

PREPARING A KILLER FICTION PROPOSAL, Part I

© by Karen Wiesner

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Now that you've completed a polished novel based on a first-draft outline, you'll need to create an equally polished proposal to present to an agent or editor. This extremely in-depth article will help you through every step in that process, as well as offering examples of each component of a killer proposal.

Let me preface everything I say in this multi-part article on preparing fiction proposals by saying that if you already have a professional layout for your proposal packages and this has been well-received by editors and agents, then continue with your own style. Nevertheless, you might learn a few new things to help you make your proposals even more professional.

What I'm about to give you is industry standard—most editors and agents approve of it, and, with it, I've received numerous comments on how professional my submissions are. That said, if a publisher or agent has a list of formatting guidelines, then always follow theirs to a T.

A proposal that is equally efficient for an editor or agent consists of:

- ✓ query letter
- ✓ a synopsis
- ✓ the first three chapters or 50 pages (commonly called a partial)

This four part article will take you through the steps to complete a query letter, a synopsis, and your partial, as well as information on how to package and submit your proposal. It will also include many in-depth tips for preparing a proposal so tantalizing, you're sure to get a request for the full manuscript. Finally, we'll go over some of the most common mistakes made when preparing a proposal.

Most publishers accept unsolicited query letters that include a very brief summary of the story within the body of the letter. If they'll accept an unsolicited proposal, or you've already made contact at a conference or in response to a previous query, then there are several basic necessities that will enable you to put together a killer proposal:

- 24-pound white paper (92 bright): The 20-pound variety is brownish, almost dirty-looking, compared to 24-pound paper, and it's essentially see-through. If you lay one sheet on top of another, you can see the print on the bottom page. For an editor who spends all day looking at manuscripts, submissions prepared on 24-pound paper are much easier to read.
- No fancy fonts: Times New Roman is the most commonly requested font, even over the once-popular Courier.

- Fonts must match: Authors frequently make the mistake of not having their query letter, synopsis and partial in the same font. If your query letter is in Times New Roman, then make sure both the synopsis and partial are also in Times.
- One inch margins all around, no page number on the first page, 12 pitch. Make sure your query letter, synopsis and partial match in all of these regards. Ensure consistency throughout each part of your proposal package.
- Black ink only.
- Block style set-up for the query and synopsis: In other words, single-spaced, no indents, and paragraphs are followed by a blank space (your partial will, of course, be in standard manuscript format of double-spaced, indented paragraphs).

Step I: Your Query Letter

Let's discuss the format of your query letter, starting from the top of the page. The first thing you need is your contact information, consisting of your name, address, e-mail address, fax number and website URL(s). If you don't have personalized letterhead, you can create your own in your word processing program, but keep it as simple as possible. Double space after your contact information.

Left align your query. Except for your contact information, don't center or right align any parts of the query, not even the date and your signature.

Include the name of an editor who's accepting submissions in the genre you're submitting in your query. If you need to, call the publisher and inquire about this. Never submit blindly—you're guaranteed to either be tossed in the slush pile or have your manuscript returned without having been read. Check and double-check that you've spelled the editor's name correctly. Follow the name of the editor by his or her title in the company (again, you may have to call and inquire about her official title, but this is crucial information—it proves you did some homework about her before you submitted), followed by the publisher's address. Writers' organizations will have the most current information.

Skip a space and put the date. Skip another space following this to include your greeting. "Dear Ms./Mr. *Last Name*:" is always safe. (Use a colon; only personal letters use commas following a greeting.) Never use a first name unless:

1) The editor has a unisex name and you don't know whether to call him or her Ms. or Mr.. In the case of a name such as Terry Meadows, you would put "Dear Terry Meadows:" instead of "Dear Ms./Mr. Meadows:".

2) You know them very well—as in, you've met him or her at a conference and/or have had lengthy discussions with him or her in the past.

The greeting is followed by another space. If you've met this editor before, or had the material requested by her, refresh her memory in a succinct sentence or two of specifics in the first line of your query.

The next portion of your query letter is crucial. Many people lead their query with something like "Please considering reviewing my book for publication." Any editor would assume getting her to review your material was the point of your submission, so stating the fact is redundant and the editor is already bored.

A much better way to begin a query letter is by using a high-concept blurb. You want to hook the editor into your story immediately. A high-concept blurb is a tantalizing sentence or sentences (no more than 2) that sums up your entire story, the theme or story goal, and/or makes you go, "Hmm, I'm intrigued. Tell me more." An easy way of figuring out a high concept blurb for your story is to answer this question: "[Character's name] _____ needs or wants to [do what] _____?" Once you figure that out, you can work the sentence(s) into something compelling.

Once you have the editor hooked with a high-concept blurb for your story in the first sentence of your query, it's time to give a little more information about your story. In one to two paragraphs (no more than that, since you're including a full synopsis), sum up the most compelling elements of your story, including what makes your characters so interesting and what their motivations are.

The paragraph that follows will include the most basic information about your story, including:

- word length (approximate is fine)
- genre of your story—be specific, even if your story straddles more than one category
- whether the book is completed or when you plan to complete it (it's best to say something like "end of November" or "beginning of December")
- if this book has won or finished in any contests
- if it's part of a series, include some very brief information about the series
- anything else that's important for the editor to know about the story

Following this paragraph, you'll be including your biography. Please note that the biographical section for a published author will probably differ from that of an unpublished author. An unpublished author would include anything that makes him or her intriguing to an editor, such as:

- any publishing credits

- organizations he or she is a member of (which are appropriate to the submission and to writing in general)
- any information that makes him or her an expert on the subject the book deals with or any special research, etc. done in the area the book deals with
- his or her day job, only if it's intriguing or in some way parallels the submission (someone who teaches writing should always include information about the fact, but someone who works as a dishwasher at a restaurant wouldn't divulge the fact unless the story prominently features a restaurant and/or dishwasher)

Unless it in some way parallels your story, personal information isn't appropriate in a professional proposal—save the names and ages of your children, grandchildren, and pets for your author biography once you're published.

