

Pitch Your Book:

Loglines, Synopses, and Queries
that Hook and Hold



PART THREE: QUERIES

JAMES PERSICHETTI, LOST HAT EDITORIAL SERVICES

Dear Agent,

Congratulations on your recent sale of *Barrow Hawk's Revenge*. I admire all of Rupert LeBlanc's work and am excited for his next book! I believe my YA thriller CONCERT AT CARNAGE HALL, complete at 86,500 words, will interest you.

Ralph has loved the piano ever since his earliest memory of sitting in his grandfather's lap while he played, his fingers casting a spell over the keys. He aspires to be America's next greatest pianist, but he royally botched his last school concert. What a nightmare that was. So when he gets a mysterious invitation to a scholarship contest at Carnegie Hall, he figures he'll leave the past behind him and hops on a plane to New York.

The competition is going to be stiff, especially after he hears Charlie's rendition of Rondo Alla Turca. And this girl Britta can really bust out a Chopin piece. But he came here to prove to his school that he's not a nervous loser and is determined to win that scholarship. That is until Britta is found dead backstage.

Police actively investigate her death, refusing to call it a murder just yet, and the scholarship is still on. But when other students start to disappear, Ralph and Charlie must ban together to get to the bottom of this mystery and stay alive. When Ralph finds a surprising photo of his grandfather in the Carnegie Hall archives, the pieces start to fall together. All the victims were once students of the same teacher: his grandfather.

Drop Dead Gorgeous meets *Phantom of the Opera* in this musical YA thriller. I teach piano at both the high school and college level and have even had the honor of playing at Carnegie Hall myself. My short fiction has appeared in *Beneath Ceaseless Skies* and *Glimmer Train*.

Thank you for your consideration,
Author



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Intro

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Outro

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Thank you for your consideration,
Author



The Intro

I'm seeking representation for...

- Title
- Genre
- Word count

Extra information

- Personal connection
- Series potential
- Comp titles



The Intro

I am seeking representation for my 77K-word historical romance novel, GOLDEN BOYS.

Congratulations on your recent sale of *Barrow Hawk's Revenge*. I admire all of Rupert LeBlanc's work and am excited for his next book! I believe my YA thriller CONCERT AT CARNAGE HALL, complete at 86,500 words, will interest you.

I'm excited to send you THE BLADES OF SATURN, my science fiction novel complete at 90,000 words.

THE BABEL FILES is a completed, YA science fiction book of 83,000 words. Readers familiar with Pierce Brown's *Red Rising* or Fonda Lee's *Zeroboxer* will find similar elements in my work.



Comp Titles

The Martian, but underwater and with a giant squid

Golden Girls meets *Indiana Jones*

The gritty world of *The Way of Shadows* (Weeks) with the character dynamics of *Six of Crows* (Bardugo)

