

THE  
LAUNCH PAD  
COMPETITION  
PRESENTS

THE  
\* TOP 100 \*  
MANUSCRIPTS  
OF THE YEAR

PRIORITY READS

- 3 Years -
- **182 Writers Signed** –
- 56 Projects Set Up –
- **26 Writers Staffed** –
- 3 Bidding Wars –

BASED ON / IP / PARTIALS  
WELCOME TO THE **NEW** SPEC MARKET

## WHAT IS THE LAUNCH PAD COMPETITION?

With over 180 writers signed, 56 projects set up, 26 writers staffed, 80 appearances on annual 'best of' lists, and 3 bidding wars in just the past three years, The Launch Pad Competition has fast become the premiere hub for discovering new writers. With a pilot competition, feature competition and the newly minted manuscript competition, we have established ourselves as the launching point for new writers across platforms.

## WHO IS THIS LIST FOR?

Whether, agent, manager, producer, executive, or assistant, this list is for you. With a continual call for great voices, great characters, great worlds, and great writers, we've built this document to give you a quick glance at this year's top new authors and projects before they become next year's hot new properties. So, whether you're looking for new clients, new projects, new writers, or simply a great read, check out the list to see which writers and stories inspired us in 2016.

## WHO DECIDES WHO MAKES THIS LIST?

This list makes up the top 5% of this year's manuscript competition entries, as voted on by our professional readers, our 25 judges (UTA, WME, New Leaf, Fake Empire, De Luca, ESA, Red Wagon Entertainment, Gersh, Gotham Group, IPG, Circle of Confusion, Lin Pictures, The Weinstein Company, ICM, APA, Kaplan/Perrone, Lava Bear, Madhouse Entertainment, Anonymous Content... amongst others), as well as our exclusive first look development partners Scott Free, Vertigo, Twin Padres, Energy Entertainment and Inkshares. If it's on this list, your industry peers deemed it worthy of being here.

## HOW CAN I REQUEST AND READ THE SCRIPTS?

Instead of bouncing emails back and forth, we're making it incredibly easy to request the pilots you want to read via our request form. So, if you see anything you like, simply click the below link, or copy and paste the web address below into your browser to start requesting.

Request pilots here: <http://www.tracking-board.com/read/LPMC2016/>

## HOW CAN I FIND OUT MORE ABOUT AND/OR CONTACT THE WRITERS?

Instead of putting all of the writers' personal info in this book for the world to see, we've kept that offline to protect their privacy. So, if you've found a script you love and have questions, or you want to request an introduction, simply shoot us an email at [Requests@Tracking-Board.com](mailto:Requests@Tracking-Board.com) and we'll put you in touch right away.

## THE LAUNCH PAD MANUSCRIPT COMPETITION

**TITLE: A COMPANY OF ROSES by Megan Toogood**

PITCH: THE DA VINCI CODE meets GONE GIRL

LOGLINE: A centuries old clandestine society tries to keep the secret of an illegitimate Elizabethan royal child hidden as a young woman, in search of her missing friend, discovers clues that may uncover the truth. Going down the path of a treasure hunt she never could have imagined, the woman uncovers far more than she bargained for when the investigation leads her into a very dangerous conspiracy.

GENRE: Adventure | Drama | Mystery

WHY TO READ: Combining a fun action-adventure mystery with the tension and suspense of a conspiracy thriller, this manuscript has a little something for everyone. Anchored by a strong, relatable female lead, this story drips with mystery and historical detail that will appeal to any fans of NATIONAL TREASURE or Dan Brown. The clear central plot of a missing woman helps to focus this manuscript with a pulse-pounding momentum that will keep you on the edge of your seat. Following secret agents, solving ancient riddles, and infiltrating the fascinating and original society at the heart of it all are only the first steps in finding out the truth.

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**TITLE: A FAITHVILLE ALMANAC OF BIBLICAL AND FOLK MEDICINE  
By Denis Basic**

PITCH: THE HANDMAID'S TALE meets TWIN PEAKS

LOGLINE: A closeted atheist secretly, and illegally, chronicles the goings-on of the hyper-religious cult that runs the dystopian town of Faithville, all while plotting an escape for himself and those he loves.

GENRE: Drama | Mystery | Sci-Fi

WHY TO READ: A devastating indictment of religious fundamentalism in the form of a creative and detailed dystopia, this manuscript is endlessly relevant and creative. The narrator's voice is distinct and engaging, with the novel presented as a secret journal disguised as a medical textbook, giving the whole experience a feeling of subversive voyeurism. This brings the reader into his illicit behavior and raises the emotional stakes from the very first page and you get the feeling that you are doing something illegal just by opening the document. The characters are engaging, carefully drawn, and often have intriguing contradictory layers. The commentary on religion veers so far into the dark side of dark comedy that it manages to be disturbing, hilarious, and insightful all at the same time.