If you're a published author, you have several options for presenting your biography. You can include the important details in one or two paragraphs, or you can include your full-length biography in several, separate pages that immediately follow the query. Naturally, you would only include those things that are pertinent to your submission, or in some way puts you or your body of work in a promising, intriguing light. Include any of the following:

- any advance reviews for this submission from other published authors
- publishing credits (always include the publisher, release date, formats the book is available in, along with any award finaling or winnings, and—in the most impressive cases—snippets of reviews you've received for you books, especially if they're in the same genre as the project you're submitting)
- any awards you've received as an author, separate from you writing
- organizations you're a member of
- information about your successful promotional endeavors as a published author
- information about you agent, if you have one
- your website URL(s)
- anything else that's impressive and pertinent to your submission and/or your writing career

In the final paragraph of your query letter, tell the editor what you're enclosing in this package—usually including your synopsis, the first three chapters, and an SASE with sufficient postage for return of your proposal.

I've heard many different sides of whether to include SASE or to instead ask the editor to recycle the partial. There are several editors and agents who feel that asking them to recycle it is basically saying the same thing as "My work isn't worth much." For that reason, I always advise including an SASE with sufficient postage for return to you.

Most authors also end the query with words similar to: "I'd be happy to send you the entire manuscript at your request. I look forward to hearing from you." These facts are obvious yet short, and do an acceptable job of closing your letter.

Finish off your query letter with something simple, not gushy, such as “Sincerely” or “Respectfully”, followed by three to four blank spaces. Add your typed signature (*which matches the one you have above in your contact information!*). Once you’re certain your query letter is ready to go, sign your name in ink in the blank spaces above your type signature. Finally, include a simple listing of what’s enclosed in the package after this point. Generally, once the editor has finish reading the query letter, she’ll use the enclosures listing to find out if you’ve included everything she needs.

If your query letter is more than one page, staple it.

On the next page, you’ll find an example of an effective query letter. (Please note that the headers are incorrect in the sample. As it’s part of this article document, it’s not possible to include the correct heading information. Follow the instructions in the article for headers. The query letter would also be signed.)

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Jane Doe, Senior Editor
Best Romance Books
100 E. Best St.
New York, NY 00000

April 9, 2004

Dear Ms. Doe:

A woman without a past. A man without explanations.

Their love has no beginning. No end...? Kira Gunn, 25-year-old wunderkind, remembers nothing about her life before 31-year-old Vincent Carson. He's been her guardian, her protector, her business partner and her passion for 15 years, yet he remains an enigma who seems to exist solely to give her everything she wants and needs. Who is he? Where did he come from? Who is *she* and where did *she* come from? The vague nightmares she's had as long as she can remember—gunshots, utter terror and the gentle eyes of salvation—and Vincent's tender resistance to help her discover the answers of her uncertain past are taking its toll on her body, her heart and her soul. How can she trust a man whose past is as gray as her own? But how can she leave Vincent, the only home she's ever known? For he is her salvation.

Kira has become the sole reason for Vincent's existence since the moment her vulnerable, trusting child eyes met his own. As Kira struggles with unseen demons, Vincent fiercely guards the truth, even as his own heart takes the wounds of her battle. She wants the one thing he can never give her. To seek out the truth of her past would be to put both of their lives in danger...and could mean losing the only thing in the world that matters to Vincent—Kira's love.

NO ORDINARY LOVE, a finalist in the Long Contemporary category of From The Heart Romance Writers' The Lories' Best Proposal Contest, is the first book in my Incognito Series. The book is complete and is 87,000 words in length. Please find enclosed a brief synopsis of NO ORDINARY LOVE, the series exposé, as well as a partial of the manuscript. Incidentally, UNTIL DEATH DO US PART, Book 2 of the Incognito Series, is also a finalist in The Lories' Best Proposal Contest (Mainstream with Romantic Elements category) this year. I'm an accomplished author, and you'll find my biography below.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Karen Wiesner

Enclosures:

NO ORDINARY LOVE Partial

NO ORDINARY LOVE Synopsis with Exposé of the Incognito Series

Karen Wiesner is an accomplished author with 23 books published in the past 7 years, which have been nominated/won 30 awards, and 12 more titles contracted for spanning many categories and formats. Named a “leading romance writer” in *The Writer Magazine*, Karen’s many series’ include the Gypsy Road Series, the Angelfire Trilogy, Dare to Love Series as well as the newest, Wounded Warriors Series, from Hard Shell Word Factory <http://www.hardshell.com>. Her fiction books from Hard Shell have been nominated for *Romantic Times*’ 1999 Reviewer’s Choice Award, the Frankfurt Award and multiple EPPIE’s. Karen’s first paranormal, **SWEET DREAMS** (originally published by Avid Press, LLC), was a Reviewers’ Top Pick for 2000, received a coveted 4 ½ star Top Pick review from *Romantic Times BOOKclub*, and was a finalist for the prestigious 2001 Daphne du Maurier Award. It was re-released by Hard Shell in June 2003 with a new cover painted by her husband. **WAITING FOR AN ECLIPSE**, Book 2 of the Wounded Warriors Series, received a 4 ½ star review from *Romantic Times*, took 2nd Place in the FTHRW’s The Lories’ 2004 Best Published Contest, is currently a finalist in the 2005 EPPIE’s and has also been nominated for the *Romantic Times* Reviewer’s Choice Award (2004, Best Small Press Romance). Karen’s new release from Hard Shell, **MIRROR MIRROR**, Book 3 of the Wounded Warriors Series (romantic psychological thriller), has already received a host of 5 star reviews. Karen designed the cover for the book herself.

Karen also writes police procedural mysteries with award-winning author Chris Spindler of Auenwald, Germany. The first book in their Falcon’s Bend Series, **DEGREES OF SEPARATION**, is published by Quiet Storm Publishing www.quietstormpublishing.com and is available now in hardcover (trade paperback in 2005). **DEGREES OF SEPARATION** received a 4 ½ star review from *Romantic Times* and was a March 2004 Top Pick. The **FALCON’S BEND CASE FILES**, Volume I anthology will be released in late 2005. One of the stories from the Case Files anthology, “Fixated”, recently finaled in the L-edit Slip Contest. Visit Karen and Chris’ Falcon’s Bend Community, where you’ll find bi-monthly giveaways, details on the next Falcon’s Bend releases, fun facts, games, and information about the series at <http://www.falconsbend.com>.