X-Files but for middle schoolers

Appeal to fans of Courtney Milan and Tessa Dare

Under the Tuscan Sun set in China

~~Appeal to fans of *Harry Potter*, *Hunger Games*, and *Twilight*~~



What to Pitch

Setup

Escalation

Final Hook



Keep Setup to a Minimum

Describe hero in a single phrase



Stuck in their ordinary world



Internal struggle relevant to the plot



Dive into the **INCITING INCIDENT**



New situation

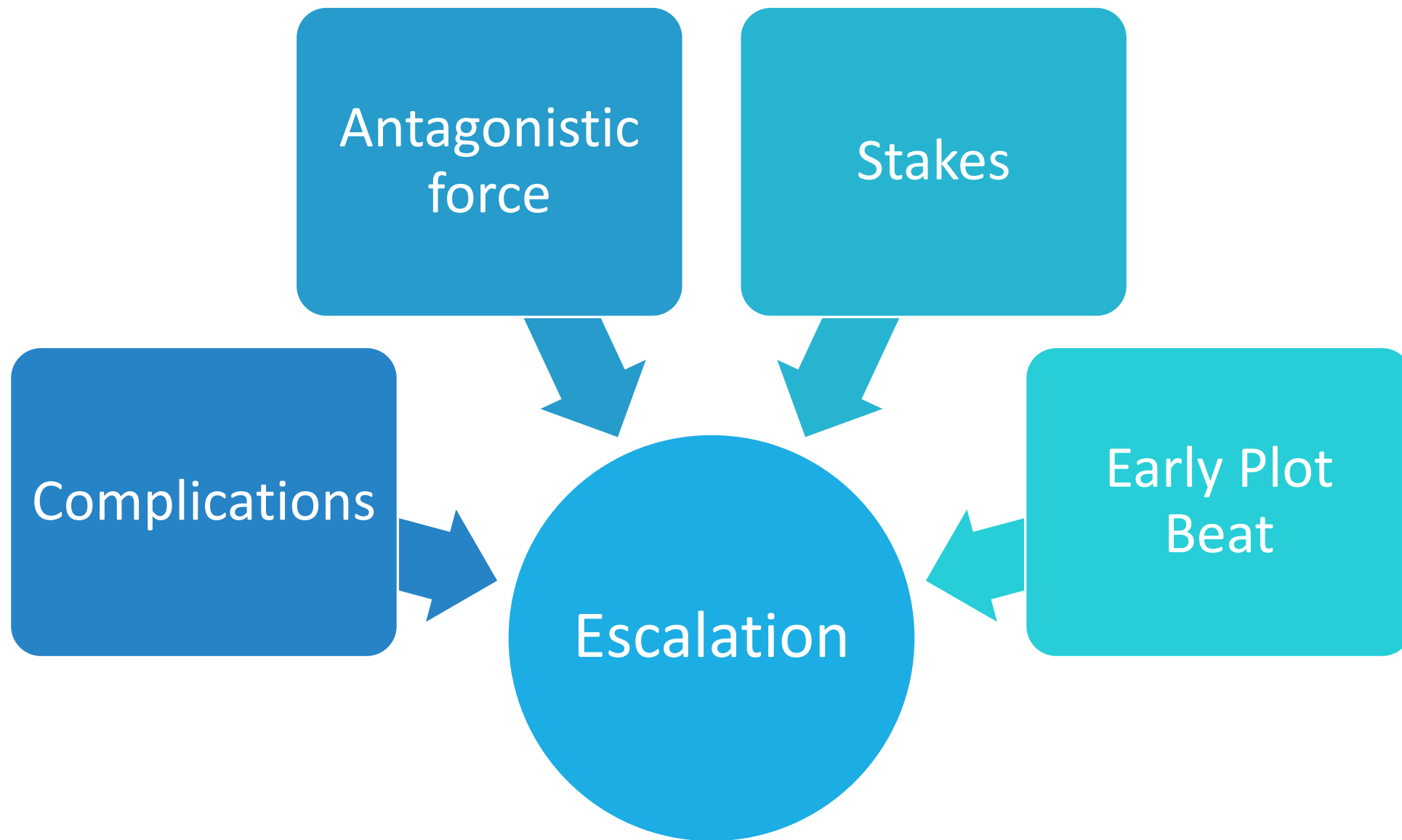


Setup

When fifteen-year-old orphan Samantha Young kills the richest man in Missouri in self-defense, she disguises herself as a boy and flees to the unknown frontier. She knows the law in 1849 will not side with the daughter of a Chinaman. Along with a runaway slave, also disguised as a boy, “Sammy” joins a band of young cowboys headed for the California gold rush.

It takes a very special crew to keep this vessel running. And no one knows that better than Nadya Skylung, who tends the cloud garden and keeps the ship afloat. When the unthinkable happens and pirates attack, Nadya and the other children aboard—all orphans taken in by the kindhearted Captain Nic—narrowly escape, but the rest of the crew is captured.





