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## Agent/Query Submission Central

*~this week 11-25-16~*

# Writing Mechanics 101

## WORKSHOP #8

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

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

### **ABOUT TODAY’S WORKSHOP~**

Focus today includes:

- Writing Mechanics 101: why these errors can doom your entire submission to delete-ville without being read.
- Maturing your writing begins with excessive **pronoun** elimination.
- Further defining of the Story Core, query, and synopses comments as needed.

## **ABOUT WRITING MECHANICS~**

Agents continue to search for talented writers with saleable manuscripts.

Most agents are open to email submissions. That's the good news. However, the competition for attention has increased about 1000%. Time pressured agents scan email subject lines, click on those with promise. The query opens, and the agent reads the first paragraph. For many writers, that's where it ends. The agent is not engaged with the story being presented, or, and this is the biggie, the writing isn't quite ready for prime time.

Off the entire submission flies, unread to deleteville.

Even though you may have written a fascinating manuscript, populated it with interesting and believable characters, one major issue can sink your submission.

I'm speaking of writing mechanic errors and red-flag words.

Writing mechanics are not often discussed in writing circles. Sad but true because they matter. Even if you have a story that engages agent attention right off the bat, as they become aware of errors, like excessive use of adjectives, or person pronouns like him, her, his hers, etc., that repeat, repeat and repeat, their enthusiasm level becomes dampened. Often to the point where they simply reject your submission.

You can understand the reasoning. If your submission is filled with writing mechanic errors, chances are your manuscript will be also. Editing to remove the errors and mature the writing may not be cost effective (this is all about business), and therefore, the agent will pass. It's business. CLICK and off your submission flies, unread, to deleteville.

First, look at your query.

Pay particular attention to excessive adjectives, adverbs, and pronoun proliferation! These are big clues that these will also be found in your manuscript. This can prevent an agent from continuing to look at your submission.

As you learn to search for these red-flag words, mark them with color, then go back, chapter at a time, and revise not just them, but the sentences where they appear. Not only do you rid yourself of these rascals, you also mature your work. Another plus.

Go easy on yourself. You've come a long way to reach this point in your "getting published" quest. The most challenging transition for all of you continues to be making the mental shift from **telling to selling**. You've done the heavy lifting as you've expanded your story –telling skills. Good for you. It's involved books and classes and writers' conferences and critique groups. And bit by bit, your ability to weave together a story has evolved to the point where you are today.

And now, you are stepping into an intense, but relatively brief learning curve as you learn to sell yourself, your skills as a writer, and your manuscript as a saleable document. You are ready to convince agents that you are the real deal. You are the writer they've been looking for. You know how to tell a story that hooks and holds reader interest from the first page to the last. Your manuscript is proof of your story telling skills. It's proof of your ability to create a saleable manuscript.

Except: and here's a bit of bad news. If, as you've crafted your story telling skills, you've been unaware of basic writing mechanics and "red-flag" words, they fill your manuscript. Rightfully or not, these label as a writing rookie with a manuscript that is *unworthy* of publication.

Better you should hear this from me, with some explanation of how you can prevent this with some awareness and focused revision, than to hear it from an agent or a publisher.

Emile showed up at my virtual office a couple of years ago, stung to the core by an "editor" and that could be anyone with a business card, told her not to give up her day job. I evaluated Emile's manuscript and recognized some vital traits of a great story teller: interesting mix of characters, unusual setting, combination of drugs, rehab, hope, love and political revenge. And, she has a few deadly writing mechanic habits that needed to be released from her writing life.

I unleashed my red pen and pointed these out to her, over and over, with suggestions (like ones that will be shared today) for her to revise, page

by page, chapter by chapter, to incorporate more mature expressions as she made her manuscript ready for prime time.

Which she did, laboriously. Like the difference between night and day, between chocolate and Brussel sprouts. I helped Emile with her next manuscript, pushing her to tighten it up and then, write a query that reflected her new skills.

Her wave of success began slowly, as often happens. Several agents expressed interest and asked to see her entire manuscript. One agent read her manuscript, made four pages of revision suggestions, which Emile performed. Then she resubmitted and waited, and waited, and waited. Finally, after revising her query again, in one of my workshops, she submitted to five more agents, received requests for full manuscripts and received two offers of representation. Emile accepted one, is now revising and tweaking with agent suggestions, and her manuscript is about to be shown to select publishers.