Some reviews for Karen’s fiction:

“Ms. Wiesner’s characterization is incredible. She can take a character, no matter the background or the lifestyle, and make that character so real that the reader feels they’ve met this person somewhere before.” (Ivy Quill Reviews)

4 ½ stars! “Set in Milwaukee, this poignant book [WAITING FOR AN ECLIPSE, Book 2

of the Wounded Warriors Series] reflects on the complex dynamics of drug addiction and the profound impact it has on the lives it touches. Wiesner's ability to delve into her characters' psychological makeup to depict the sensitive topic of drug addiction makes this an exceptionally powerful story. The second book in her Wounded Warriors series, this is a must-read." (Romantic Times BOOKclub)

4 ½ Stars, Top Pick! "This initial series offering [DEGREES OF SEPARATION], set in fictional Falcon's Bend, Wisconsin, gets off to a great start in its exploration of obsession and manipulation. The authors carefully weave together a tricky plot spiced with well-drawn characters and motives aplenty, as Pete and Danny creep through the seamy underbelly of the club and the girls' mysterious pasts. Pete is a particularly likeable hero, just flawed enough to seem human. The authors are deft with dialogue and good at drawing small-town dynamics, and the psychological suspense is well played. Though occasionally graphic, this looks like a series worth following." (Romantic Times BOOKclub)

"SWEET DREAMS is a tale brimming with thrills, chills, suspense and love... SWEET DREAMS is extremely well written. The characters are likeable right from the start and come across as very real. The plot was new and refreshing to me and the demon very believable. SWEET DREAMS is an exciting thrill ride that will keep you up to the wee hours. I highly recommend SWEET DREAMS for everyone who loves non-stop action!" (Romance Reviews Today)

"I've never seen a writer more adept at capturing the emotional complexities of the human experience. Her love stories are bold, fearless, and unforgettable. The world of women's fiction is a better place because Ms. Wiesner is in it." (award-winning author Michele Bardsley)

Karen's first writing reference title with Writer's Digest Books www.writersdigest.com, **FIRST DRAFT IN 30 DAYS** (formerly titled THE PRODUCTIVE WRITER {or how to avoid carpal tunnel with all those revisions}), is now available wherever writing reference titles are sold. It will be a Writer's Digest Book Club <http://www.writersdigestbookclub.com> Main Selection in March 2005.

Karen is also the author of **ELECTRONIC PUBLISHING The Definitive Guide {The Most Complete Reference to Non-Subsidy E-Publishing}**, a best-selling, Frankfurt nominated writers' reference. The Guide was a finalist for the 2000 EPPIE and won the 2001 EPPIE for Best Non-fiction. It was excerpted in the 2001 Writers Digest Novel & Short Story Market and made the 2001 Inscriptions' Books of the Year list. eBooks N' Bytes chose the Guide to be their first winner of the eBooks N' Bytes Award of Excellence for Epublishing Book of the Year (2002). The Guide was also a finalist in the 2002 Indie Awards. The 2003/2004 edition is published by Hard Shell Word Factory www.hardshell.com in two volumes:

- **ELECTRONIC PUBLISHING The Definitive Guide {The Most Complete Resource to Non-Subsidy E-Publishing}**
- **WEAVE YOUR WEB {The Promotional Companion to ELECTRONIC PUBLISHING The Definitive Guide}**—2004 EPPIE Finalist!

Note: Karen will not be updating her e-publishing and author promotion titles.

Karen writes children's books under the pen name Karen Sue Wiesner for Writer's Exchange E-Publishing <http://ebooks.writers-exchange.com>. Releases include:

- **TAKING RESPONSIBILITY BUILDS TRUST** (Making Good Choices Series); illustrations by Robert Beers—2004 EPPIE Finalist!
- **CODY KNOWS** with Linda Derkez; illustrations by Candace Hardy—2004 EPPIE Finalist!

Karen's first book of poetry, **SOUL BLEEDS The Dark Poetry and Other Wanderings** of K.S. Wiesner, finalized in the 2002 EPPIE's and is available from Atlantic Bridge Publishing <http://www.atlanticbridge.net>.

Karen has won the Inscriptions Engraver Award for best on-line columnist two years in a row, the Year 2000 for eXcellence in E-publishing Award: E-author from ebookadvisor, was a two time recipient of the E-Pub Ambassador Award, and was a two time recipient of The Simply Charming Award for outstanding promotion of e-books. She was also nominated for the 2000 EPIC Florence Moyer Service Award.

Karen is the founding member of Jewels of the Quill www.JewelsoftheQuill.com, a promotional group of Midwest women authors who write in a variety of genres. The group has monthly spotlights and giveaways at their website, and was featured in the September 2003 issue of *Romantic Times BOOKclub*. Jewels of the Quill recently sold two anthologies to Whiskey Creek Press <http://www.whiskeycreekpress.com>. Tales from the Treasure Trove, Volume I will be released September 2005. Tales from the Treasure Trove, Volume II will be released in March 2007. Jewels of the Quill will also be doing annual Christmas anthologies with Whiskey Creek Press. The first anthology, featuring 6 of the authors (including Karen), is titled SMALL GIFTS (coming October 2005).

Karen is a member of EPIC www.epicauthors.org, RWA www.rwanational.com, WisRWA www.eclectics.com/WisRWA, Sisters in Crime <http://www.sinc-ic.org>, Sisters in Crime Internet Chapter, RWA Kiss of Death Mystery-Suspense Chapter <http://rwamysterysuspense.org>, BooksWeLove.net www.BooksWeLove.net, World Romance Writers www.worldromancewriters.com, and From the Heart Chapter of RWA <http://www.fthrw.com>.

Karen is represented by the Three Seas Literary Agency.

In the next part of this article, we'll go over what's important to include and how to prepare a killer synopsis.

PREPARING A KILLER FICTION PROPOSAL, Part II

© by Karen Wiesner

A proposal that is equally efficient for an editor or agent consists of:

- ✓ query letter
- ✓ a synopsis
- ✓ the first 3 chapters or 50 pages (also called a partial)

In the first part of this article, we talked about how to make your query letter as professional as possible. This time we're going to talk about how to make your synopsis so outstanding, you'll have editors drooling to read more.

As we discussed in Part I, what I'm about to give you is industry standard—most editors and agents approve of it. That said, if a publisher or agent has a list of formatting guidelines, then follow theirs.

Step II: Your Synopsis

The biggest problem I see with synopses is that authors don't know how to write them, or they assume an outline and a synopsis are the same thing. They're not—not at all. A synopsis, plain and simple, is a summary of your novel set down in a linear paragraph form. An outline is much more detailed. It covers all the major points of your plot, chapter by chapter.