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**TITLE: A WILDERNESS OF COMFORT by Dan Levinson and Lee Levinson**

PITCH: THE WOMAN IN GOLD meets VERTIGO

LOGLINE: After making a purchase that would save his dying business, an art dealer's good luck turns to misfortune when the origin of the masterpieces comes to light. Now, with the horrific stigma of the Holocaust looming over the art, he has to discover the truth behind the paintings' past to bring closure to the original owner, and to save his business, his marriage, and even his life.

GENRE: Drama | Mystery

WHY TO READ: With excellent writing, wonderful dialogue, and a captivating story about family, history, and art, this is a must read for anyone who enjoys a good mystery. The writer cleverly cuts back and forth from the past to the present so you can follow the art's journey and make your own conclusions, only to turn them on their head when the truth is revealed. The main character is complex and relatable as he deals with the threat of losing his business while recognizing the horrible tragedies of the past. It is a complicated and, in the end, touching story that gives a new perspective on World War II while showing how the terror and misfortunes of the past never truly leave us.

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## THE LAUNCH PAD MANUSCRIPT COMPETITION

**TITLE:** **A WONDERFUL WORLD by Geoffrey Uhl**

**PITCH:** THE NEVERENDING STORY meets ALICE IN WONDERLAND

**LOGLINE:** After her parents die in a natural disaster, a little girl soon finds herself transported to a topsy-turvy world unlike anything she has ever seen. While exploring it with her newfound friends, she discovers that she is in fact the only one who can protect this magical place from an encroaching darkness that threatens its existence.

**GENRE:** Adventure | Fantasy

**WHY TO READ:** This is a well-written, fun, and engaging story, and a whole new take on a classic kid's fantasy adventure. It draws you into the strange new land the same way that THROUGH THE LOOKING-GLASS, THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE, or THE WIZARD OF OZ did before it, but presents its own wonderfully unique world that easily sparks the imagination. This is a manuscript that would feel at home amongst other leather bound books in an old library. The arc for the protagonist is really touching and powerful, and it's relatable and engaging for children and parents alike. The characters are a joy to read, and the story is a pleasure to get lost in as you read this homage to all of the classic fantasy stories that we've grown up with.

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**TITLE:** **AMBER BROWN FILES by Lisa Renee Jones**

**PITCH:** BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER meets SUPERNATURAL

**LOGLINE:** On her 27th birthday a lawyer experiences a power awaken inside of her and she becomes a Seer, a person who can sense and see evil in the world. This awakening changes her life forever as she finds herself in the midst of a life or death conflict between demons and Seers. As her world unwinds, the darkness within her becomes more powerful and she begins to fear she might be one of the monsters she's supposed to be hunting.

**GENRE:** Drama | Romance | Supernatural

**WHY TO READ:** It's so easy to see this as a long-running book series that can easily be turned into a television show that similarly runs for years. It follows a classic formula for television that doesn't detract from the story, but in fact enhances it. You are right there with Amber as she discovers her powers and learns how to use them, creating an instant bond between the reader and the protagonist. And as more and more starts to go wrong for the hero you cannot help but put yourself in her shoes as she deals with the darkness inside of us all. If you're looking for a procedural series that offers endless opportunities for seasonal arcs, with a cool mythology that's all its own, look no further.

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**TITLE:** **ANGEL DUST by Rose Lewenstein**

**PITCH:** MR. ROBOT meets MEMENTO

**LOGLINE:** Having experienced strange blackouts for the majority of her life, an aimless 20-something has embraced the issue as a way to avoid dealing with her past. But when the mysterious cash deposits she receives every month suddenly stop, and her world collides with a thieving stranger, she learns that the money and the blackouts may be more connected than she ever thought possible.

**GENRE:** Crime | Drama | Thriller

**WHY TO READ:** The writing in this manuscript is strong, effectively capturing the in-the-moment atmosphere necessary for a successful thriller novel. The writer manages to make the reader always feel like part of the action, throwing you in headfirst to the anarchic world of 21st Century London and never letting up. There is a constant sense of mystery surrounding the story and you are always just as invested as the protagonist to figure out the answers. The story presents a hero that truly evolves over the course of the story and you want to be standing right there next to her when she does.