Being willing to put in the time to revise and mature your work will pay off. It almost always does. Not spending the time, or knowing how to do it, plus not knowing how to revise, are the reasons that 90% of writers who hit the agent trail, are not successful.

### From Janet~

Grace: 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 again by another man.  
WHAT HAPPENS IF THE MAIN CHARACTER DOESN'T GET WHAT SHE WANTS? She remains alone and a family outsider.  
SUBJECT LINE: Glass Promises

As written:

Professor Grace Stone yearns for what has been missing from her life, a family of her own. As the offspring of an illicit affair, she never knew her father. Her husband is killed shortly after the birth of their daughter. Grief-stricken, Grace again faces life alone. Four years later, Lily urges her to find them a new daddy. Grace does not want her daughter to grow up without a father so she suppresses her fear of heartbreak to start dating. She meets Beau, a construction worker, who differs from the suave men she was attracted to in the past. They begin a steamy relationship fraught with landmines of pain from both of their past marriages.

Writing mechanic issues: excessive pronouns are highlighted, along with other issues that, once addressed, will mature the writing considerably. Plus, your paragraph doesn't end with a tease to keep the reader moving on to the second paragraph. A declarative statement doesn't usually do the job.

Professor Grace Stone, yearns for what has been missing from her life, a family of her own. As the offspring of an illicit affair, she never knew her father. Her husband is killed shortly after the birth of their daughter. Grief-stricken, Grace again faces life alone. Four years later, Lily urges her to find them WHO IS THEM? a new daddy. Grace does not want her daughter to grow up without a father so she suppresses her fear of heartbreak to start dating. She meets Beau, a construction worker, who differs from the suave men she was attracted to in the past. They begin a steamy relationship fraught with landmines of pain from both of their past marriages.

Revision first draft:

Professor Grace Stone, yearns for a family of her own. The offspring of an illicit affair, she never knew her father. Happily married (or so she thought) Grace's husband dies shortly after the birth of their daughter. The pressure of being a single mom pales in comparison to the ongoing demands from Lily to "find us a daddy." Grace suppresses her fear of heartbreak and begins to date. She's attracted to Beau and they begin a steamy relationship fraught with landmines of pain from both of their past

marriages. Instead: can they xxxxxx create a meaningful relationship despite the landmines of failure from previous marriages.

**TO RESOLVE:** What question can you ask to keep the agent engaged and reading your second paragraph?

xxxxx

At a ritzy charity event, Grace experiences her greatest nightmare. Due to her uncanny resemblance to her dead mother, a brawl occurs. The humiliating incident leads to the revelation of her deceased father's identity **and that of his living relatives**. Grace rejoices in finally having the family she **has always** wanted. As she navigates the unfamiliar labyrinth of family dynamics, she learns **that** not all newcomers are welcome. Using all her resources, she campaigns to secure a future with her commitment-phobic new love as well as win over his hostile sister. If she loses the battle, she and Lily will never realize their dreams of a father and 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 work on the annual Coral Springs Literary Festival.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

[Janet Franks Little](#)

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Synopsis:

Professor Grace Stone grew up never knowing which of her dead mother's lovers was her father. So she marries young to create a family of her own. Two years later, her philandering husband dies in the devastating tsunami of 2004. Alone with an infant daughter, she focuses on her education and being a good mother until four-year-old Lily lobbies hard for a father. Despite her fear of being vulnerable to another man who makes glass

promises, Grace can't deny her child what she herself has yearned for all her life.

She tries speed dating and rejects all the possible dates, although one does interest her. Grace encounters that five minute man again when his crane company totals her car. The chemistry between her and Beau sizzles and they become unexpectedly intimate in a rather unusual place. Appalled by her loss of control, Grace pushes him away. He wins her back with persistence and genuine feelings for her daughter.

As they grow closer, Grace falls in love, but Beau does not express the same feelings. IS HE UNABLE TO? OR DOESN'T HE CARE AS MUCH ABOUT HER. AND IF SO, WHY DOES SHE PURSUE HIM. THIS IS A MAJOR PLOT POINT. At a premier Boca Raton fundraiser they attend, one of her mother's former lovers accosts and humiliates her. From this frightening incident, Grace discovers her dead father's identity and a biological connection to Beau's stepmother. Everyone welcomes her into his family except his sister, Gen, who considers Grace an illegitimate interloper. As the newest family member, she bears the woman's disdain.