When beginning your synopsis, start with the header at the top of the page. Your header should include the title of your book, followed immediately by the word "Synopsis" on the left, then, aligned on the right, your name followed by the page number. No header should be included on the first page. Following eight spaces, center your title (all capitals, bold, and larger font are fine). Space down one and type the word "Synopsis." After another space or two, include your name.

The recommended guideline for a synopsis is one page for every 10,000 words (i.e., 60,000 word novel=6 page synopsis.) Remember, the shorter and more concise, the better. Almost no editor will accept a synopsis longer than 10 pages. In a synopsis, include only what's absolutely necessary to the plot (and the romance, if you're writing a romance novel)—easier said than done, I know. This isn't the place for details. Concentrate only on the aspects of the plot that are important to the main character(s). This may or may not encompass actual events that take place. Many times it won't because those kind of details aren't important in a synopsis. You just want to include *the point* or the goal achieved through those events. Editors want to see the bare bones of a story, not extraneous information or the flowery prose. They're looking for good writing as much as your ability to put the entire novel into an easily understood block.

Your synopsis (as well as your book) has to start with something important or interesting happening. The reader needs to know that something is going to happen and it's going to happen immediately from the first sentence of every single chapter or scene.

In general, write the synopsis when you're finished with your novel or when you have a chapter-by-chapter outline of the plot.

Here are some things to think about when creating a synopsis:

1. The Tone

The first thing you need to do is figure out the tone of your novel. Is it a drama? Is it a comedy? You'll want the tone of your synopsis to match the tone of your book.

2. The Hook

The next step is to come up with a hook. A one-liner or brief paragraph meant to snag interest immediately. Don't get stuck at this step because it can be done last, too. Just like the first line of your novel, worrying about a hook can prevent you from getting down to the actual writing. Leave a blank space if you can't think of anything right away and return to it later when you've come up with something clever. (You may also use the high-concept blurb you used in your query letter here.)

3. The Characters

Introduce the main characters in the first paragraphs and include their motivation for the book. This isn't the place for character descriptions (unless they're essential to the plot line). Instead, tell what's important about their goals, their personalities, their careers, their current love life.

Your main characters absolutely need to be developed almost as well in the synopsis as they should be in your book. Who are they? What do they want? What goals are they striving for? What obstacles are in their way to those goals? Bottom line, why should the reader even care about them? Your characters have to be sufficiently interesting enough to gain reader sympathy and support. Make us like them. Make us care about them. Make us root for them, even when they're steeped in conflict, emotional baggage and even self-deception. All main characters must experience genuine character growth throughout the synopsis. Without the basic necessity of strong, deep characterization, readers will never make it past the first page. You also don't want a secondary character overshadowing your main character in the synopsis.

If your story is a romance, explaining how your couple meets will lead naturally into why their reactions to each other are different than their reactions to other men and women. We need to know why they're attracted to each other and how that attraction deepens enough to develop into something that will last forever.

Finally, resolutions must come from a growing strength in the main character(s)—not from outside symbolism, events, or people. A character's lack of growth throughout a story can't result in an abrupt life-changing event or symbolic episode or talk with another person changing her life. That's not believable or fair to the reader, who's spent the entire novel waiting to see the main character reach the goal of self-fulfillment. Things outside a person

can't change someone in fiction (probably not in real life either, though they will get us thinking)—change can only come from within.

If you have a large cast of characters, this can get extremely confusing, not only in the book, but also in the synopsis. By definition, a synopsis should be concise. You won't have room to sufficiently develop minor characters in your synopsis, so it's best to not mention those who don't fill a large role. Choose the most important characters in the book and only mention those in your synopsis.

4. The Plot

Every novel, even a romance, should have some plot outside the relationship, no matter how slight. At this point in the synopsis, relate the facts of the situation (and if you're book is a romance, embellishing those facts with how this brings the hero and heroine together and how it pulls them apart). Give only what's important to the progress of the relationship and of the plot.

All plot threads—from the main ones to the minor ones—have to have a unity that leads to steady development. Every part of your work should work and *fit* together. The reader has to understand from the first why they're following this character and they have to have a sense of suspense about the events they're thrust into. The plot threads should be introduced at the beginning of the story and unfurl steadily throughout the book until each one concludes. If that doesn't happen in your synopsis, it probably won't happen in your book, and no editor will want to see more of it. Give the reader (in this case, the editor you've submitted to) with nothing to hope for, nor to look forward to. A story is made up a series of cohesive goals that fully-fleshed out characters are moving toward, and these should be interspersed with climaxes and downtimes. You never want to read a story in which the pacing never changes or heightens. Make something intriguing happen.

5. The End

Tie up the conflicts completely in the last few paragraphs of your synopsis. You've heard it a million times, but never leave the conclusions dangling with the attitude "I want them to be dying to find out how it turns out." How it'll turn out is the editor will see you as an amateur and send you a "We don't feel this is right for us" form letter. Describe how the plot is resolved and give a happily-ever-after that'll make editors want to see the flesh and blood of these bare bones.

Chapter by chapter, sum up in a few sentences what happens. Background must be covered. Internal and external conflicts must be explored, as well as why they were or weren't resolved. Also, new developments must be introduced and unfurled succinctly throughout the synopsis. For now, concentrate on including everything you feel is important to your story. Worry later about the length of the synopsis. If it's much too long, you can cut it down later.

Remember that a synopsis is written in the present tense—unlike most stories. If you're referring to something that happened in your character's past in your synopsis, you would use past tense, but otherwise everything should be in present tense.

In a concise synopsis, you probably don't need to put in more than the names and a brief description of the main characters' careers. Cut out anything else. Be ruthless here because this will be the easiest place to whittle away the unnecessary.

In a contemporary, it's always assumed the story is set in the present time. In a historical and time travel you might need to be specific, but keep it down to one line if at all possible.

Unless the setting description is absolutely pivotal to some conflict in the story, leave it out altogether. Just include where (city and state, or country) the story takes place.

Remember, a concise synopsis is always under 10 pages.

Your synopsis will be several pages long. Paper clip it to keep it separate from your partial.

On the next page, you'll find an example of a synopsis for my published mystery novel (written with Chris Spindler). (Please note that the headers are incorrect in the sample. As it's part of this article document, it's not possible to include the correct heading information. Follow the instructions in the article for headers. Also, as this example is for a mystery novel, having character teasers at the top to entice the reader is perfectly acceptable.)

DEGREES OF SEPARATION,
Falcon's Bend Series, Book 1
Synopsis
By Karen Wiesner and Chris Spindler

Main characters:

Lieutenants **Pete Shasta** and **Danny Vincent**, Falcon's Bend Police Department investigators. An excellent team, friends since childhood, which doesn't keep them from quarreling when necessary.