Escalation

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The trail poses far more hazards than the demure violinist imagined, not just from pursuing lawmen, but from Sammy’s own heart when she falls in love with one of the cowboys, West Pepper, who doesn’t know she’s a girl. Sammy can’t reveal her true identity for fear of losing the cowboys’ protection. But when West’s confusion over his feelings threatens to tear them apart, Sammy has to choose between her love for West and her own survival.



Escalation

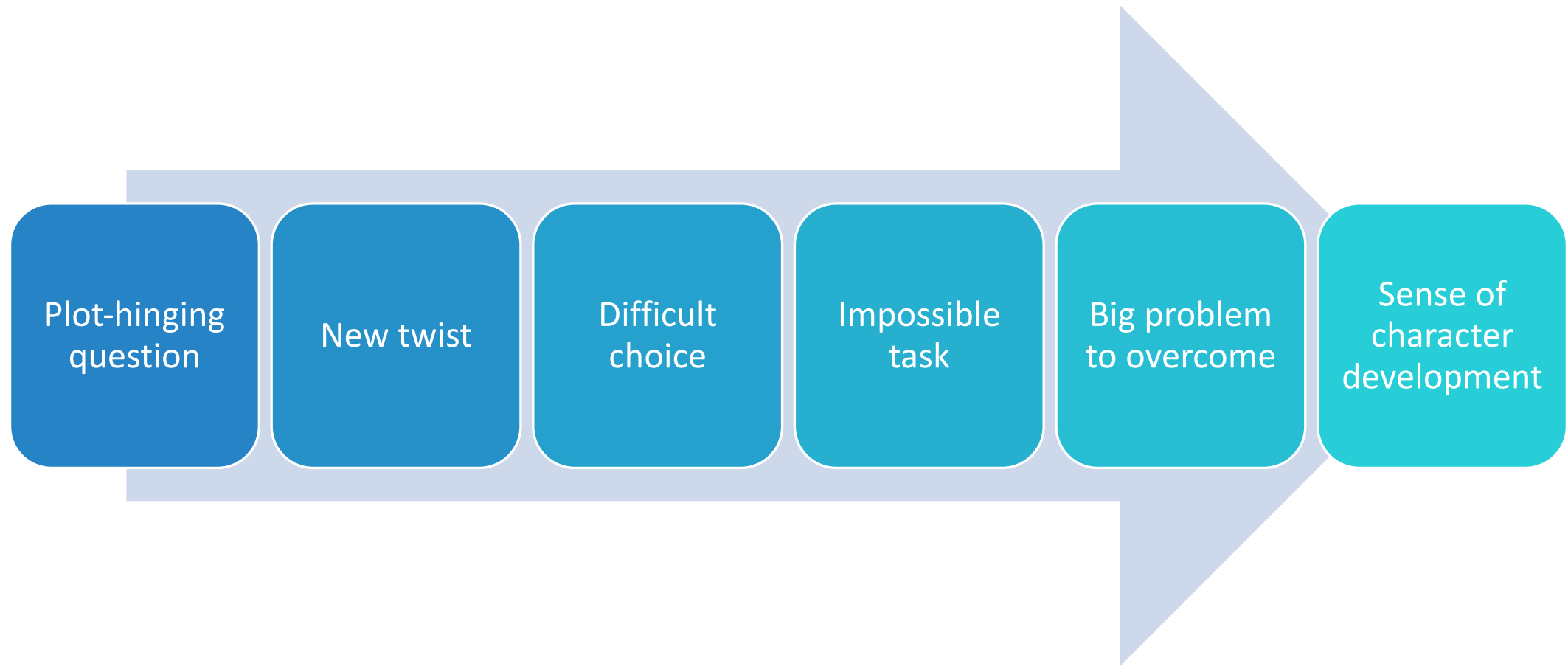
In Shaker Heights, a placid, progressive suburb of Cleveland, everything is planned—from the layout of the winding roads, to the colors of the houses, to the successful lives its residents will go on to lead. And no one embodies this spirit more than Elena Richardson, whose guiding principle is playing by the rules.