Worried that she has **no more solid standing with** Beau than her mother had with her lovers, Grace pushes him for a commitment and to set boundaries with his sister. Her ultimatum forces their breakup when he is unwilling to meet her demands. Grace and Beau meet again at the family's Thanksgiving dinner. Although awkward with each other, the get-together goes well until Lily is terrorized by Gen's daughter. Grace questions her long-held desire for an extended family. Were they better off alone?

After reflection, Grace decides that the man she loves and her newfound relatives are too important to not fight for them. She initiates a campaign using her PhD book smarts, her mother's tricks-of-the-trade, and even Lily's child-like ingenuity. With Beau she uses her sexuality and food to appeal to his masculine desire. When she meets with Gen, she helps the angry woman improve her self-esteem and confidence. Grace is determined to achieve her dream— a forever place in Beau's heart and in his family.

from Lisa~

Here's a big twist in my goal to write a query!

My editor thinks my story is less thriller and more **romantic suspense**. Here is my homework for Friday. Unless I tone down the romance in my manuscript, I'll need to beef up my submission materials to draw a whole new audience...

**Note: You must make that choice, and then revise accordingly.**

Story core:

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

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

What stands in her way? A severe, forgotten psychological trauma past blocks her memory. What will happen if she doesn't get what she wants? A deadly stalker will kill her.

**Email Query Subject line:** ~~The new~~ First Lady flees a deadly White House ~~political~~ conspiracy.

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

Kay takes refuge with a new friend, a man she fell for at first sight, Nick Costa. From him, she learns the shocking secret he's been hiding. She's Angela Lockhart, the missing wife of the president-elect. He's a Secret Service agent, working desperately to keep her hidden from the power players he suspects of strangling Angela's twin sister, Amy, and a campaign intern. The few memories that emerge leave her distraught, shrouded with



guilt. A recurring nightmare weighs Angela down, troubled by suspicions she may have played a role in the murders. When she learns three more people have been killed in her wake, Angela must act to stop the spilling of innocent blood. She escapes Nick's custody, driving off alone to confront those she suspects of murder. It's a bold move Angela knows is fraught with danger, with a high probability of meeting the same fate as her sister—dead at the hands of a vicious strangler.

#### Writing mechanic issues:

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

Writing mechanic comment—do not use “em” dashes. They often become scrambled from system to system.

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Comment: Not much romance in here. However, not much tension either. If Nick plays into the story, we need some background information. Why does she take the chance to confront the possible killers on her own? Why

doesn't she enlist Nick? This doesn't make sense. Plus, in the synopsis this part of your story unravels, at least as presented, into a "who did this and who did that" which doesn't involve Nick at all. Is that your intent?

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LOST & FOUND is complete at 80,000 words. It will appeal to fans of Norah Wilson, Linda Howard, and Anne Stuart, who have crafted twisted tales of women struggling to piece together their forgotten pasts, only to find their futures in deadly jeopardy. Over my thirty-year career as an organizational psychologist, I've published scholarly papers, edited newsletters, and written columns and articles on topics related to K-12 education and parenting. I'm serving my second term as President of the Sisters in Crime Atlanta Chapter. I'm an active member of Mystery Writers of America and the Atlanta Writers Club. I honed my writing skills with Continuing Education classes, webinars, conferences, writing partners, and professional critiques.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Lisa Malice, Ph.D.

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#### LOST & FOUND: SYNOPSIS

Although she's surrounded by doctors and nurses, Kay Smith feels lost and alone at the private D.C.-area hospital where she's being treated for amnesia following a brief coma. There's only one thing Kay's sure of—she can't go to the authorities for help. Not until she can recall the severe psychological trauma blocking her memory and decide whether to embrace her dark past or run from it.

Frustrated, chasing one dead-end online clue after another, Kay cannot even confirm her name. She finds hope in a news story asking for help in identifying a comatose car accident victim, a woman matching Kay's description and injuries. Her inquiries with the hospital, morgue, and police produce more questions than answers. Nobody knows Jane Doe's whereabouts. She's missing from the Charlottesville hospital where she