Andre Trelawney, owner of *Danse de Minuit*, a sophisticated jerk, corrupted through and through, but *très charmant*.

Deidre, Vanessa, Sugar, Lacey and Teresa, the close-knit "family" of strippers at the nightclub, a bizarre breeding-ground for unbalanced feelings and obsessions.

Melody and Cherry, identical twins. They grew up in different families, each traumatized in her own way. Melody is Andre's wife and yet she's the only woman who hasn't fallen for his charms; her sister Cherry is a dancer at Andre's club and the one who refuses to do anything to betray her boss.

Roy Ormond, head of security at *Danse de Minuit* who made a fatal error when he got involved with one of Andre's girls.

A body in the park...

Thursday evening, Pete gets home, hoping to surprise his long-suffering wife Lisa, but his plans are thwarted when a murder is reported. A year ago, Andre Trelawney, owner of a strip joint, came to the sleepy little town of Falcon's Bend, Wisconsin. Now, a dancer from the nightclub, Teresa, has been found strangled with a flexible, extremely strong chain approximately eight millimeters wide with no distinguishing markings.

Den of vice...

Upon entering the nightclub, Pete and Danny talk to the owner. When informed about Teresa's death, Trelawney seems genuinely horrified. The last time he saw her alive was on Thursday morning; she was apparently not feeling well and left early. Trelawney admits he had an affair with her in the past. He also states he's now happily married. Pete sums up his character as the type of guy who's very attractive to women because of his charm, but beneath it he's rotten to the core.

Pete and Danny see the blond dancer from the stage at the bar. There's a moment of shock when Trelawney introduces her as his wife, Melody, not a stripper. Pete and Danny are confused since they saw this woman dancing on stage. Melody reveals that she has an identical twin, Cherry. Danny is immediately attracted to Melody, who is the picture of an old-fashioned Southern Belle, especially with the lace handkerchief she holds like a life-line. Melody seems withdrawn and fearful around her husband. When asked for her alibi, she shows terror and guilt, but claims to have read a book at the bar all night.

Cherry tells them she walked home after her last shift, like Teresa, but they left at different times.

Deidre is quite obviously in love with Andre and is the first to show grief about a fellow dancer's violent death. They learn from her that Andre, his wife and the six dancers all live together. She tells them that Teresa was distressed and confused lately, throwing up often and accusing Vanessa, who is bulimic, of lacing her food with the emetic she's taking herself.

Vanessa seems wary, saying she wasn't feeling well last night and had to lie down, therefore she didn't see Teresa leave.

It doesn't add up...

At Trelawney's house, Sugar was in the club the entire time, never left and didn't see Teresa leave.

Lacey comes across as emotionally cold and appears to hate her employer. Lacey tells Pete that Teresa was sick and went home. At that time there was a commotion in the bar. Cherry was accusing a customer of taking liberties and Roy had to throw him out. Lacey insinuates that Teresa and Roy had a personal relationship outside of work.

Pete and Danny interview Roy Ormond, head of security for the nightclub, at his apartment. Roy is trying very hard to appear uninvolved, but he breaks down after hearing the news of Teresa's death. He gives more details about Cherry's bust up with an obnoxious patron. Afterwards, Roy stayed in the bar and watched Cherry dance. He was amazed how quickly she'd recovered from the upset with the customer.

The autopsy...

Teresa died of strangulation. Traces of an unknown substance are discovered in the victim's stomach, which is proven later to be an emetic. Teresa was five months pregnant. When confronted with the fact of Teresa's pregnancy, Andre and Roy agree to blood tests to find out who the father is.

Inner darkness...

Melody is totally stressed out. She feels powerless. Andre used to terrorize her all the time and now suddenly, after Teresa's death, he's become overprotective. And then there are her blackouts. She had another one the night Teresa was killed. As if all that wasn't enough, she's also feeling the tender beginnings of attraction to one of the detectives—Danny Vincent.

Melody most hates Andre for soiling such a sweet girl like Deidre. She tries to warn Deidre that she might be in danger. Melody is scared that she could hurt Deidre when she's in her state of fugue.

Deidre has a simple dream—to have Andre love her and only her. She knows that Andre faked their birth certificates as well as his marriage contract. She tries to blackmail Andre. She wants him to go away with her, to leave *Danse de Minuit* to Roy or sell it to Lacey. Inadvertently, she reveals that, without Andre's knowledge, Lacey has set up a phone sex hotline and hoards her money for the day she'll leave Andre. Andre is furious about Lacey's betrayal. To hush Deidre up for the moment he makes her promises, gives her a ring that she accepts as an engagement.

Deidre tells Melody about the promises Andre made and shows her the engagement ring. She knows Melody will be delighted to be free. But Melody's manner seems forced and unnatural. Later, when the girls get ready to work, Deidre is suddenly tired and dizzy. Melody says she's tired, too. Deidre thinks Melody is staying at home to make sure she and Andre won't run away that very night. Maybe Melody cares for Andre more than everybody thinks.

The last straw...

When Lacey takes her break that night, Andre summons her into his office and begins to interrogate her about her telephone sex hotline. Lacey quits her job and leaves the nightclub in fury. Next, Cherry comes in and tells Andre there's a gentleman at the bar who said they could go to his apartment, and he's willing to pay well. Andre tells her to go but to be careful.

Guilty conscience...

Andre is worried about Melody. She's been so absent-minded lately. He lusts after her constantly. She's the only pure thing he's ever owned and he wants to keep her that way. She's the fragile twin. Andre feels guilty because he lost his twin brother when he was 8 years old. He didn't watch out for his own fragile brother like he should have and his brother died.

One dead, one missing...

Melody wakes up, her head throbbing, and realizes that the blackness had come again. When she sits up, Deidre's portable CD player slips to the floor. When Melody brings the CD player to Deidre's room, she finds it dark and completely quiet. Deidre's skin is cold. When Melody discovers her lace handkerchief next to the dead girl, she quickly uses it to wipe away any fingerprints from the CD player, then flees to her bedroom in terror.

Lacey is missing. She's found the next day in a motel over an hour away. Lacey reveals her past, and her alibi comes from a truck driver who picked her up. Pete puts Lacey in protective custody.

Pills in a bottle...