Enter Mia Warren—an enigmatic artist and single mother—who arrives in this idyllic bubble with her teenaged daughter Pearl, and rents a house from the Richardsons. Soon Mia and Pearl become more than tenants: all four Richardson children are drawn to the mother-daughter pair. But Mia carries with her a mysterious past and a disregard for the status quo that threatens to upend this carefully ordered community.

When old family friends of the Richardsons attempt to adopt a Chinese-American baby, a custody battle erupts that dramatically divides the town—and puts Mia and Elena on opposing sides. Suspicious of Mia and her motives, Elena is determined to uncover the secrets in Mia's past. But her obsession will come at unexpected and devastating costs.



The Final Hook



The Final Hook

All the murder victims were once students of the same teacher: his grandfather.

But when West's confusion over his feelings threatens to tear them apart, Sammy has to choose between her love for West and her own survival.

As Emmett uncovers the truth, he realizes he's not fighting for wealth or glory, he's fighting for his life.

Vin has learned to expect betrayal from everyone she meets, and gotten it. She will have to learn to trust, if Kel is to help her master powers of which she never dreamed.



Putting It All Together

Brussels, 1943. Twelve-year-old street orphan Helene survives by living as a boy and selling copies of the country's most popular newspaper, *Le Soir*, now turned into Nazi propaganda. Helene's world changes when she befriends a rogue journalist, Marc Aubrion, who draws her into a secret network that publishes dissident underground newspapers.

The Nazis track down Aubrion's team and give them an impossible choice: use the voice of the resistance to create a Nazi propaganda bomb that will sway public opinion against the Allies, or be killed. Faced with no decision at all, Aubrion has a brilliant idea. While pretending to do the Nazis' bidding, they will publish a fake edition of *Le Soir* that pokes fun at Hitler and Stalin—daring to laugh in the face of their oppressors.

The Ventriloquists have agreed to die for a joke, and they have only eighteen days to tell it.



Questions?

Voice in Pitch

Flat Pitch:

When Jessica accidentally steals a holy relic from the Triton aliens, she unknowingly starts a war with the humans and Tritons. Now the Tritons are chasing her down in their mothership to recover their relic.

Pitch with Voice:

To be fair, Jessica didn't *mean* to steal a holy alien relic and start an intergalactic war. She just thought it was a plain old boring space rock. But try explaining that to the Tritons who are chasing after her in an alien mothership that packs a ton of firepower.



Voice in Pitch

Flat Pitch:

Charlotte Holmes is too smart to comfortably fit into the rigid Victorian society. But she never expected to become an outcast, exiled to the inhospitable streets of London.

Pitch with Voice:

With her inquisitive mind, Charlotte Holmes has never felt comfortable with the demureness expected of the fairer sex in upper class society. But even she never thought that she would become a social pariah, an outcast fending for herself on the mean streets of London.



What NOT to Pitch

Theme

World

Morals

Ending

Subplots and
side characters

How to market

How long it
took to write

Why your
book is better

Other books

Yourself



Ask Beta Readers

Who is my main character?

What do they want?

What event starts the book?

What's my hero's **goal**?

Why do they care about that goal (**motivation**)?

What happens if they fail (**stakes**)?

What's the main **conflict**?

Who's the antagonist, and why are they opposing the hero?

What kind of readers would want to read this book?



Reasons an Agent Will Reject

Easy Pass



- Guidelines
- Agent doesn't rep
- Word count
- Poorly written

Clarity



- Main character
- Plot
- Story problem
- GMCS

Story



- Average
- Not high concept
- Market
- Similar project



Your Turn

1

Dear Agent,

While hiking in the Colorado wilderness, college freshman Alexandra Dare is attacked and bitten by a zombie elf. Imprisoned by a secret society when her survival exposes her as a were-dragon, Alexandra joins forces with her human captors to battle the army of undead rising to enslave not only the earth but dimensions beyond.

