

IWOC Presents

**TIPS FOR PERFECTING
YOUR QUERY LETTER**

Audrey Wilson
Author of *Wrong Girl Gone*

TYPES OF PUBLISHING

SELF-PUBLISHING

On your own

Upfront cost for writer

Keep all royalties

No agent required

Full creative control

May need to hire services

TRADITIONAL PUBLISHING

Agent or publisher

Writer doesn't pay

Keep partial royalties

Agent sometimes required

Less creative control

Publisher provides all
services

2016

Dear Sir or Madam,

Upon viewing your website, I understand that your agency is interested in women's fiction. With that in mind, I am pleased to introduce to you my novel, *Joy Elliot*.

The title character, Joy Elliot, is a young mother still living in her hometown of Jasper, Mississippi, who copes with her less-than-ideal life with her self-deprecating sense of humor and unconditional love for her five year-old son, Jerry. Trapped in an abusive relationship with her husband and high school sweetheart Carl, Joy spends her days waiting tables, raising Jerry, and praying Carl doesn't blow what little money they have at the casino, or come home drunk and angry at the end of the night. With the guidance of her family, friends, and the help of strangers, Joy Elliot's emotional and thrilling journey will lead her miles from home, and back again, where she will stop at nothing to protect her son and the ones she loves.

This 87,000 word, drama, thriller, and romance will keep readers in Joy's mind and life from beginning to end. As a woman, I seek out fiction about women with strength of character, nobility, and humanity, and feel that readers will find this in *Joy Elliot*. [No comp titles]

I graduated with honors from Columbia College Chicago with a degree in Television Writing & Producing in 2014. My short stories *Dead Weight* and *The Art of Keeping Warm* have been published in Harper College's Point of View literary magazine, where several of my poems have also been published. In March 2014, my original TV pilot *The Artists* won first place at the Broadcast Education Association Awards. I currently have two additional novels in progress.

I have included the first ten pages of *Joy Elliot* below, for you to read at your convenience.

Thank you very much for your time. I truly appreciate your consideration, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Audrey Wilson

2020

Hello,

I hope this email finds you well. I understand you're in the market for domestic suspense and thrillers with a strong female protagonist. With that in mind, I'm excited to introduce you to my thriller *Wrong Girl Gone*, which I feel would be a great fit for your representation.

It's late in the summer of 1989 and the body of twenty-two-year-old Joy Elliot is about to be discovered on the bank of the Kawanee River.

But let's not get ahead of ourselves.

Joy is a young mother living in her small hometown of Jasper, Mississippi. She waits tables at the local diner and prays her husband, Carl, doesn't blow what little money they have gambling, or come home drunk and violent at the end of the night. While Joy copes with her less-than-ideal life with her self-deprecating sense of humor and unconditional love for her five year-old son, Jerry, she reaches her breaking point when she stumbles upon thousands of dollars stashed away in Carl's Playboy. Joy takes the money, packs up Jerry and leaves, meeting up with her twin sister, Kelly, on the road. What Joy doesn't know is that this is the last time she'll see her sister alive.

Wrong Girl Gone is a 94,500 word, heroine-driven suspense thriller with a shocking twist. The story and narrative will appeal primarily to women, ages 18-54, and can be compared to *Sleeping with the Enemy* and *The Girl on the Train*.

Having earned my bachelor's degree with honors in Television Writing and Producing from Columbia College Chicago, I am an Emmy-nominated writer and producer for a national television show. My short stories have been published in Harper College's literary magazine and I have won multiple awards for my screenplays and fiction. I am currently in the process of editing my next novel.

Would you like me to send the full or partial manuscript of *Wrong Girl Gone* for your consideration?