In Melody's private bathroom, they find an unlabeled bottle with three capsules in it. Melody asks Danny to help her. She admits she was an only child, and Danny realizes that Melody grew up alone, not with her sister Cherry. She also reveals to him that she never married Andre; their marriage papers are fake. Danny wishes he could take Melody home with him, to protect her. Danny and Pete work out scenarios for all of the potential suspects. Much to Danny's dread, everything points to Melody.

More information comes in: Melody's real last name is DeMazzino; Cherry's real name is Angela Bronston. Melody left her father's house when she was 19. Cherry, who was living with them at the time, was kicked out by Melody's father.

Roy was the father of Teresa's baby. He's also a fugitive from New York, where he was a drug dealer.

The lab report from the recent autopsy: Deidre had been drugged with triazolam. The three capsules found in Melody's bedroom are triazolam as well, a drug with the brand name Halcion, used only in psychiatric wards. Pete calls Melody's father. Vittorio DeMazzino blames almost everything on Cherry, since all his troubles started when he allowed her to live with them after her parents' death. Under her influence, Melody tried to strangle him.

Fibers of a distinctive antique lace are found on Dee's CD player.

The missing piece...

The adoption agency which handled Melody and Angela's case is located and the case representative still works there. When Angela Bronston (Cherry's real name) was 12, she accused her parents in front of a court of law of abusing and prostituting her. The parents told a completely different story about their daughter's promiscuousness with their clients and

employees, and all charges against the parents were dropped. Soon afterwards, the Bronstons were found dead. Angela was taken to a psychiatric clinic. After almost two years of treatment, the doctor decided that Angela needed a family, and her only living relation was a twin sister.

Cherry has a solid alibi for where she was when Teresa was murdered—the bust-up with the obnoxious client that made it impossible for Roy to drive Teresa home. Pete remembers Melody telling him that she and Cherry switched places so Melody could meet with Danny once. When else did they switch places? Pete realizes Cherry’s alibi for when Teresa was killed isn’t solid at all. Drugged with Halcion, Melody must have been the one who danced on stage while Cherry, dressed in Melody’s clothes, barefoot, sneaked out after Teresa and killed her.

Love me, or I’ll make you love me...

Remembering the life she left behind, Cherry fondles the necklace she’s wearing around her wrist. She feels it’s her power source. She stole it from her abusive foster parents before she locked them in a closet—just as they’d always done to punish her—and left them to their deaths. Andre won’t stop talking about Melody. Cherry can’t believe that after all she’s done for him, he’s even *more* protective of Melody. She moves up behind Andre and loops the necklace over his head.

Showdown...

A disheveled Andre comes to the police station. He tells a confused story to Pete and Danny: Cherry tried to strangle him with the platinum “Omega” necklace she usually wears around her wrist. Pete realizes what’s driving Cherry: murderous jealousy. Teresa was pregnant, at that time quite possibly with Trelawney’s baby. Deidre told Cherry she was going to run away with Andre. And now Melody, the only woman Andre has ever loved, is alone.

Cherry is at Melody’s door. When Melody lets her in, Cherry reveals her ultimate plan: When she’d realized that Andre had fallen completely for her sister, it’d all come together at last. She would kill Melody and assume her identity. Andre’s heart would forever be hers. And she could take back the birthright that should have been hers to begin with. While she’d grown up in hell—abused, tortured and prostituted—Melody had lived in a paradise of luxury and care. The adoption agency had made the wrong choice. Along the way, she’s ruthlessly extinguished everyone who could be an obstacle on her path to true love and financial security.

Pete and Danny find Cherry strangling Melody. Screaming that she’ll never again be locked in the darkness, Cherry throws herself over the terrace. Cherry is dead, her precious necklace clutched to her heart.

Dance of Light...

Pete and Lisa are invited to the festivities that take place at the former *Danse de Minuit*, a dance club run by Sugar and Vanessa. Andre and Roy are facing long prison sentences. Lacey has left town, adamant about never seeing any of these people again. The new bride and groom—Melody and Danny—just got back from their honeymoon. The happy couple announce that they’re trying for a baby—but definitely not twins!

In the third part of this article, we'll go over what's important in creating a killer partial, and how to put the proposal together once all the steps are done.

PREPARING A KILLER FICTION PROPOSAL, Part III

© by Karen Wiesner

A proposal that is equally efficient for an editor or agent consists of:

- ✓ query letter
- ✓ a synopsis
- ✓ the first 3 chapters or 50 pages (also called a partial)

In the first and second parts of this article, we talked about how to make your query letter and synopsis as professional and tantalizing as possible. This time we're going to talk about how to make your partial so fascinating, editors absolutely can't wait to see the full manuscript. We'll also cover how to put the proposal together once the query, synopsis, and partial are done.

As we discussed previously, what I'm about to give you is industry standard—most editors and agents approve of it. That said, if a publisher or agent has a list of formatting guidelines, then follow theirs.

Step III: Your Partial

Always include a cover page on top of your partial. The cover letter text should be centered on the page, beginning with your title (which can be bolded and the font enlarged slightly), word count, followed by your contact information, including name, address, phone number, and e-mail address. No header should be included on the cover page.

The rest of your partial should have a header, which includes the title of your book left-aligned. Your name and the page number will be aligned on the right. On the first page of your partial following the cover letter, space down eight lines and center your title (all capitals, bold, and larger font are fine). After another space or two, include your name. Double space and begin to the left. It's acceptable to put the first two or three words in all capitals. Your next paragraph will be indented five spaces.

When a new chapter is begun after this point, make a hard page break, then start just as you did before, with the chapter number bolded and centered eight spaces down on the page. Scene breaks can either be double spaced between, with the first one or two words left-aligned and in all capitals, or you can put a something to indicate a new scene is beginning—three asterisks are most common with a space or two before and after them. In order to be consistent with what you've done previously, if you've used all capitals for the first few words, start at the left in all capitals.

A partial is either the first three chapters (including a prologue), or the first 50 to 60 pages of the manuscript. It doesn't have to be exactly 50 pages. Remember that you want your partial to end on an exciting note, and, in general, you want it to be at the end of a scene. Make the editor drool to read more.

Much of the things we discussed last time in creating a winning proposal apply here. Without the basic necessity of strong, deep characterization, readers will never make it past the first page. Until characters are sufficiently developed, editors won't request to see more of your manuscripts. Also remember that your hero and heroine need to be developed almost as well in the synopsis as they should be in your book.