Confronting the creator of the magical zombie virus in dreaming, Alexandra discovers the Mage of Ellifer is far more powerful, and far more handsome, than she anticipated. He is also still among the living. With the Mage of Ellifer a step ahead, Alexandra must learn how to harness her new draconic abilities, and control her emerging draconic passions, before it is too late.

Appended below for your review are the first three pages of the first chapter of my recently completed manuscript ***Out of Avalon***. The book is just shy of 100,000 words and falls into the Fantasy/Supernatural Horror genres. ***Out of Avalon*** is my first work of fiction. It is also the first book in the series, "The Adventures of Alexandra Dare." The second book in the series is currently titled ***Out of Eden***.

Thank you for your time. I do appreciate it!

Author



1

Dear Agent,

Diggin it!

While hiking in the Colorado wilderness, college freshman Alexandra Dare is attacked and bitten by a zombie elf. Imprisoned by a secret society when her survival exposes her as a were-dragon, Alexandra joins forces with her human captors to battle the army of undead rising to enslave not only the earth but dimensions beyond.

Don't know much about Alexandra

Who? Why does he matter?

Confronting the creator of the magical zombie virus in dreaming, Alexandra discovers the Mage of Ellifer is far more powerful, and far more handsome, than she anticipated. He is also still among the living. With the Mage of Ellifer a step ahead, Alexandra must learn how to harness her new draconic abilities, and control her emerging draconic passions, before it is too late.

Goal? Stakes? Too late for what?

Pitch too short

Word economy

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99,000 words

Formatting

Thank you for your time. I do appreciate it!
Author



Dear Agent,

In the post-industrial United States of 2064, reluctant heiress Anjali Tewari wants nothing to do with the robots that made her family wealthy. Her best friend Jaelyn, a rising star at Tewari Robotics, is a 'trasher' from a poor family who struggles for every bit of her success.

When Jaelyn leaves to join a rival company, Anjali learns that her friend is working on a robot with the potential to dominate the few professions left to humans. Anjali tries to persuade Jaelyn to leave the project, only to find herself held captive and implanted with a fake identity chip that marks her as a mentally ill young woman with a history of impersonating celebrities. Jaelyn has betrayed her.

Anjali's escape and journey home brings her face to face with the media influencers, rogue politicians, and revolutionaries fighting over the direction of this post-robot world. When she confronts Jaelyn once again, Anjali finds that her friend has paid a harrowing price for her vision.

Rhythm of Vision is an 80,000-word science fiction novel set in the near-future western United States. Influences for this novel include *The Murderbot Diaries* by Martha Wells and Kage Baker's *Company* novels. I believe this flavor of popcorn science fiction would fit nicely with your existing list.

After working as a technical writer for twelve years, I found that I had reached the limit of human endurance. I am currently working part-time at the local library and devoting as much time as possible to writing fiction. *Rhythm of Vision* is complete and available upon request.

Sincerely,
Author



2

Excellent opening!

Dear Agent,

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BAM!
Escalation!

When Jaelyn leaves to join a rival company, Anjali learns that her friend is working on a robot with the potential to dominate the few professions left to humans. Anjali tries to persuade Jaelyn to leave the project, only to find herself held captive and implanted with a fake identity chip that marks her as a mentally ill young woman with a history of impersonating celebrities. Jaelyn has betrayed her.

For her vision?

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Good, but more punch on her escape? Voice?

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Solid

Maybe not relevant, but doesn't detract

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Sincerely,
Author



Query for Surprise at the Rocking M

Dear Agent,

Cash Maguire has the bull riding rodeo world by the tail. Until some life-altering changes come his way in the form of Maddie Maguire, a nine-month-old baby girl that Cash hadn't known he'd fathered. She ended up on his doorstep literally. Left by her dying mother for Cash to raise. She quickly wraps everyone around her little finger. When a career-ending accident with a killer bull changes his life path, Cash finds himself working harder than ever to redefine his life.