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## THE LAUNCH PAD MANUSCRIPT COMPETITION

**TITLE: BLACK CLOUD by Landon Crutcher**

PITCH: SIRENS meets GREY'S ANATOMY

LOGLINE: Over the course of eight days, an unlucky paramedic, who seems to attract difficult cases, copes with the ups and downs of his profession.

GENRE: Drama | Thriller

WHY TO READ: With the end of NURSE JACKIE there is a big opening for a medical dramedy show such as this. There is a true-life feel to this manuscript and its authentic and real stories pop off the page to engage the reader. It's obviously written by someone who has been there and knows the ropes of the job, which makes you feel like you are there with them over the course of this fast-paced and exciting read. Everything feels real, as the conversations and interactions between the victims, those surrounding them, as well as the medics, nurses, and other staff. They're intimate, hilarious, and sometimes heartbreaking, all at the same time. There are an endless amount of stories to be tapped here, as there will always be new emergencies. The two leads are also good men that have a soft spot for those they love, leading to funny and sweet moments between these incredibly relatable characters.

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**TITLE: BLOOD SISTERS by John Kuriger & Kristin McGraw**

PITCH: THELMA AND LOUISE meets KILL BILL

LOGLINE: When all the women of a small town who have been victimized by men start acting fearless and violent, they band together to discover the cause while carryout out their revenge on those who have wronged them.

GENRE: Horror | Thriller

WHY TO READ: This manuscript excels at building suspense. Scenes crackle with a character's darkly funny interior monologue, while the tension of the scene builds around it. The scenes grip you and draw you in from the very first page with writing that is clear, interesting, and purposeful. The premise will draw attention and start conversations, making it all the more captivating and intriguing. The writer effortlessly provides backstory in a way that makes you feel you've known these characters for years, which allows them to all have very strong arcs as well. The dialogue feels genuine and unique to each character, and is often darkly hilarious. Overall, the manuscript feels like a Coen Brothers crime flick full of colorful characters, wacky scenes, and amusing dialogue. A must read for anyone looking for a thriller that's off the beaten path.

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**TITLE: BORISLAV THE TERRIBLE AND THE WAYWARD STINK BOMB  
by Hilary Sierpinski**

PITCH: DIARY OF A WIMPY KID meets PHINEAS AND FERB

LOGLINE: When a supervillain starts controlling the mind of a quiet 10-year-old, he must band together with his friends in order to expel the mad scientist from his brain before they all find themselves permanently grounded.

GENRE: Coming-of-Age | Family | Sci-Fi

WHY TO READ: This is a wonderful premise for a preteen, middle school audience. The characters are smart and funny, and every child will be able to relate to having an adult's voice in their head constantly making them do things that they don't want to do. The interaction between the characters will have you laughing out loud, and the humor alone keeps you entertained throughout the story. So it is an added bonus that the energy the author infuses into the writing also does an amazing job of keeping you engaged from start to finish. The story is upbeat and clever, which is exactly what's needed to keep the attention of the intended young audience. From the first page to the last, the author shows ingenuity and originality in storytelling, while keeping up the wit and mysteries at the same time.

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## THE LAUNCH PAD MANUSCRIPT COMPETITION

**TITLE: BRIDGE OF THE AMERICAS by Evan McNamara**

PITCH: SICARIO meets HOMELAND

LOGLINE: A Homeland Security agent must stop his brother, a recruiter for an Islamic terrorist cell in the Mexican desert, from carrying out an attack on the US Oil Reserves.

GENRE: Action | Conspiracy | Thriller

WHY TO READ: The premise here sings with drama: two brothers on opposite sides of the border war in El Paso, Texas. The intersection of so many politically relevant topics that are currently at the forefront of the national discussion (immigration, Islamic terrorism, drugs, oil) makes this a very topical action thriller. The writing is informed and intelligent, and the descriptions are vivid. The dialogue is also natural and very smart. This is a very marketable and topical thriller with strong characters and set ups.

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**TITLE: CHARLIE ZULU FOXTROT by Troy Nethercott**

PITCH: SECONDHAND LIONS meets OCTOBER SKY

LOGLINE: When an American teenager is sent to live with his aunt and uncle in rural France, he feels lost and alone until he discovers a rusted old plane that he starts to fix up. The project brings everyone together to create the family he has been missing, as they prepare the plane for a flight that will change him forever.

GENRE: Coming-of-Age | Drama

WHY TO READ: A lean, character-driven story that examines what makes a family a family. This will easily appeal to a four-quadrant audience, as young people can directly relate to the protagonist's plight, and older audiences will be given an escape from the harsh realities of the world and transported to the beautiful French countryside. This could easily, and with very little effort in the adaptation process, become the feel good movie of the year, packed with laughs and heart. This is a coming-of-age story that is reminiscent of all the best family stories, put in a new setting with likeable characters and a climax that will be all too much fun on the big screen.