Your partial will be several pages long—either use a binder's clip big enough to hold it all, or use a large rubber band.

On the next page, you'll find an example of a cover letter and the first page of a partial. (Please note that the headers are incorrect in the sample. As it's part of this article document, it's not possible to include the correct heading information. Follow the instructions in the article for headers.)

No Ordinary Love

87,000 words

Incognito Series, Book 1

by Karen Wiesner
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“NO ORDINARY LOVE by Karen Wiesner grabs the reader from the first page and never lets go until the last, with fast and spine-chilling action. Vincent is a remarkable hero—tough, dangerous, a killer when he has to be. His only vulnerability—a need for love.”

~bestselling author Jane Toombs

Prologue

ANGELO'S footsteps resounded through the stark corridor of the underground compound as he walked toward the white room where they were keeping the child.

Drop the girl into an orphanage. That was what Oversight Committee wanted to do with the girl. Angelo grimaced. He rarely agreed with the powers that be, but in their covert organization he did what he was told. This time he knew he had no choice but to allow the lamb to go into the system. She knew far too much. At just ten years old, she'd seen too much as well. She'd been in hiding for so long, running from the threat that stalked her family. Only a few hours ago, she'd seen her father gunned down. The girl's confusion since then had been total, making Angelo wonder if she'd really understood what happened on that dead end street. If she remembered...

Angelo gritted his teeth. Someday the girl *would* remember. Someday she would figure it out. Angelo couldn't allow that. Not when he was so close to getting what he needed. The girl's memory would have to be erased.

Putting Your Proposal Together

Once your proposal pages have been tapped together until all the edges are perfectly smooth, put everything together in the order you want it, usually:

- ✓ Bottom: synopsis
- ✓ In the middle: partial
- ✓ Top: query letter

There's been a lot of debate over whether to put your synopsis before or after your partial. Ultimately, it's up to you. My way of thinking is, if I put my partial before my synopsis, and the editor reads my partial, is intrigued by it and wants to know more, then she has the synopsis left to read. The synopsis should whet her appetite for the full manuscript.

However, when you think about it, most editors have their own preferences as to which they prefer to read first, so no matter what you do, they'll end up doing what they want, so it probably doesn't matter. Just makes sure your enclosure list at the end of your query letter matches the order you've put your synopsis and partial in.

Paper clip a business card and your SASE to your query letter. Now, with everything together, put a sturdy, cardboard backing under the pile. Use extra large rubber bands to secure the pile both vertically and horizontally. This will keep it looking neat. You're now ready to slip the bundle into an envelope which leaves a little room to insert it easily without being so big that the package will slide around inside the envelope. The regular post office and many other mailing service won't take much (or any) care in delivering your package from acceptance to delivery—pack it well and send it First Class or Priority Mail to lessen the chances that the editor will end up with mere scraps of what you intended to submit.

Proposal Tips

- ✓ If you're a published author, don't include promotional items from previous releases.
- ✓ Unless you're a professional illustrator and you're submitting a children's story, the editor isn't interested in what you've come up with for cover art for this project, no matter how outstanding.
- ✓ Never try to thank or bribe an editor with a gift to go along with your proposal.
- ✓ Don't be assumptive by using a pen name or having a dedication in your proposal—those things are determined only after a book has gone to contract.

- ✓ Including a copyright symbol on any part of the proposal isn't necessary.
- ✓ Always send your proposals with postage sufficient for its return, with the editor and publisher name already printed on the return envelope.
- ✓ Always get delivery confirmation. (A mere fifty-five cents will save you a headache and a phone call to the publisher to find out if it was received.) While you could send a postcard so the editor can let you know, you want her to concentrate on your proposal, not little tasks that will take her away from her regular editing.
- ✓ Never send your package via Media Mail—if it's undeliverable, the post office will throw it out without contacting you.
- ✓ Only include contact information within your proposal that you actually use. If you don't want an editor calling your at home or work, don't include those phone numbers. If you almost never check your e-mail, then don't include an e-mail address. If your website is infrequently or never updated, you might not want to include your website URL.
- ✓ Word count is generally figured by multiplying the number of pages in the completed manuscript by 250 (which is the estimated number of words per page). Always round your word count to the nearest thousand. So, if your completed book has 203 pages, multiply that number by 250 to equal 50,750 words. You'd round this to 51,000, and say your book has approximately 51,000 words.
- ✓ Even when you're published, you have to be a professional. Give your current publisher and any other publisher you submit to (whether by e-mail or snail mail) the benefit of a submission that meets their requirements, that's submitted according to their guidelines, and that treats them like a professional. Don't send a personal-type letter that includes a submission to any publisher unless you have a very good working relationship with them, if they've encouraged you to send informal book pitches, and if this format is acceptable to them. When unsure, always opt to include a full proposal including a professional query letter, synopsis and partial. Never slack in being a professional because you feel you're above it. There will never be a time in your career when you can act in an unprofessional manner and not have it come back to bite you in the butt.
- ✓ Learn how to write a professional query letter, biography and synopsis, and keep your skills sharpened throughout your career. You'll always need to know these things, and, considering the constantly changing face of the publishing world, these are skills you can't really afford to lose.
- ✓ Before you send your proposal out, make sure you let someone else (or better yet—two or three others) who has an eye for typos and good writing skills critique it. Don't rely on your own editing skills or your word processing spell-checker. Make sure your submission is error-free, and that everything looks clean and professional. This also means no coffee stains or perfume—cigarette smoke and pet hair are also highly

offensive to sensitive people. Take those things into account when preparing your submission. You might want to either keep your office free of cigarettes or pets, or to prepare your submission elsewhere, where smoke and pet hair isn't a problem.

- ✓ If this proposal is being submitted in response to an editor's request, it's a good idea to include a photocopy of her original request behind the query letter (noting that you've included it within your query).
- ✓ Send out your very best material. This may mean preparing your submission and letting it sit on a shelf for a week or two, or possibly longer, then going back to view it with fresh eyes before sending it to an editor or agent. Most editors and agents remember their first impression of an author for years to come. Make sure their first impression of you is that you're a professional who's spent a considerable amount of time preparing a proposal so it's nearly perfect—a proposal with this specific editor/agent in mind.
- ✓ Finally, don't feel like everything I've said here is written in stone. As long as everything in your proposal is consistent, I doubt too many editors would be offended by a slightly different set up. Just make sure you provide every editor you submit to the most professional and intriguing proposal possible.

