . . .

What I learned from Molli has jumpstarted my writing career. In just three (3) short months post-query workshop, I began to be treated as a professional by agents and publishers and secured a publishing contract! Do yourself a favor, and learn to craft a professional submission with Molli’s help. It will be the single best investment you’ll ever make in yourself and your writing. (A special bonus: you’ll make new friends along the way!)



This is Liz’s contract-winning query:

Email SUBJECT line: Tis the Season for Murder and Mayhem

It’s Christmas everywhere except in St. Jude Without, the isolated village which holds fast to its pagan roots on the coast of Newfoundland. Carmel stumbles upon the body of a local minister,

garroted and left for dead in an icy field. When the second dead cleric shows up, murdered in the same fashion, she knows it can't be a coincidence. She also knows she's picked the wrong place for a quiet life. Someone is murdering the religious leaders of the nearby town, and her friend Rev. Sharran might be next on the list.

The murders began at the time of the winter solstice celebration, when local ruffians dress as "mummers," drink to excess and enact mock battles which resulted in the first murder. As Carmel comes to terms with the mysterious traditions in her new home, the police recognize her as a valuable asset. Carmel's *outsider* status may help them penetrate the cloak of silence that meets their official inquiries. Yet as suspects provide ironclad alibis, the trail leads to her home and the strange new tenant who showed up just as the madness began. He might be the only one with opportunity and means to commit both murders. Too bad she's already opened her mouth and told him what she knows. When she realizes what his motive could be, she has reason to fear, not only for her friend, but her own life.

THE GARROT is a murder mystery complete in 70,000 words, and was short-listed in the 2016 Atlantic Writing Competition Unpublished Division (under its previous title *Lord of Misrule*). I have worked as a freelance writer and editor, and am a member of the Writers Alliance of Newfoundland and the Nova Scotia Federation of Writers.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Note: Liz has an unusual royalty agreement in which royalties are split between hard cover and sales of e-books. Using this hybrid form of "profit-sharing," this publisher has expanded her library of cozy mysteries, marketing directly to readers who love this genre.

Now, about the “futzing!”

Here’s the situation.

Working with me privately, or in Submission Central, writers learn to define story core and jump right into the query letter. That’s good.

First draft turns into second and third and fourth, and finally, you have a query draft that “mostly” works. It reveals the story core and includes a tease at the end of the first paragraph and an even more dire tease at the end of your second paragraph.

The third paragraph is tightly written, with your credits and writing/group experience presented quickly for an easy read.

I’ve been with you every step of the way and finally tell you that it’s time to move on to the synopsis. Leave your query alone, for now. That means, no editing, to changing, no additions, no nothing. Leave it alone.

And then, you move on to the synopsis, expanding information about your protagonist, via their thoughts, feelings, words, and actions as they shift and change and move through the story.

But, you know how it goes, as you work through the first draft, the second and third and fourth, you’re inspired to go back to your query and tweak it, just a little bit, or a whole bunch, and basically destroy the structure and the flow. This continues as you revise your synopsis until your query, which was in pretty good shape, isn’t any longer. Oh my goodness.

We have an example of this situation in the work we’ll be going over today. I’ll be sending the writer on a hunt to locate a query version that contained interesting-grabbing elements and was OK enough to leave alone until all synopsis, and revised first pages were completed.

The moral of this story is, leave well enough alone!

That’s my open for today.

Thanks for listening.

Write on!

We'll start with Janet and take a look at her query 2nd paragraph and then her revised manuscript opening page~

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 being vulnerable and having her heart broken.

WHAT HAPPENS IF THE MAIN CHARACTER DOESN'T GET

WHAT SHE WANTS? She remains alone and a family outsider.

SUBJECT LINE: Glass Promises

Query:

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 relationship. Will she risk future love despite the landmine of pain suffered in the past?leave this. It's done! For now.

At a ritzy charity event, Grace's uncanny resemblance to her dead mother causes a brawl. The incident leads to/reveals the identity of her deceased father and his living relatives. Now Grace must learn to navigate the unfamiliar labyrinth of family dynamics, especially when a newcomer is not welcomed by everyone. She campaigns to secure a future with commitment-phobic Beau and win over a hostile relative. As a woman denied love as a child and wife, will Grace secure a father for Lily and a family of her own?