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**TITLE: COMPLETELY INCOMPLETE by Jeffrey Hirschberg**

PITCH: ANALYZE THIS meets DRINKING BUDDIES

LOGLINE: A male psychiatrist and female psychologist who are longtime rivals are forced to team up and move in with a wealthy couple to provide joint counseling, or face being fired.

GENRE: Comedy | Romance

WHY TO READ: This is a fast-paced comedy with banter that will remind you of the rom-com classics of yesteryear. The characters are easy to see, and they're all vividly described both inside and out. They all have interesting quirks and telling ticks that make you feel like part of this world. From the moment you pick this up you already know these people, and you want to see more. But it's the twist of the story that sets this manuscript apart. The therapy technique that has the protagonists moving in with their patients for several weeks, so they can see the problems firsthand, is a fresh, innovative approach, and makes for endless amounts of funny and dramatic scenarios.

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## THE LAUNCH PAD MANUSCRIPT COMPETITION

**TITLE:** **CONSEQUENCE by Connor Eyzaguirre**

**PITCH:** BLADE meets THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY

**LOGLINE:** After a gang of vampires murder his wife and son, a Union soldier spends the next eleven years tracking them down, leading him to Consequence, where he helps defend the town against the demons of the West.

**GENRE:** Horror | Supernatural | Western

**WHY TO READ:** While the combination of vampires and Westerns sounds like it could be odd, this manuscript bucks all your expectations and is one of the most fun horror thrillers you can get your hands on. The writer is not only adept at creating horror, suspense, and tension, but injects just the right amount of humor into the story as well. The lead character of Carter Nash is charming and fun, especially with his various aliases and his inability to keep track of them. The writing is great, as it seamlessly jumps back and forth between Carter, the townspeople, and the vampires, and creates a world that is fully fleshed out. The plotline is clear from the beginning and you are ready and willing to follow Carter to the bitter end.

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**TITLE:** **CURE FOR PAIN by David Vienna**

**PITCH:** NASHVILLE meets SWEET HOME ALABAMA

**LOGLINE:** A rising country music star returns to her small hometown to film a reality show, but reconnecting with her high school boyfriend makes her rethink going back to the LA limelight.

**GENRE:** Drama | Music | Romance

**WHY TO READ:** This manuscript is a classic romantic comedy with a fun country music twist. The two lead characters are well-defined romance archetypes, the aloof small town guy and the superstar trying to return to her roots, and they work perfectly in this context. The supporting cast helps flesh out the town and world this story lives in, partially due to the surprisingly effective detail of having Malcolm work at a vacuum repair shop, which both undercuts his air of superiority and makes him feel very relatable. The writing is great, and perfectly fits the style and tone of the piece. This could easily be turned into a commercial romantic movie for any young star pairing. There are strong markets for country music and for this genre, so mixing the two is an obvious homerun.

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**TITLE:** **DAVID RHODES – THE VITRUVIAN MAN by Scott Poiley**

**PITCH:** MINORITY REPORT meets ZODIAC

**LOGLINE:** In a world where reincarnation is a reality, a detective hunts down a serial killer who has been murdering people over countless lifetimes.

**GENRE:** Crime | Sci-Fi | Thriller

**WHY TO READ:** A knockout concept in the vein of the Denzel Washington film FALLEN, this manuscript clearly sets itself apart from the pack by including the reincarnation angle and totally integrating that element throughout the future society. The concept is infused in the characters organically, with the basic idea of this narrative paying off again and again by demanding complex characters and utilizing unique spins on traditional detective story beats. This is a fun and interesting sci-fi mystery that keeps you guessing and makes you need to see the end. Unlike any other mystery story you have ever read.

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## THE LAUNCH PAD MANUSCRIPT COMPETITION

**TITLE: DEADLEGS by Cardy O'Donnell**

PITCH: THE FINEST HOURS meets DEADLIEST CATCH

LOGLINE: In the 1970s, a young fisherman struggles not only with proving himself against two of his shipmates – his more physically imposing brother and the father of his girlfriend's unborn child – but the elements themselves as they battle ruthless waters in Arctic winter.