Lyndsey McCade owns the ranch next door. She's loved Cash ever since he'd put a frog down the back of her shirt when she was nine. She'd never found the courage to let him know how she felt, until his accident when they both realized they truly loved each other.

Surprise at the Rocking M is more than a cowboy, cowgirl story. It's a story about love, trust, pain, deceit, and loss. As with life, the Rocking M Ranch has more than its share of changes. It is complete at 65,009 words and is first in a series about a mythical town of Marigold, OK.

Sincerely,
Author



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Some wording
and line edits

Which event
kicks off the
story? Related?

Pitch too short

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Amazing
character

But more
about
Lyndsey?

Excellent
setup, but left
me hanging...

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Missing:
conflict, how
each element
ties together

Sincerely,
Author

65,000

Formatting



Agent:

Is There Life on Other Ranches? is a 65,000 word memoir for readers who live with horses or wish they could. I was hooked at age eleven the first time I fell off a horse. I have lived the horse dreams of countless little girls, becoming a successful professional horse trainer in a man's world.

This memoir is an insider's look at one woman's life on a horse ranch, with laughter, grit, barn-scented boots in the living room, and the value of human friends in the midst of a four-legged world. Ranch life can be isolating, but the rest of the world has a way of showing up at the barn in unique ways. The pages of this memoir are peppered with ranch dogs, students, my own cowboy love story, and remarkable cowhorses.

Training horses professionally for forty-two years in Arizona, Colorado and California, I earned Appaloosa World Championships in Western Pleasure and Cutting, as well as winning High Point in the Nation with my Snaffle-bit Reined Cowhorse. I've had articles published in *The Paint Horse Journal*, *Appaloosa World*, *Appaloosa News*, and *Cal-Western* magazines.

I'm a member of Women Writing the West, Pikes Peak Writers, Equine Authors United, Ladies Horse Society, and Cowgirl Collaboration. I would be pleased to send along an annotated table of contents and sample chapters--or the completed manuscript, finished and ready.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Good, bad, or ugly, I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Author



4

Clever title!
(ALL CAPS)

How does title
fit in?

Memoirs need
GMCS too. Be
sure to pitch us
a story.
Ordinary life,
inciting
incident,
extraordinary
circumstances...

Agent:

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Sincerely,
Author

Bio relevant to
story
#memoir

Reads like
essay, but we
want story

More bio, not
story

Good voice!



Dear Agent,

Your Manuscript Wish List page indicates that you're a suspense junkie who loves action-packed thrillers. I believe you might be interested my 95,000-word YA suspense novel, IMMUNITY, which takes place in the near future, fifteen years after a toxic waterborne pathogen has forced a mass exodus from the central United States.

Sixteen-year-old Pearce Brennan, an unassuming biology geek, is stunned when she is unexpectedly transferred from her science school to the elite political school in Washington, DC to literally fill the shoes of a student who died in an accidental lab fire. No one has ever switched schools before and Pearce is hardly political elite material— she hates politics, subsists on government handouts of water and meal bars, and illegally buys black market heart medication to keep her father alive.

Track One offers Pearce more than she ever dreamed of: real food at every meal; assurances her father will be taken care of; a budding romance with the Vice President's son; and best of all, an internship with Dr. Alden, the head of the CDC and mastermind behind the new vaccine that will finally permit repopulation of the United States' heartland. But then a deadly new epidemic ravages DC, and Pearce begins to suspect that Dr. Alden, and she herself, might have something to do with it. But what, exactly? Snooping means risking her future and her father's life. But doing nothing could mean letting a world-renowned scientist get away with murder...or worse.

IMMUNITY taps into today's concerns about epidemics, social inequality, and government elitism. The story features the world building and action of Marie Lu's *Legend* in the vein of a Robin Cook medical thriller for teens.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Author



5

Word economy, hedging

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Solid, and quickly sets the scene

BAM! BAM! BAM! Firing on all fronts!