was admitted after her accident. A stalker lurks in Jane Doe's shadowy past, possibly the Good Samaritan who rescued her. The police think the two are partners-in-crime. That night, Kay's dreams about an infamous serial strangler leave her panicked, worried a vicious murderer may be lurking in her past. In the morning, she learns two hospital staffers linked to her inquiries were murdered. Convinced she is Jane Doe, Kay flees the hospital, hoping to outrun the killer hot on her trail. Kay takes refuge with a new friend, a man she fell for at first sight, Nick Costa. From him, she learns the shocking truth. She's Angela Lockhart, the missing wife of President-elect William Lockhart. Nick's her Good Samaritan, a rogue Secret Service agent hiding Angela from the world and the power players he suspects in the murders of a pregnant intern and Angela's twin sister, Amy. Nick confesses Amy was the love of his life. The news shrouds Angela with guilt, wrestling with suspicions about her marriage and role in the murders. When she learns three more innocents were killed in her stead, Angela's remorse overwhelms her. She escapes Nick's protective custody and drives off alone, determined to confront William, learn the truth behind the murders, and put an end to the bloodshed.

While awaiting William's arrival for Amy's private interment at her family's Lynchburg, Virginia estate, Angela is accidentally locked inside the mausoleum. Fleeing the cold, Angela takes refuge lying next to Amy's skeletal remains inside her casket. A late night visitor, the hitman out to kill her, seals the coffin, leaving Angela to suffocate. Hours later, as her supply of oxygen dwindles, Angela finds relief from her guilt, flooding her consciousness with the horrific truth of her past. She is Amy, duped into believing Angela had suffered a nervous breakdown when she was really dead, killed days before the election during a fight with William over his affair with the murdered intern. She'd been conned by Abel Devlin, William's chief of staff, into faking her own disappearance and assuming Angela's identity to protect the campaign. Soon thereafter, the casket opens, bringing Amy face-to-face William, Abel, and his hitman, Felix Jager.

Fearing for her life, she creates a diversion and screams for help from the Secret Service agents standing guard outside. In the ensuing chaos, Abel

goes for Amy's throat and threatens to kill her way he did Angela. Amy fights back, incapacitating Abel. Felix guns for her, but kills Abel in the crossfire. When the smoke settles, Felix is dead, shot by Nick.

In the aftermath, William and Amy are the only two conspirators left alive. William forces Amy to make an agonizing choice, one pitting her desire to reclaim her life with Nick against the need to protect Angela's two young daughters. She find a compromise, agreeing to hide the truth from everyone but Nick, saving William from being charged in his wife's death. In exchange, William resigns the presidency, divorces "Angela" and gives up custody of his daughters. A year later, William is in prison on corruption charges unrelated to the murders. The FBI has closed the case on the serial strangler, pointing the finger at Abel, and his accessory, Felix. As Nick's wife, mother to Angela's girls with a baby boy on the way, Amy has found what she lost—peace and happiness, living life for both herself and her sister as "Angie."

**COMMENT:** Whew! Lots of action. Not much about Amy's inner world. Your story is about her, not the others. Not believable that one woman, untrained in martial arts, could disable two men trying to kill her?

**From Doree~**

Correction: Query YA- One Eighty :Doree

### **Story Core**

Who: Levi Yokum

Why: Afraid to grow up and survive on his own

What does he want: His mom to live?

The or what else: Death/suicide

Core: Mortality

Subject: Opioids . . . can you hear me now?

You wrote:

Seventeen-year-old Levi Yokum's academic grades are perfect, he's popular, and he plays on his High School's football team. However, when he's looking at a solitary existence, he self destructs. As his mother dies of a

rare disease, Levi feels his life's been torn apart. He struggles with the steps he must take to mature and survive on his own, without a parent there to guide him. Anxiety leads him to make irrational decisions. Will denial, a bottle of narcotics, and his fear of abandonment be his final decision?

Writing Mechanic Issues:

Seventeen-year-old Levi Yokum's academic grades are perfect, he's popular, and he plays on his High School's football team. However, when he's looking at a solitary existence, he self destructs. As his mother dies of a rare disease, Levi feels his life's been torn apart. He struggles with the steps he must take to mature and survive on his own, without a parent there to guide him. Anxiety leads him to make irrational decisions. Will denial, a bottle of narcotics, and his fear of abandonment be his final decision?

**Comment: Your first paragraph needs to include your story core.**

Levi leads the perfect life: friends, football, and college in the future. Mom for emotional and financial support.

Until his mother falls gravely ill, prepares to die, leaving him alone in the world.

Unprepared to be on his own, Levi struggles to learn what he must do to mature and acquire basic adult survival skills.

He doesn't believe he can do this on his own.