GENRE: Action | Drama

WHY TO READ: A character-driven drama heightened by the contained setting of the fishing boat, this manuscript is a master class in subtle tension. The set up forces the protagonist to confront his rivals while working alongside them, and it's incredibly effective. Add to that the fact that they are all attempting an illegal fishing activity and the tension becomes palpable. The writing is dynamic and descriptive, painting a vivid picture, while the regional dialogue is pitch perfect, and the plot moves along at a perfect pace. The characters and relationships are intensely layered, in part due to the flashbacks effortlessly integrated into the high stakes action on the boat. With life and death stakes, the difference between failure and success teetering on a knife's edge, and love and friendship being closely examined, this manuscript is as intense as it can get.

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**TITLE: DISTANCE OF MERCY, THE by Shelly Drancik**

PITCH: BROOKLYN meets THE PIANIST

LOGLINE: An Austrian girl who grew up in the Russian occupation of Vienna following WWII undergoes culture shock after moving to America to attend college in Chicago. There she meets an African American woman whose friendship will ultimately save her.

GENRE: Drama

WHY TO READ: With extremely strong writing, evocative imagery, and prose that is concise and beautiful, this is a great read for any drama fan. We get great insight into the characters, and the historical setting is compelling while also lending the perfect tone for the subject matter. Nicolette's journey to America creates a ton of drama, and her burgeoning friendship with Tillie following her move is just as compelling. Every character feels alive and you can't help but want to stick with them to the end.

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**TITLE: DIVORCE DIET, THE by George Gier**

PITCH: GIRLFRIENDS' GUIDE TO DIVORCE meets THE BIGGEST LOSER

LOGLINE: After being diagnosed with Type II diabetes, a morbidly obese woman decides it is time to make a change when her husband leaves her. With the help of her closest friend, she embarks on an epic weight loss journey that leads to her own reality TV show and subsequent fame.

GENRE: Comedy | Drama

WHY TO READ: While there are so many potential places to go wrong when dealing with a sensitive subject matter like this, this manuscript carefully toes the line and is incredibly empowering. Much of this can be attributed to the strong character work, not only with the protagonist, Cassie, but with the supporting characters as well. Tons of tiny, perfect details add depth to her character, making her feel as real as your best friend. Cassie is as complex as they come as you watch her go through all of the ups and down of divorce, disease, and at weight loss. You feel for her, but also understand that she needs a strong push to make a change. The manuscript gives her that push by combining multiple life events at once and adding the morally complex idea that she might need to separate from a husband she cares about in order to make a big, and necessary, life change. This is a book that will inspire those who read it.

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## THE LAUNCH PAD MANUSCRIPT COMPETITION

**TITLE: EMBALM THE MARMOT by Ryan Holly**

PITCH: ALICE IN WONDERLAND meets JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE EARTH

LOGLINE: A man travels between the totalitarian surface and a magical underground world in search of his grandfather's body, forcing him to confront fantastical creatures, time travel, and a decades-old conflict.

GENRE: Drama | Fantasy

WHY TO READ: Taking all the trappings of a traditional children's novel and twisting them completely to make a commentary on the idea of the inner child and immaturity in adults, this manuscript has no shortage of creative, intelligent, and esoteric ideas. The writing is fascinating, taking a unique non-linear approach to the subject matter and presenting universal themes of childhood, aging, and finding the joy in a scary world.

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**TITLE: EMBER by Amanda Keener**

PITCH: DIVERGENT meets MISS PEREGRINE'S HOME FOR PECULIAR CHILDREN

LOGLINE: When a teen learns she has the power to control fire on her 16th birthday, she must move to a special Academy that will teach her control over her new gift. While there, she discovers that there's more to the Academy's altruism than meets the eye, and her and her new friends need a way out.

GENRE: Drama | Supernatural | Young Adult

WHY TO READ: This is a very cool premise, as it takes familiar beats from X-MEN but adds in its own unique elements. This really is familiar idea that comes at the problem from a completely new and interesting angle, which is hard to do. The sinister edge to The Academy is in line with other, popular YA fare, and it's so easy to see this as the start to a series, as well as a movie franchise or hit TV show. The mystery is set up well from the beginning, and the scenes are cinematic and engrossing. There is a lot here for young adults to relate to, as it deals with being in high school and feeling different from everyone else. Anyone interested in the next YA franchise has everything they need here.

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**TITLE: END OF VIOLET AND ABBY, THE by Scott Kearney**

PITCH: JENNIFER'S BODY meets HEATHERS

LOGLINE: When her best friend dies in a tragic accident, and immediately comes back, a teenage girl is just happy to have her BFF returned. Until boys start turning up dead, ravaged by a creature both terrifying and familiar, and now it's up to her to save herself and her best friend from an ancient evil that threatens them all.