My goodness, where is the zing from the paragraph that revealed said she was sleeping with someone from her non-blood related, newly discovered family?

This 72,000 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.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Synopsis:

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 her PhD in record time. Four years later, she has a tenured position, close friends, and a mortgage-free home. Life is good—until four-year old Lily begins to lobby 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.

When her car is totaled in a construction site accident Grace encounters the owner of the company responsible. Beau is one of her five minute speed dates. He meets sweet, precocious Lily and is captivated. 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 Beau's 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, Grace 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. Afterwards, 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 using her intelligence and intuition, her mother's tricks-of-the-trade, and even Lily's child-like ingenuity. 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. ~~As families often do, other relatives step up to assist.~~ On Christmas Day, Lily cries when Beau gives her a new bike **because**. ~~He's told~~ "only daddies give bikes to little girls". girls." (Punctuation) Beau agrees, **and** then convinces Grace he loves her. **His very painful chest tattoo confirms it. ????** At their wedding, Grace and Beau make steel-clad promises to love and cherish each other forever. **(Nicely revised to become a much more better ending)**

FIRST CHAPTER:

Grace Stone jammed her laptop and a pile of over-the-holiday paperwork inside her briefcase. Palm fronds scraped against her office window, whipped by strong but warm breezes from the Atlantic Ocean.

"Excuse me." Carolyn, the department secretary, stood in the doorway. "Someone is here to see you."

Grace's shoulders sagged. After final exams, she had planned to leave campus for Winter Break. Lily expected to be picked up early from preschool. "Who is it?"

“I don’t know. He’s here about your car.”

“My car?” Grace grabbed her briefcase and followed Carolyn. A man in a hard hat and acid-green shirt with a Charvet Crane logo stood in the reception area. She tilted her head back to look at him. “I’m Dr. Black-Stone.”

His eyes widened. “Uh, I’m Joe, the site foreman, for the construction project across the street. Your car’s been damaged in the faculty lot.” Grace shook her head. Since she was under thirty, blonde, and single her coveted parking spot was rumored to be a sexual favor from a university power broker. What would the gossip mongers say now? She scurried alongside Joe in her heels and pencil skirt.

At the exit doors, a student with a Billabong tank top entered. “Dr. B.! Your Beemer’s been beamed.” **GREAT COMMENT!**

Grace pushed past Joe and hurried outside. A crowd was clustered in front of the building. Security cruisers blocked the street. Emergency lights flashed. The deep rumble of fire engine motors added to the commotion.

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 opposite end of the steel girder was where her car had been parked.

Spectators parted for her like torn cloth. Some offered nods of sympathy. Others sported gleeful better-you-than-me smirks. Her now unobstructed view revealed the beam had pierced the black car and folded it upward. Firemen sprayed a chemical around the area. Grace choked down a snort of hysteria. The car looked like a taco. Her dead husband’s babe-mobile was impaled with the biggest phallic weapon of destruction she’d ever seen. **GREAT DESCRIPTION.**

A knot of hard-hatted workers stood by the parking lot entrance. One man, whose back was turned, shouted. “Where the hell is Joe?”

“He went to get the professor who owns the car.”

“Goddamn it! A professor owns this mess! Now I’m gonna have to deal with some four-eyed, pencil-necked nerd. And the thing couldn’t fall on a Kia or Escort instead of a BMW? This is a fucking disaster!”

“Boss, Joe is here. With... the professor?”

The man spun around, cocked his head, and studied Grace. 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 WOULD BE WEARING A HARD HAT.**

Joe moved her forward. “This is Dr. Black-Stone.”

The Boss frowned. “Gigi?”

“Hello, Beau.”

Tighten to heighten the tension of the moment. Don't futz around. Your goal is to capture the interest of the agent with a scene that reveals much about your protagonist and her love interest, Beau, and begins the story with a bang as her Beemer is destroyed.

Begin your story the moment something happens, something that demands the telling of your story. A steel beam smashing a Beemer is something. Lots of action, emotion, noise. It brings Grace together with her future by destroying her past, the babe-mobile.

Revision concepts:

The squeal of metal smashing into metal reverberated through her office. The building shook. Coffee sloshed out of her cup.

She races out of her office door, almost ran over student wearing

“Dr. B. Your Beemer's been beamed.”