He wonders if it's worth the struggle.

He squirrels away some of his mothers' pain killers.

This first paragraph is about choices. Decisions. He struggles with fear of the future. Will he be able to help mom make her final transition? And instead of an unknown future, would it just be easier to overdose and follow her into the peace of death?

It's important to link your story core together in the first paragraph.

Ending, as you have, with a tease built on information you've given just before.

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Levi Yokum and his mother are a tight family of two. When he learns that she's fallen ill with cancer, he knows that working together as a team, they'll get through it. They'd battle breast cancer when he was younger, and everything turned out okay. He has no doubt that, with medical intervention, she'll be fine. She disagrees. He accuses her of surrendering. She's decided to leave him destitute and alone. The tension turns their home into a war zone, and him into an odious young man. Pressure and anxiety fights him from inside, with bouts of nausea and headaches, pains he can't identify and he blames it all on her. If he's unwilling to grow-up, and take hold of his own responsibilities, then how can he possibly survive? Instead, takes an interest in a bottle of OxyContin he finds. After she's gone Levi becomes connection in a telepathic way to the pills. Is he using the narcotics as his answer to his problems?

Completed at 54,500 words, "One Eighty" will appeal to readers of "Fault in our Stars" and "Thirteen." My background includes three years as a reporter for the Salt Lake Valley Journal. For seven years, I've been an active member (and past vice president and president) of the Utah RWA (Romance Writers of America) and participate in Society of Children's Books Writers and Illustrators, the Utah League of Writers and Absolutely Writers as well as two critique groups.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Doree Anderson

doree.anderson.com (345)

SYNOPSIS: Young Adult - One Eighty

High School juniors, Levi Yokum and his best friend are discussing girls and low cut dresses when Levi's cell phone rings. His mother, Camelia Josephine (CJ) is leaving work early and driving home sick. Something that is unusual, especially for her. Levi hurries home to find her suffering with a severe migraine. A test reveals a small tumor against her carotid artery. The surgery goes well.

CJ's post-op appointment uncovers a rare form of liver cancer. Levi believes with Chemo and radiology; life can return to normal. CJ and the doctor try to explain to Levi that her diagnosis is terminal. Fear of

abandonment plays havoc with Levi. Mother and son's close relationship slides into a roller-coaster of arguments and heartbreak. Instead of offering her comfort, he uses her pain to feed his anger. Chronic heart palpitations and damp hands hound him after constant reoccurring nightmares. Terror gut-punches him, and fights escalate. A concerned friend convinces him to mend the rift with his mother. Not easily, but they patch their tattered relationship up, and Levi takes over her care. He finds a bottle of narcotics left by her bedside; steals them and hides them in his room. Too soon, CJ's health declines. Levi's blessed to be present, holding her when she dies. With the pills and a bottle of alcohol, he fails his first attempt at suicide at the base of his mother's grave. His stress climbs when his estrange father returns demanding Levi go with him. The courts deny the man that hasn't seen Levi since he was three. Levi's childhood home sells. After Levi moves into his best friend's house, the friend interferes during another suicide attempt. Each day Levi begins to notice that this new life might not be perfect, but he's also not destitute or alone. When he decides to stop taking the pills, it's like an alien has climbed into his brain. He's hearing voices telling him things to do. It's driving him insane. Not only isn't he sleeping, but he's also snapping at his coach, tuning out his friends. He realizes that to live; he must get help. He asks his legal guardian who sends him to a therapist. With long hours of severe therapy, friends, and conviction, he learns control. Its not long that he's molding a new life of his own.

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

Newlywed Wu Meichen hates the Chinese traditions that dictate her actions and thoughts. Although their marriage was arranged, Meichen falls deeply in love with her husband, Chao Chung. She wants him to accept her as a partner and give her a voice in his plans for his future. But Chinese tradition demands all family members obey the orders of the oldest male who's responsible for the family's welfare. When the head of the family sends Chung overseas to work, 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 after her mother-in-law attacks her. While she enjoys her studies, Meichen yearns for Chung. Months pass, then years. Meichen has no comfort except the few letters her husband sends, Chung's photograph, and memories of their short time together. In the fifth year Meichen's sorrow turns into anger and then rebellion. If her husband can't come home, she'll find her way to him. When she reaches San Francisco, the family patriarch wants to send Meichen back to China. She disguises herself as a boy and crosses America by train. Meichen rejoices when she sees Chung again, but her troubles do not end. Chung has orders to divorce her or the family will disown him. Without love, Meichen sees no point in living. But she wonders if his love will die when he remembers Meichen's rash actions caused the loss of his family. Can Meichen find a way to make peace with her in-laws and stay with her husband?