GENRE: Horror | Supernatural | Young Adult

WHY TO READ: The rare horror story more concerned with characters than cheap thrills, this manuscript succeeds on the strength of its fully fleshed-out leads and their detailed and layered relationship. A fascinating look at female friendship, this story takes place in a believable and subtle high school world that never falls into cliché, and instead feels scarily real. The writing is clear, atmospheric, and does a brilliant job of integrating flashbacks, memories, and asides into the narrative to further anchor the scares in character and emotion.

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## THE LAUNCH PAD MANUSCRIPT COMPETITION

**TITLE:** **ESCAPE FROM MOUNT CHAMPLAIN by Mark Trenteseaux**

**PITCH:** MISS PEREGRINE'S HOME FOR PECULIAR CHILDREN meets X-MEN

**LOGLINE:** A young boy reeling from the death of his parents, for which he feels guilty despite having no memory of the accident, is sent to a fantastical, futuristic rehabilitation center, but he soon suspects there's something more sinister at play.

**GENRE:** Mystery | Sci-Fi | Young Adult

**WHY TO READ:** At a time when seemingly every incarnation of the future has been thought up and put on the page, this manuscript manages to paint the picture of a completely original future world, which never falls into dystopian clichés or Jetsons-style prognosticating. A skillfully structured conspiracy thriller populated with young teens, this story sets up intriguing mysteries against a backdrop of cool gadgets, futuristic technology, and intricate politics. The charming and likable lead has a fascinating backstory, while the supporting characters jump off the page. With the visually stunning setting of a castle in the Oregon Cascades, this manuscript practically screams out for a vivid and creative adaptation.

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**TITLE:** **EVERYTHING YOU WANT by Kirsten Alexander**

**PITCH:** BLOODLINE meets THE KILLING

**LOGLINE:** After covering up a hit-and-run accident, a brother and sister's lives are changed forever when they discover that the woman they left for dead was their soon-to-be stepmother. Now, with the effects of their actions playing out right in front of them, their personal lives and mental stability slowly begin to erode.

**GENRE:** Drama | Mystery

**WHY TO READ:** The writing is descriptive and vivid, and the writer has a solid grasp of the setting and a clear vision for the story. The writer knows Australia and it comes through on the page, as the manuscript is imbued with authenticity thanks to the various places, customs, dialects, flora, and fauna of the Land Down Under. The chapters alternate between the two leads, providing insight not only into their own heads but also into how others are perceiving them, squeezing out every possible ounce of complexity from this fantastic premise. Self-discovery, self-loathing, redemption, and condemnation – these internal conflicts permeate these pages, to the point that these characters feel so completely real that the reader will stick with them until the very end, no matter what happens.

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**TITLE:** **FALL OF DREAMS, THE by Ryan LaSalle**

**PITCH:** THE PHANTOM TOLLBOOTH meets HANSEL AND GRETEL

**LOGLINE:** Terrorized by fear thanks to his vivid, horrific dreams, a young insomniac finally succumbs to sleep and is taken to a place where his imaginings come true. Trapped in a mysterious world filled with eccentric characters and hungry witches, he struggles to find his way home.

**GENRE:** Adventure | Coming-of-Age | Fantasy

**WHY TO READ:** The prose for this manuscript is remarkably well-crafted, as the creatures, characters, and world truly jump off the page. The vivid and imaginative writing draws you in from the start, and the characters and dialogue keep you invested. Where the book manages to differentiate itself from the other fantasy tales of parallel or alternate dimensions is the slightly darker tone. There is a real fear at play here with the protagonist, and the exploration of fear and what he needs to do to overcome it is fascinating. There are clear arcs for the characters and so much potential for a franchise. Anyone who loves fantasy-adventure tales owes it to themselves to pick this one up and take a look.

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## THE LAUNCH PAD MANUSCRIPT COMPETITION

**TITLE: FAMILIAR, THE by Jonathan Marx**

PITCH: THE CLEANER meets iZOMBIE

LOGLINE: A small town mortician spends his nights working as a Familiar, a crime scene cleaner hired by supernatural creatures to clean up their messes and hide their existence. Despite his dual life, he manages to keep both businesses running smoothly, until he's drawn into a mystery involving disappearing corpses, werewolves, and a former girlfriend.

GENRE: Crime | Fantasy | Supernatural

WHY TO READ: There is some fantastic character work at play here. Not only is the lead strong and fun to watch, but also the supporting cast is clever and interesting. In addition, the writing is witty and humorous, and the story flows really well. The premise of a cleaner for supernatural creatures is so enjoyable and original, and this does a really good job of combining the supernatural drama with the procedural. All of this is mixed in with a captivating mystery, which has personal stakes for the protagonist and a ton of twists and turns. This could easily be the pilot episode for a comedy-drama supernatural procedural.