She races around the corner and stops dead in her tracks choking down a snort of hysteria. Her dead husband's babe-mobile had been folded into the shape of a giant steel taco, impaled with the biggest phallic weapon of destruction she'd ever seen.

A knot of hard-hatted workers stood by the parking lot entrance. The burly forman slammed his hard hat to the ground, shouting. “Where the hell is Joe?”

“He went to get the professor who owns the car.”

“Goddamn it! Now I’m gonna have to deal with some four-eyed, pencil-necked nerd. Damn beam couldn’t fall on a Kia or Escort instead of a BMW? Fucking disaster!”

“Boss . . . um, Joe is here. With the professor.”

The foreman spun around, and cocked his head. Over six feet tall, tanned, and muscled, his thick dark brows arched above golden eyes. He studied Grace as Joe urged her forward. “This is Dr. Black-Stone.”

“Gigi?”

“Hello, Beau.”

Or does she react internally. God damn that speed dating.

Here’s a golden opportunity to show more about Beau, what kind person he is.

The beam begins to shimmy as it swings wildly out over the crowd. People scatter. “Sonofabitch” Beau races to the crane, dodging the swinging beam as it passes by him, climbs into the cab, shoves the operator out of the way, and deftly lowers the beam, crunch, on top of the car again, halting the potential of harming people, or other cars.

From Linda

Story Core:

Who wants what? Wu Meichen wants freedom to control her own future.

Why does she want it? The head of the family tells everyone what to do.

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.

QUERY OK for now.

First Paragraph –Newlywed Wu Meichen hates the Chinese traditions that dictate her actions and thoughts. A thirteen year old bride in an

arranged marriage, Meichen falls deeply in love with her husband, Chao Chung. Meichen yearns for a marriage partnership and a voice in their future. But when Eldest Uncle sends Chung to work in America, Meichen fears he'll be gone for many years while she faces a lifetime alone.

Second Paragraph – Meichen's father-in-law sends her to a missionary school where Meichen excels in learning. Yet she longs for Chung. Her only comfort: the few letters he sends and the photograph he left behind. After five years, Meichen's sorrow turns into anger and then rebellion. If Chung can't return to China, she'll travel to America. When Meichen arrives in San Francisco, Eldest Uncle demands she obey him and return home. Meichen rebels again and disguises herself as a boy. Crossing America by train, she rejoices to be reunited with Chung. However, her hopes for a life together are dashed when she learns Chung has been ordered to divorce her. Meichen must convince him of the joys of love and creation of a family with her. But Meichen fears his love will die if Eldest Uncle disowns them both. Can she find a way to make peace with the family and remain with her husband?

Third paragraph- Complete at 80,000 words, Unbound Woman won **Eldest** 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.

Fifth Draft of Synopsis OK for now.

First Paragraph: On her wedding day, Wu Meichen becomes a member of the Chao family. They are all strangers, even her husband, Chao Chung. She struggles to win Chung's affection and the approval of his relatives, but she cannot please her hyper-critical mother-in-law, especially when Meichen fails to conceive a child after a year of marriage.

Second Paragraph: Meichen panics when Chung leaves for America, but he must obey. Her father-in-law sends her to a missionary school which provides mental challenge and safety from her mother-in-law.

Li Biyu, a mission teacher, befriends Meichen, but even Biyu can't cure Meichen's impatience. After five years without Chung, Meichen decides to go to America and convinces Biyu to accompany her.

Third Paragraph: Outraged by Meichen's disobedience, Eldest Uncle stops her in San Francisco and arranges her return to China. Meichen escapes and boards an east bound train. Eldest Uncle telegraphs an ultimatum: Chung must divorce Meichen, or the family will disown him. Four weeks later, Meichen reaches Chung. He can't bear to end the marriage after her courageous journey. Chung struggles with guilt over his decision. Meichen understands his depression and tolerates his irritability. During an argument, Chung crushes Meichen's heart with a confession that he kept her only for sexual pleasure. Meichen agrees to a divorce so Chung can win forgiveness.

Fourth paragraph: Heartbroken, Meichen joins Biyu, who speaks at churches to raise money for Chinese girls' schools. Meichen discovers her power as a speaker brings in impressive contributions. But an unexpected pregnancy cuts her career short. Biyu insists she return to her husband. When Meichen arrives home, she learns Chung left to remarry in China.