Third Paragraph: Complete at 80,000 words, UNBOUND WOMAN won first place in an ethnic novel contest sponsored by Romantic Times Magazine. I belong to the Central Savannah River Area Writers and am an active member of RWA (Romance Writers of America) and Georgia Romance Writers. Thank you for your time and consideration.

#### **Writing mechanic issues:**

Newlywed Wu Meichen hates the Chinese traditions that dictate her actions and thoughts. A 13-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



Elder Uncle sends Chung to America to work, 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 after her mother-in-law attacks her. THIS HAS NOT BEEN MENTIONED. While she enjoys her studies, Meichen yearns for Chung. Months pass, then years. Meichen has no comfort except IN THE FEW LETTERS AND PHOTOGRAPHS CHUNG SENDS TO REMIND HER OF THEIR SHORT TIME TOGETHER. the few letters her husband sends, Chung's photograph, and memories of their short time together. In the fifth year FIVE YEARS, Meichen's sorrow turns into anger and then rebellion. If her CHUNG husband can't come home, she'll find her way to him. When she reaches San Francisco, OLDEST UNCLE DEMANDS SHE RETURN TO CHINA. the family patriarch wants to send Meichen back to China. INSTEAD, MEICHEN She disguises herself as a boy and crosses America by train. Meichen rejoices when she sees Chung again, but her troubles do not end. Chung has orders to divorce her or the family will disown him. Without love, Meichen sees no point in living. But she wonders if his love will die when he remembers Meichen's rash actions caused the loss of his family. Can Meichen find a way to make peace with her in-laws and stay with her husband?*

**Revision for first draft of second paragraph:**

Meichen's father-in-law sends her to a missionary school when Meichen excels in learning. Yet, she yearns/longs/misses for Chung. Her only comfort: the few letters and photographs he sends her. After five years, Meichen's sorrow turns into anger and then rebellion. If Chung can't come 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 at being reunited with Chung. But/except/however, her hopes for a life together are dashed when she learns Chung has been ordered to divorce. She must convince him of the joys of love and creation of a family with her. However, 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?

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#### Fourth Draft of Synopsis

First Paragraph: On her wedding day, Wu Meichen becomes a member of the Chao family. They are all strangers, even her husband, Chao Chung. As a young bride, she occupies the lowest level in this large family's hierarchy, under the thumb of her hyper-critical mother-in-law. Chung struggles to protect Meichen from his mother's malice.

Second Paragraph: The head of the family sends Chung to America, perhaps for many years. Meichen panics, but Chung must obey First Uncle. 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 her. But even Biyu can't cure Meichen's impatience. After five years, Meichen decides to go to America and join Chung, convincing Biyu to go too.

Third Paragraph: Outraged by Meichen's disobedience, Oldest Uncle stops her in San Francisco and arranges her return to China. Meichen escapes and boards an east bound train. First 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. He kept her only for sexual pleasure. He failed in his duty to the Chao family for a selfish reason. Meichen agrees to a divorce so Chung can ask for forgiveness.

Fourth paragraph: Disillusioned with love, 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 mesmerize the audience

amazes him. No other woman can match his wife. Chung and Meichen remind Eldest Uncle how American immigration policies often change. Chung might be unable to re-enter America if he returns. This will end financial support for his family. Eldest Uncle desires money more than revenge and restores Chung and Meichen to the family.

From Carol~

**Story Core:** Georgie must get her sick little brother home amid a snowstorm.

WHO is this story about? Georgie

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

WHAT stands in their way? The weather

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

Query

Georgie and her FRAIL brother, who always seems to get sick, are downtown for the Armistice Day Parade. Their uncle is part of the parade and is to give them a ride home when the parade is over. A sudden snow storm comes up and the store where they are to meet closes. CAN'T THEY STAND OUTSIDE? On top of this, Luke says he doesn't feel well. How will she find her uncle and if she doesn't, how will she get her sick brother home?

The day had started out warm, so Georgie and her brother, Luke, are not prepared for cold weather. They have no money, and since they can't find their uncle, they must make a long walk home to an empty house as their parents are at the hospital awaiting the birth of a new baby. After a long ordeal fighting the elements, they manage to get a free ride home on a streetcar only to find the electricity out in their cold home. Can Georgie

figure out how to get the house warm, and what about Luke who becomes sicker by the minute?