In the final portion of this article, we'll go over the most common problems in proposals, and how you can avoid them.

PREPARING A KILLER FICTION PROPOSAL, Part IV

© by Karen Wiesner

In the first three parts of this article, we talked about how to make your query letter, synopsis, and partial as professional and tantalizing as possible. In this final installment, we'll go over the most common problems in fiction proposals and how to avoid them.

The Seven Deadly Proposal Sins (and how to fix them)

1. Passive writing

I'm sure most of you know more about this than you care to, but if you submit a proposal rife with passive writing, not only will the editor not want to see more of your manuscript, she won't be interested in future submissions from you either. Learn how to write in an active tone, show don't tell, and make your prose have impact and natural flow. Be sure to read my article about getting rid of passive writing at <http://www.angelfire.com/stars4/kswiesner/article4.html>.

2. Not knowing the difference between a synopsis and an outline

Editors almost always ask for a synopsis—not an outline—with a partial. A synopsis is a concise summary (usually less than ten pages) of your novel set down in a linear paragraph format. An outline or in-depth summary covers all the major points of the plot, chapter by chapter, and can be, and usually is, much longer than a synopsis. Once you sell to a publisher and you have an editor you're comfortable with, she may want to see your outline before you write a book—and you can sell future books to her based on only this. However, before you sell a novel, and possibly for a few projects afterward, you'll need to submit a synopsis. I have several articles online detailing the process of writing a synopsis: <http://www.dowse.com/articles/synopsis-article.html> and <http://www.dowse.com/articles/two-page-synopsis.html>.

3. Long sentences

This is another fairly large problem in both synopses and manuscripts because it makes the style of writing clunker than it needs to (and should) be. To make it more clear, think about each portion of a sentence as one action that needs to be comprehended by the reader. For instance, one action could be that the heroine leaves the hospital. The next action is her thoughts about her sick daughter. Next, she's walking to her car, and finally, she bumps into an old lover.

What I see frequently is that all of these actions are put into a single sentence. The sentence reads something like this: "Donna left the hospital, walked toward her truck, thinking about her daughter and how much she hated to leave her alone in the hospital, so she didn't look up until she collided with someone—someone she realized in shock was Michael Roark, the man who'd dropped out of her life like the plague ten years earlier."

Now this seems extreme, but I see sentences like this all the time and they can't be comprehended readily in this form. Most readers can digest a single action, perhaps two, in a single sentence. Any more than that, and they start to get confused and aren't able to follow what's going on. Imagine if every single sentence in your book was made up of three or four actions in this way. It's going to read like you're plodding through a swamp. Break your sentences up so they're easily digestible.

But, remember, too, that sentence structures need to be varied. You don't want every sentence to start or flow the same way (i.e., "She went to the store. She purchased bread at the store. She took her purchase home." Sounds terrible, doesn't it?). Create digestible sentences with one or two actions each, and vary their structures so they flow into the ear like music.

4. Not starting with a bang

Frequently, I see synopses and manuscript introductions that don't begin with a bang. What happens in your story will carry over to your synopsis, so if the book doesn't start with anything important or interesting actually happening, your synopsis will also start in a boring way. Start every single chapter or scene in your synopsis or story with a bang.

5. Plot threads that lack cohesion

A story is made up a series of cohesive goals that fully-fleshed out characters are moving toward, and these should be interspersed with both climaxes and downtimes. All plot threads—from the main ones to the minor ones—have to have a unity that leads to steady development. Give readers something to look forward to with pacing that heightens the intrigue. When an editor or agent sees a lack of cohesion in the plot threads in your proposal, it's a clear indication that an outline wasn't used when writing the book. An outline is so important to having a cohesive, well-thought-out story from start to finish! You might also want to read my cornerstones article, which discusses pacing, suspense, and other elements of a great story: <http://www.angelfire.com/stars4/kswiesner/article1.html>.

6. Head-hopping

Head-hopping is annoying. A huge percentage of readers and editors won't accept it because it's easy to grow frustrated by trying to get to know one character while in his point-of-view, and suddenly being thrust into someone else's POV—and, in most cases, the reader doesn't even care about this character. *Only one POV character per scene*—make that a rule from this point forward and don't step over that line because it really will make your stories radically better.

The biggest reason you need to avoid head-hopping is because it tends to lead to a lack of characterization that drags down a story. When you head-hop constantly, it disengages readers from the main characters—we're never able to get to know them because, about the time we're just starting to see a bit of their personality, we're thrust back into some secondary character's head. Head-hopping is just one of many signs to an editor that you're trying to avoid intimacy with your main characters.

7. Lack of sufficient characterization

What's the most important part of a novel? Hands down, characters. You can have the greatest plot on the face of the earth, but if you don't have even more exciting characters, you'll never pull it off. Creating amazing characters that reach out of your query, synopsis and partial

and grab an editor by the throat should be your paramount task when you're putting together a proposal. Nothing else you do will be even remotely as important. In fact, I'd go so far as to say that if you completely set your proposal up wrong but your characterization is outstanding, no editor will care about your *faux pas*.

Great characters can cure a thousand ailments. So few authors take the time to sufficiently develop their characters—and that's infinitely more important than researching setting and situations and plot details.

There are many ways writers attempt to avoid intimacy with their characters: ending a scene just when things are getting heavy, making a character run from emotional situations and simply not dealing with them (and you as the writer refuse to deal with him for this behavior by shoving him out of hiding), replacing emotions with actions (in other words, instead of considering his actions, the character does some other silly thing that makes absolutely no sense to him or the reader), forcing some shocking aspect or situation into a plot to avoid having the character deal with what's already in front of them, developing secondary characters that are more interesting than the main characters.

The way to create intimacy is to spend a lot of time with each of your main characters, just as you would to get to know someone in real life. Get to know them as deeply as you possibly can, and then you'll be able to write them with such life-like intimacy. Everyone who reads your book will be captivated by your characters. Be sure to read my articles about characterization and intimacy: Be sure to read my article about getting rid of passive writing at <http://www.angelfire.com/stars4/kswiesner/article2.html> and <http://www.angelfire.com/stars4/kswiesner/article3.html>.

Creating a killer fiction proposal is no easy task. Your query letter, synopsis, and partial—not to mention how you package them—will all play a part in how the editor you submit to responds to your story. Armed with a clean, professional set-up and a story that you've made utterly irresistible in each portion of your proposal, you can have editors not only requesting the full manuscript but begging for it immediately if not sooner.