Fifth paragraph: Chung abandons his journey and returns home after he secretly watches Meichen speak. Her ability to inspire the audience amazes him. He admits he loves her. Meichen and Chung remind Eldest Uncle that American immigration policies often change. Chung might be unable to re-enter America if he leaves. This will end financial support for his family. Eldest Uncle desires money more than revenge and restores Chung and Meichen to the family.

First pages: Unbound Woman

Heart pounding, Wu Meichen crouched beneath the stairs that led to the upper story of the house. Outside, fire crackers and gongs silenced the din of neighbors who stood at the Wu's front gate. The bride stealers had come.

Thirteen year old Meichen shrank into the narrow space, concealed by her aunt's broad body. A stern voice spoke in the courtyard. "Bring out the bride."

“No. You can’t have her,” the neighborhood girls shrilled back. “Don’t take my niece away from me.” Her uncle blocked the front door.

Meichen heard the girls shriek and laugh, and her uncle’s helpless bleats. Feet pounded on wood as the strangers entered the house. One of them shouted instructions as they searched the ground floor, shoving furniture aside. The stairs over Meichen’s head shook as one thundered upstairs. Two invaders ordered her aunt to move aside. Meu Yuk wailed, but gave way. Four arms reached into the alcove to seize Meichen. With the game over, she should accompany them without protest, but her feet refused to move. “

The bride stealers led Meichen over the threshold as the crowd laughed and applauded. Mei Yuk smoothed Meichen’s red silk tunic and skirt, richly embroidered with gold flowers. Meichen took two steps, then turned to look back at her aunt. Impatient young women surged behind her, pushing her to the courtyard gate where an enclosed sedan chair waited.

Four servants dressed in bright yellow stood ready to lift the chair. The palanquin **was** painted red, the lucky color, with silk fringe and red streamers along the curved roof. Gold symbols for happiness decorated three **side** panels, with one left **side** open. As soon as Meichen sat, her aunt pulled a red silk curtain shut. The bearers picked up the poles and jogged forward followed by Meichen’s aunt, uncle, and the “kidnappers”, including the groom, Chao Chung. Her hands trembled as she thought of the day, and especially, **the** night, ahead. A tight, hot ball grew in her stomach and rose to her throat until it hit the barrier of her clenched teeth. She wondered for the thousandth time why she had been chosen to marry a man so far above her status.

Elder brother, I know somehow you played a part in this. I wish you were here to help me. You wouldn’t have let our aunt get away with her lies. What will I do if my new family learns the truth?

She closed her eyes and breathed deeply to ward off tears and nausea. She'd ~~would~~ be disgraced if she left the palanquin with streaked makeup and vomit-stained clothes. Meichen concentrated on the dream in her heart. Her husband would be a kind man who respected her. They might even fall in love if she was very lucky. The gods would bless her with many sons, and her husband's family would hold her in high esteem.

The bridal party passed through the dusty streets of her neighborhood, into the village market where the shoppers made a narrow passageway for the parade, shouting good luck slogans to the bride and groom. The pungent smell of fish and animal manure mingled with the odor of dozens of people who pushed against the palanquin, rocking it like a cradle. With the market behind them, Meichen **tipped back into her seat**, ~~felt herself tip backward~~. She could hear the runners panting, ~~and~~ **†** Their speed decreased as they started up a hill to the houses where wealthy people lived. At last the journey ended and the bearers stopped inside the walls of the Chao compound. ~~Someone pulled the curtains aside, and she studied her new home.~~

The Chao family house formed a large square, the doors decorated with red paint, the green roof ornamented with up-tilted eaves, and a ~~Meichen saw~~ a stone courtyard lined with plants. Sunlight glinted on gold fish that darted in and out of lotus blossoms in a small pond. She'd never imagined she would live in such a place.

She fanned herself as she sat in the palanquin waiting for her groom. "Why is he taking so long?" She spoke softly so only her aunt could hear.

"He has to wash ~~off~~ and put on his wedding clothes." Meu Yuk put her head close to Meichen's ear. "When you step out, keep your feet together with the toes pointed down. That will make them look smaller."

A middle-aged lady left the house and helped Meichen out of the chair. Meichen kept her eyes cast down, as was proper for a modest girl. She paused as her aunt straightened the red veil covering her face. She walked slowly through the courtyard and front door, ~~the~~

~~front door opened, and~~ she heard the murmuring of her husband's family in the main hall.