“Georgie and the Armistice Day Blizzard” is a chapter book of 10,000 words. I have sold more than two dozen stories and articles to a variety of magazines including Highlights for Children, Girl’s Life, the Writer Magazine and am the author of seven children’s books. I was a writing mentor for, and have given presentations and speeches for the Minnesota chapter of the Society of Children’s Book Writers and Illustrators and taught classes at the Loft Literary Center in Minneapolis. I belong to two critique groups, one in person and one on-line. **THIS WORKS. KEEP IT FOR NOW.**

### Synopsis

Armistice Day 1940 starts out unseasonably warm. Georgie plans to take the streetcar downtown with her friend, Rose, to watch Uncle George march in the Armistice Day parade, but Rose has a cold and stays home. Georgie’s mother goes into early labor and Georgie’s father takes her to the hospital. They leave Luke in Georgie’s care and if he doesn’t feel well when he awakens, she is not to take him downtown. She is not happy about this. She has never missed a parade and was/is not about to miss this one. Downtown, they watch the parade and wait inside a department store for the parade to end and meet their uncle who is to give them a ride home. The store suddenly closes due to a surprise snowstorm. On the way down an escalator, Georgie sees her uncle leaving the store. When they get outside, she yells at him as he turns a corner but her voice gets lost in the blowing wind and snow. She runs ahead of Luke only to find that their uncle is nowhere to be seen. The little money that Georgie had was spent on a small lunch and some candy from the candy counter leaving nothing for streetcar fare. **THIS DOESN’T JIVE WITH YOUR QUERY.**

Snow starts falling harder and temperatures do likewise. Luke tells her that he doesn’t feel well. How would she get him home and out of the elements? She sees their streetcar and stops it and explains to the driver that she will give him the money when they get to her stop. She hates lying to him, but feels she doesn’t have a choice. They board, and in their seats,

Luke puts his head on her lap and falls asleep. Many passengers stomp their feet and rub their hands together trying to warm up. As she strokes Luke's hair, she is thankful for the wool sweater she wore and Luke's light jacket, which helped protect them a little. At one stop, a mother and father with a baby get on the streetcar. Georgie wonders if their new baby had been born yet. Would this baby be healthy? Why would her parents take the chance of losing another baby? **IS THIS HER CONCERN? REALLY? WOULDN'T SHE BE MORE TERRIFIED OF HER SICK LITTLE BROTHER?**

The streetcar stalls in deep snowdrifts and the driver calls for a bus, which arrives a little while later. Finally, at their stop, a relieved Georgie wakes Luke up and they get off the bus only to land in knee-deep snow. She tries to carry Luke, but her arms give out and she pulls him with much effort across the top of the snow. Only one block to go, but it may as well be one mile. She is so tired she just wants to lay down and go to sleep. She remembers something from Girl Scouts about hypo-something-or-other and musters up enough strength and courage to get home. Both Georgie and Luke perk up when they get to their house, only to find snow piled up against the front door. **With much effort, they get the snow moved away and enter a cold house with no electricity.** They dig with their hands to clear the door. Georgie rounds up newspapers, old wooden chair, junk from the basement to stoke a fire in the fireplace and at the same time takes care of Luke who has thrown up and is feverish. She goes to call her friend Rose whose mother is a nurse, but there is no phone service either. And why isn't her father home yet? **GOOD TENSION. WHAT ELSE COULD POSSIBLY GO WRONG.**

Georgie manages better than she ever **thought** she could throughout the rest of that day and over the nighttime hours. **WHAT DOES SHE DO? Monitors his fever, keeps him warm, keeps fire going, reads to him, brought him his toys, burned train for fuel.** Burns her own toys and books. Attic to find old stuff. Playhouse, doll house, She finds she has resourcefulness that she didn't know she had and feels very proud of herself. **INSTEAD OF TELLING THIS, SHOW IT WITH ACTION. WHAT DOES SHE DO.** She wakes up in the morning to the sound of snowplows. The **snow** has subsided and everything is covered in a thick blanket of

snow. Uncle George gets to the house to find a relieved Georgie. He had desperately looked for them to no avail and was glad to see them home and safe. A short while later, her father comes home with the news of a new healthy baby sister.