Thank you very much for your time. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Audrey Wilson

DEFINE YOUR GENRE

- Thriller, Horror, Romance, Literary, etc.
- May spread across multiple genres: Domestic Thriller, Sci-Fi/Fantasy, Historical Romance, etc.
- Read books that you feel are similar to your genre, see what those are classified as

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

- Who will want to read your book?
- Be specific, not exclusive

Bad example: *Life on Earth is a sci-fi romance that will appeal to both men and women, ages 18 to 74 who like science fiction.*

Good example: *Life on Earth is an LGBTQ+ heroine-driven sci-fi romance that will appeal primarily to women, ages 18 to 34, who have an affinity for classic sci-fi films of the 1950s.*

PERFECT YOUR PITCH

- Logline – A one sentence pitch of your book or article.
- Narrow your story down to three key points:
 - 1. The protagonist
 - 2. The setting
 - 3. The main conflict

Example: *Aerial's monotonous life in her rural, Midwestern hometown is turned upside down when a mysterious stranger from an alien planet not only captures the watchful eye of the townspeople, but also captures Aerial's heart.*

- Try browsing Netflix for examples!

SUMMARIZE YOUR STORY

- Summary - A single paragraph that focuses on the protagonist's goal and the story's inciting incident
- Build on your logline
- Leave the reader wanting more - what happens next?
- Examples of summaries can be found on almost any book

CHOOSE YOUR COMPS

- “Comp” or “comparison” titles are books or publications similar to yours (film and TV are also acceptable)
- Can be used to describe a variety of elements in your book, from the narrative style to the underlying themes
- Say why your book can be compared to these titles

Bad Example: *Life on Earth can be compared to Catcher in the Rye and THE SHAPE OF WATER.*

Good Example: *Life on Earth blends the raw narrative of Catcher in the Rye with the unconventional, sci-fi love story found in THE SHAPE OF WATER.*

CRAFT YOUR BIO

- Time to brag!
- Mention any published work, with links if applicable
- Why you are the one to write this?
- Social media followers and links

DO YOUR RESEARCH

- Crucial step in the querying process – you don't want to waste time and energy submitting to publications that don't have a market for your material
- Research the specific agent or publication you want to query (what genres they're looking for, word count, etc.) – hone in on their interests – “complex family dynamics” or “strong female protagonists”
- Query with caution (look for red flags)
- [Manuscript Wish List](#) is a great resource

FOLLOW THE SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

- Thoroughly review the submission requirements
- Summary vs. Full Synopsis
 - **Summary** - A single paragraph that focuses on the protagonist's goal and the story's inciting incident, leaves the reader wanting more (should always be included in your query)
 - **Full Synopsis** - A full treatment that covers all the key beats in your book, including the ending
- Fiction submissions may vary from non-fiction

PERSONALIZE YOUR INTRODUCTION

- Create a specific, personalized introduction that will stand out

Example: *Upon viewing your bio, I understand that you're in the market for LGBTQ+ science fiction featuring a strong female protagonist. With that in mind, I'm excited to introduce you to Life on Earth, an LGBTQ+ heroine-driven sci-fi romance.*

PLAY THE WAITING GAME

- Response time can vary
- Follow-up after 6 weeks - but be sure to check the agent's policy first
- Don't send out too many other queries at once
- Remain patient and optimistic!

WHEN YOU DO HEAR BACK...

- Receiving a full or partial manuscript request - AWESOME!
- Receiving an offer - CONGRATULATIONS!
- Make sure to thoroughly review your contract, royalties, rights, etc. and don't be afraid to ask questions
- Receiving multiple offers
- Know that each rejection is one step closer to publication!

HAPPY QUERYING!

“By the time I was fourteen the nail in my wall would no longer support the weight of the rejection slips impaled upon it. I replaced the nail with a spike and went on writing.”

- Stephen King



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Social Media

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[Instagram - @DreamerByDay91](https://www.instagram.com/DreamerByDay91)

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Author Links

[Author Profile - Goodreads](#)

[Wrong Girl Gone - Amazon](#)

www.AudreyWilsonAuthor.com