She glanced at her groom's parents as long as she dared.

I'm glad Scholar Chao looks so kind. But Madam Chao is frowning. She doesn't like my wedding clothes. Perhaps she thinks there's too much embroidery on them. She thinks I'm vain. Oh, no, she's looking at my feet. Surely her husband told her they were not bound.

Question: How do you plan to show her thoughts? Chao Chung, dressed in an elegant blue robe, stepped forward and pushed aside the veil that concealed his bride's face. They studied each other discreetly.

barely had time to taste the dishes as she circled the room serving tea to all the ladies. Her hands trembled under the stern scrutiny of her mother-in-law. **Across the room, the men downed wine and more potent beverages. Chung's formal stiffness gave way to laughter as the men gave him advice.** The women tittered behind their fans as they guessed what the men were saying.

She followed Chao Chung to the family altar. Together they chanted a blessing to the sky and earth, then bowed before the altar dedicated to the Chao ancestors and the kitchen god who kept watch over the family. Meichen filled delicate cups with steaming tea which she served to Scholar and Madam Chao and her aunt and uncle. She and Chung faced each other and bowed. With the wedding rituals concluded, she became Chao Chung's wife.

That evening there **was** a great banquet with nine courses, many of them ~~made with~~ expensive delicacies believed to promote happiness, *I never expected this. He's tall and well-shaped. Nothing like his father with shoulders hunched from studying books.*

wealth, and fertility. Meichen gazed with longing at the suckling pig, shark fin soup, sea bass, and whole, crackling fried chicken. She

Meichen's face burned at the women's' whispered jests, humiliated to be the focus of ~~all the~~ ribald comments. Her aunt's description of marital intimacy had done nothing to reassure her. The ~~, and all the~~ teasing spurred her conviction that she faced a night of horror. Scholar Cho called the newlyweds to his side. The guests called out toasts to wish the couple long lives and many sons.

Sooner than Meichen wished, Chung led her to his chamber, followed by a few persistent guests, most of them rowdy young men. Chung's parents had purchased a new bed for the bride and groom. Enclosed on three sides, the open panel faced the room, framed with red curtains ~~that could be shut~~. Brightly painted flowers meandered up its wooden walls. Meichen stopped, overcome with the magnificence of her nuptial bed. Chung gently took her arm and pulled her down beside him. They sat together on the open side as people passed by and offered advice to the couple.

One young man stopped in front of them, rocking perilously as he balanced himself. He exhaled whiskey fumes as he leaned close to the groom. "Chao Chung, I hope you didn't drink too much tonight. You don't want your jade stalk to wilt."

.....

Linda, this is nicely written. Informative to both the culture and Meichen in re her inner world. Enjoyable to read.

Nit picking. When possible, break into two sentences whenever you join one thought with another by using "and."

Let's talk about your agent quest: what's happening?

Suggestion: Check out the listings of agents attending the Phila Writers' conference, (<https://philadelphiawritingworkshop.com/>) several are interested in historical fiction including:

Damian McNicholl is a literary agent with [The Jennifer De Chiara Literary Agency](#). (Not familiar with the agent, but know of the agency. It's OK. Very active.)

Molli Nickell, THE PUBLISHING WIZARD

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Erica Bauman is a literary agent with [Zachary Shuster Harmsworth](#). Well known agency.
Is interested in historical fiction.

Check out the Tennessee Writer's conference for more agents interested in historical fiction.

<https://tennesseewritingworkshop.com/>

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

from Vicki Crooked

Subject line: It followed her to school one day, breaking all the rules.

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

Query

Born with cerebral palsy, Sadie's tangled walk attracts attention with every step she takes. The real Sadie hides from the world, believing others only see a cripple when she slithers by. Sadie's only friend **Finn, an exchange student from London, returns home.** 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 a perfect refuge to end her life. But in the forest, as at school, Sadie knows she is she being watched.

Suggest you add a few more words about Finn as being kind, funny, impulsive, gullible, loves to debate, and gamble and teaches her to play poker. Then, when Sadie becomes concerned for him in the next paragraph, this makes sense since you've set him up with characteristics that might lead him to whatever may seal his fate.