WHAT is the time period. 1940. Flue opens and shuts.

Thoughts from group:

Tip over tables to make cage to hold heat with them inside it.

Giving him sips of water like her mother does.

Keep him warm with her own body heat. And he smells.

Pull blankets and quilts off all the beds. Pillows around all of them.

Camping in the living room. Make that game to distract him.

No coal, not delivered yet. Any little scraps of coal?

From John ~

Who is the story about: Jack Crane

What does he want and why? He'd like to remember all of his past What stands in his way? Fragmented memory

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

He's convinced both will be looking for their money and want him dead

EMAIL Subject: Query – He can't remember if he's a victim or a criminal

He awakes on a park bench in the rain with a large gash on his head and a fragmented memory. Memories swirl inside his head of a shooting, being shot himself, a Spirit Being named Michael and something about a mission to clean-up corruption. After a short hospital stay, fears of what he may have done before being wounded become overwhelming. He'd like to remember all of his past, but if it could get him killed, maybe not remembering is better. For now, he asks, "Am I a victim or a criminal?"

His identity is further questioned when it's found he has a money belt with fifty grand in cash, and he's not sure why. As memories are stitched

together in time, the name Jack Crane feels familiar. Snippets show the money in the belt belongs to his loan shark boss who is part of his mission. When **his** car, which was missing, is dragged from the river, a body is found in the trunk with another fifty grand. He **recollects**/recall/remember/determines this money belonged to a drug dealer's boss, another part of his mission. He's convinced both will be looking for their money and want him dead. His **life is further complicated when a woman says she's his girlfriend**. Like others events from his past life, he has vague memories of her and how they were once in love. He can feel a connection, but it's too early to call it anything but an interest. He **will later find** that she has a boat load of problems of her own and how they have been drawn together to help each other with their life-changing issues. He remembers enough to ask himself if he should stay and **deal with his troubles or run for his life?**

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

#### SYNOPSIS:

Jack's doctor says his prognosis is 50/50 of ever remembering events in their correct order. What he does remember places him in a position where two different crooks are after their money which he carried. He has no idea what they look like or when they will come, but he's sure about one thing, they are not going let one hundred grand slip through their fingers without a fight. Should he give the money back or run?

Over the next few months, bits and pieces chain together into coherent thoughts which show he's not like other people. Visited by an Angelic Being named Michael who explains how Jack, like himself, is from another dimension, sent here to help clean up a loan shark operation and drug ring. **For now, due to Jack's memory situation, his mission is on hold.** Can

you show this? Is he relieved that, because of his memory and the situation, his mission is on hold?

If the visit from Michael isn't confusing enough, a woman enters his life who says she's his lover. The woman has emotional issues and a missing husband. After some investigating he surmises that she could be the murderer. While running seem like the thing to do, he could end up in the arms of the guys looking for their money.

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

When the loan shark boss, wants Jacks dead, his girlfriend's second personality, Jane, materializes in human form with a shotgun in hand, shooting the boss in the chest. Michael then appears in a bright light which surrounds Jane and Michael assures Jack that all will be well and he will know more when the time is right. Michael and Jane fade away as the light grows dim. Jack and his girlfriend are left alone to explain how this body, full of holes, ended up in their driveway.

**THIS STORY STILL DOESN'T MAKE SENSE TO ME. LET'S TALK ABOUT CREATSPACE AND THE POTENTIAL OF A BIT OF REVISION (WHICH CAN BE DONE EASILY).**

### **NEXT WEEK:**

- 1) More writing mechanics**
- 2) Your first page (300 words max)**

Note: December workshops continue to focus on story core, query, synopsis, and manuscript first pages (350 words).



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



### **In closing~**

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

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

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

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

Regardless of when you join Submission Central, if we’re working on the synopsis, but you haven’t written a query, no problem. Begin with the query. Use my query template and jump right in. Move through the query, week by week, until you’re comfortable with the format. Regardless, if the

workshops are focusing on synopsis, first pages, or submission protocol, etc., join in regardless of where your focus is placed.

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

I'll help you, as will members of the group who have progressed beyond where you may be at the moment.

(Due to POPULAR requests, I'll be launching Query Bootcamps in 2017. This intensive 30-day, four (4) workshop program is designed to teach and prod writers to craft an effective query to serve as the foundation of their entire submission package. It also is designed for writers' groups to go through together.)

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

Write on! May the words be with you!

*Molli*