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Sneaks in world building as it relates to plot

Hits all the beats: new situation, escalation

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Sets up mystery, forward momentum

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Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.
Author

Please send pages!



Dear Agent,

Since you enjoy both mystery and science fiction, I was hoping to pitch to you at the Pikes Peak Writers Conference. Ah, well. Email it is. I hope all is well with you and your loved ones.

At almost 106,000 words, ***Clone Rebel*** will appeal to readers who enjoy science-based speculative fiction by writers such as Michael Crichton, Orson Scott Card, and Isaac Asimov.

Of all the clone clans, Nujent is the most powerful, the most feared, and the most hated. However, Chelsea Nujent, age eighteen, Fam XII Sib 17, is neither arrogant nor cruel. Under immense pressure to conform, “Twelve-Seventeen” is a “good little soldier” in the clan of almost 4,000 members. Not only is her DNA derived from The Original, a 106-year-old dictator, but her entire childhood environment was controlled. This Nature-plus-Nurture programming is enhanced by brainwave headbands, linking clan members together in artificial telepathy.

Chelsea assists with the clan’s take-over of the asteroid Vesta. There, she meets Thov, a seventeen-year-old engineer whose mother is the director of operations for the mining outpost. The whole team is brought back to Earth so that Vesta, the second largest asteroid, can be developed as a spaceport in the near edge of the Belt as the control point for the Outer System.

Earthside, Chelsea and Thov get to know each other at the university. She learns what it was like living on Vesta, and he gets glimpses into clonal life. Although it is forbidden to fraternize with “indies,” Chelsea falls in love with this unpretentious singleton. Thov’s father, a resistance fighter against clonal authority, who previously was imprisoned by Nujent, also forbids the relationship. He tells Thov that Nujent experimented on his brain. Thov leaks this, and his dad gets kidnapped. Chelsea, the “rebel,” helps free him, although she herself gets captured. Thov sneaks into Nujentville, and their Romeo-and-Juliet tryst foils the clan’s plan for global mind control.

I’ve written four science fiction and four crime novels, as well as several screenplays and a dozen short stories, two of which were published in anthologies. I’m a member of *Pikes Peak Writers*, *Rocky Mountain Fiction Writers* and *Lighthouse Writers Workshop*. My college thesis was a science fiction novelette, later expanded into full-length novel. I also completed a *Writers Digest* correspondence course and participated in two different critique groups over the years.

In appreciation,
Author



6

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105,000

At almost 106,000 words, ***Clone Rebel*** will appeal to readers who enjoy science-based speculative fiction by writers such as Michael Crichton, Orson Scott Card, and Isaac Asimov.

Good comps, maybe a bit lofty

Of all the clone clans, Nujent is the most powerful, the most feared, and the most hated. However, Chelsea Nujent, age eighteen, Fam XII Sib 17, is neither arrogant nor cruel. Under immense pressure to conform, "Twelve-Seventeen" is a "good little soldier" in the clan of almost 4,000 members. Not only is her DNA derived from The Original, a 106-year-old dictator, but her entire childhood environment was controlled. This Nature-plus-Nurture programming is enhanced by brainwave headbands, linking clan members together in artificial telepathy.

Unsure how much is important to pitch vs world

Had me interested, but lost sight of conflict

Chelsea assists with the clan's take-over of the asteroid Vesta. There, she meets Thov, a seventeen-year-old engineer whose mother is the director of operations for the mining outpost. The whole team is brought back to Earth so that Vesta, the second largest asteroid, can be developed as a spaceport in the near edge of the Belt as the control point for the Outer System.

Forbidden love = conflict, but why?

Wait, what??

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Becomes a list of events and spoils the ending. Leave us with need to read on.

Good bio

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In appreciation,
Author



Thank You



JAMES PERSICHETTI
LostHatEditorial.com

James@LostHatEditorial.com
@JPPersichetti