2nd paragraph:

After swallowing enough pills to kill a giant, Sadie wakes with strange crystals in her lap. Soon she faces a malevolent grin from a fairy the size of her hand, Devilia. Sadie escapes as fast as she can, and falls. As her panic subsides, she ponders the magic of this moment, and a passion to live sparks within. The more Sadie learns about the volatile Devilia, she sees they both suffer from loneliness, each unsure where she fits in this world. Against her better judgment Sadie allows Devilia to live in Manhattan with her when school begins. Rules are given that Devilia must obey in order for their friendship to grow. But Devilia messes up. On a field trip, people stare in awe as Sadie becomes the centerpiece of a miracle. Hundreds of butterflies cover Sadie, revealing her disability to the world. Cell phones flash and Sadie becomes an Internet sensation. Finn, secretive about his sketchy endeavors in London, emails Sadie how magical and radiant she looks. Sadie only feels more of a freak. Even worse, a gut feeling tells Sadie that Finn is about to be coerced into danger. Time is of the essence in order to stop Finn from destroying his life. Sadie begs Devilia to travel to London and help Finn. With much apprehension, Devilia agrees. Can Sadie trust Devilia to save Finn? As Sadie waits, the two beings that mean everything to her become incommunicado, or perhaps dead. Sadie blames herself and once again loneliness fills her. Will she follow death into her own drug induced oblivion? Or is there another option?

Told with email and text communications intermingled with the story, my YA novel Crooked is complete at 75,000 words. I have been a part of a writers' group since 2004, attended conferences and workshops, and am a member of SCBWI.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

My comments: Nice job at synthesizing your story in this second paragraph. Needs a bit more, and also to be trimmed. Total query length needs to be 350 words, more or less. Revise away all extraneous words.

There is no payoff in Delivia being described as malevolent. Particularly since she agrees to help Sadie stop Finn from participating in an activity that might kill him.

Your story becomes more powerful if Sadie pushes/persuades Delivia to email herself to Finn. Apprehensive/fearful, Devilia agrees, and in the process, disappears. Pushes Sadie back into guilt. She didn't save Finn from the drug deal he set up so he could snag sufficient cash to come and see her. She's killed Devilia. She's alone again.

Revision concepts:

After swallowing enough pills to kill a giant, Sadie wakes to face Devilia, a 7-inch tall fairy who sizes her up. As her panic subsides, she ponders the opportunity to befriend a fairy, so different from herself, and yet, very much the same. Both suffer from loneliness, unsure of where they fit in this world. Sadie invites Devilia to live in Manhattan with her once school begins,

after agreeing to behavior parameters. These constantly are broken as Devilia practices fairy magic on Sadie. The worst infraction occurs during a field trip, when Devilia materializes hundreds of butterflies to flock around Sadie and lift her long skirt, revealing twisted legs. Cell phone videos go viral. Finn texts Sadie to comment about how magical and radiant she looks. may not need this paragraph.

When Sadie changes the subject and asks Finn about school and new friends, he turns evasive. She presses and discovers he plans to deal drugs to bankroll a Christmas vacation visit with her. His first big transaction occurs at midnight. Instinctively, Sadie knows he is in grave danger. But she can't travel to London in time to stop him. Devilia is too small to fly across the Atlantic, so Sadie suggests email. Although terrified of the digital world, Devilia transforms herself, becomes an email attachment and begins the electronic voyage to Finn. But, the email fails. REWORK THIS. Sadie's positive Devilia has evaporated in the ethers. When Finn doesn't respond to her

frantic emails, she believes the drug deal has gone bad and he's dead. Filled with dread and guilt, Sadie blames herself and once again, becomes overwhelmed with loneliness. Will she decide to follow her friends into death?

XX

NEXT WEEK:

Linda, 10 more pages.

Janet, manuscript first page “perk up”

Revise back in some of your former query 2nd para to make it more engaging so the agent wonders, “hmmm.”

Vicki, keep revision, you are this {} close.

And for the rest, keep revising what and where you are right now.

Note: December 23, no class. Revised works are to be submitted to our facebook page where I'll make comments, along with other Submission Central members.

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.

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.

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.

(Due to POPULAR requests, I'll be launching Query Bootcamps in 2017. This intensive 30-day, four (4) workshop program is helps writers craft effective query letters to serve as the foundation of their entire submission package. It also can be customized for writers' groups to participate together.)

Thanks to all of you for being here today. Join us next week.

Write on! May the words be with you!

Molli