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**TITLE: FAST FORWARD by Elizabeth Stevens & James Bruner**

PITCH: CAPTAIN AMERICA meets LIFE ON MARS

LOGLINE: After being captured by the Nazis, an LAPD detective fighting in World War II wakes up in 1985 Los Angeles not having aged a day and with no memory of how he got there. He must work with his now elderly friends and family in an attempt to get back to where he belongs.

GENRE: Action | Drama | Sci-Fi

WHY TO READ: A lively and engaging action manuscript with fun and interesting twists and turns. The story creates tension through the central mystery of how and why McCain ends up in 1985. This is a wonderful aspect to the story, because for once in a time travel story, the protagonist is just as lost and confused as the audience. This creates an easy bond between the reader and the protagonist that only gets stronger as the story continues and we learn even more about him. In addition, the "fish out of water" twist a la, BACK TO THE FUTURE or CAPTAIN AMERICA provides a lot of fun and comic relief to a story that could have easily been all too serious. McCain has such a strong determination to stay alive that you easily believe it when he gets himself out of sticky situations by sheer will power alone. With a strong lead character, interesting premise, and unique take on the time traveler tale, this will fit right into any sci-fi adventure library.

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**TITLE: FILICIDE by Danny Newell**

PITCH: THE HUNGER GAMES meets THE PURGE

LOGLINE: When all of the parents in a remote island community start to murder their children for no apparent reason, a 17-year-old girl fights to save her younger brothers from the people who are supposed to love and protect them.

GENRE: Conspiracy | Drama | Thriller

WHY TO READ: Although a heavy and haunting premise, this is also part of what makes this manuscript so extremely compelling. This is a horror tale with a truly horrific idea behind it that is not based on monsters or extraterrestrials. The idea behind the book is so simple and so relatable, that it is impossible for it not to be terrifying. There is so much dark thematic material to play with here. If a convincing premise and story wasn't enough, the writing is very strong, the action scenes are compelling and filled with tension, and the characters feel real and multi-dimensional. Molly is a great protagonist and her journey is not only filled with twists, loss, and suspense, but self-discovery and redemption. This is very promising overall and it's very easy to see this manuscript as a series of books and films.

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## THE LAUNCH PAD MANUSCRIPT COMPETITION

**TITLE: FINAL GIRL, THE by Scott Thomas**

PITCH: JUNO meets HALLOWEEN

LOGLINE: When a tough, snarky 16-year-old moves with her distant, psychologist father to the down-on-its-luck Colorado town of Black Ridge, she learns the bloody history of the town as her father studies the patient responsible for the infamous rampage. Little does she know, the killer has been waiting for someone like her to carry on his legacy.

GENRE: Coming-of-Age | Horror | Thriller

WHY TO READ: This is a horror/thriller manuscript that is a genuine pleasure to read. The writer has a clear voice that permeates the pages, with the protagonist's wit, teenage angst, and cynical attitude coming through at all times, and never making her remotely unlikable. Her voice carries us through, and the story is compelling. The amount of detail in setting up the world is impressive, and Max's relationship with her father feels realistic and well thought out, with little details making a big impact on the believability of the characters. Similarly, the town of Black Ridge has a thorough and layered history that the writer gets across easily without losing the reader's attention. This is all around a great manuscript that deserves and lends itself to a big screen version.

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**TITLE: FOOTAGE by Lex Snowe**

PITCH: THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE meets THE BOURNE IDENTITY

LOGLINE: In the future, under the guise of brain surgery, the FBI uses advanced technology to turn American citizens into unwitting spies. With covert, and unaware, operatives all over the country, the program is working better than ever, until one of the subjects rebels against the system and attempts to bring it all down.

GENRE: Conspiracy | Sci-Fi | Thriller

WHY TO READ: A manuscript that shines with professionalism, this well developed premise is unique and accessible for all levels of sci-fi lovers and action lovers alike. It hits on current fears of identity theft, hacking, and government overreach into our private lives, as well as the rising threat of domestic terrorist attacks. The material would work as a series of films, and also presents the possibility for a gritty cable drama or even broadcast serial. There is also plenty of room for a franchise in the vein of the BOURNE series. The story is structured to provide excellent payoffs, and any questions that linger are answered in due time, giving you a reason to stay engaged. The characters are well developed, and we are immediately aware of their gifts, insecurities, and flaws. There's a ton of potential here for action-thriller fans to take advantage of, and a female protagonist to boot.

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**TITLE: FRIGHTFUL by Kristin Kirby**

PITCH: KRAMPUS meets GREMLINS

LOGLINE: When a demonic monster is unleashed on a small town at Christmastime, an eager K-9 cop teams up with a hotshot city detective to destroy the beast before it kills again.

GENRE: Horror

WHY TO READ: This is a great piece for any fan of horror and the supernatural. The writing in this manuscript is clear, straight forward, and easy to follow, yet elevated and focused on character building. We learn the inner workings of all the characters, and the in depth study into these people's minds really propels this story into interesting territory. Everyone has a secret, and you want to know the answers. While the premise feels similar to a traditional murder plot, a la Fargo or The Killing, the writer infuses the horror element seamlessly into the story. The strong setting, the snowy woods of the Pacific Northwest, creates an eerie, almost fairytale feeling that not only fits perfectly, but enhances the horror as well. The pacing and very high stakes make this a thrilling ride from start to finish, and any horror fan will love it.

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## THE LAUNCH PAD MANUSCRIPT COMPETITION

**TITLE: GHOSTS OF FLAME AND SHADOW by Sharda Rudel**

PITCH: ERAGON meets BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER

LOGLINE: A young woman and her best friend, both of whom possess magical abilities, struggle to make ends meet while on the run from an assassin who targets those with powers, including her family.

GENRE: Adventure | Fantasy | Young Adult

WHY TO READ: From the first lines, this pulls the reader in with its beautifully crafted imagery, which is all at once dark, horrific, and haunting. The writer creates a fully fleshed out world and somber atmosphere that increases the tension from the get-go. Starting with the main characters on the run in a strange land, this story immediately sets itself apart from most high fantasy, maintaining the creativity, scope, and high stakes, but grounding the story in character, emotion, and tone. Blaise is a fantastic protagonist, as her anger management issues and rebelliousness align with her overflowing magical power, complicating her work as an assassin. Her struggle to keep everything in check is compelling, as is her relationship with her loyal and patient best friend Alana, a fully realized character in her own right. You won't want to stop reading about these two amazing protagonists in this sinister world.

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**TITLE: GOLDEN GATE RESCUE by Joseph Anderson**

PITCH: THE O.C. meets BAYWATCH

LOGLINE: A group of wealthy high school students volunteer with the Bay Area Search & Rescue Unit, risking their own lives to save people lost in the wilderness, all the while navigating the no-less-difficult pressures of high school.

GENRE: Action | Drama | Young Adult

WHY TO READ: An action-packed premise with plenty of tension and drama set in the visually stunning wilderness of the Bay Area, this is the next big teen series waiting to happen. Practically begging for a TV adaptation on The CW or Freeform, this manuscript deftly combines the teen soap with the action thriller, raising the stakes of high school angst in the way that all the best coming-of-age stories do. The fantastic cast of characters stands out as they try to navigate community service with pressure to succeed and the advantages and disadvantages of financial privilege, providing no end of thematic content to mine for future books. Combining this with engaging writing and a realistic and creative high school setting, this is the rare teen drama that feels completely fresh and original.

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**TITLE: GRIM, THE by Scott Leddy**

PITCH: I AM LEGEND meets THE MAZE RUNNER

LOGLINE: In a post-apocalyptic future, a disease has swept the world, killing much of the population and leaving some of the survivors unnaturally ruthless and bloodthirsty. A teen born into slavery to these evil masters meets a mysterious girl whose biology might hold the key to curing the disease, and they set out to save humanity, both from the plague and from its own darkest impulses.

GENRE: Action | Sci-Fi | Young Adult

WHY TO READ: This manuscript succeeds largely on the merits of its exceptional protagonist, a young man who is strong, smart and empathetic, but has learned to downplay those traits in order to survive in the brutal world. He's forced to kill in order to survive, but doesn't relish it as some others would, making him stand out within his own world, but also in the world of YA fiction leads. His relatable journey will immediately draw the reader into the expertly crafted dystopian world that the writer has created. The writing is descriptive, thoughtful and evocative, demonstrating a clear voice and vision that extends from visual descriptions to tone, atmosphere and even dialogue. This immersive experience elevates the perfectly paced high-stakes storyline to a truly cinematic experience, taking the reader on a journey that will terrify and move them, but above all, make them think.

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## THE LAUNCH PAD MANUSCRIPT COMPETITION

**TITLE: GYRE by Robert Sheppe**

PITCH: THE SHALLOWS meets LOST

LOGLINE: A reluctant teenager dragged into a family vacation boating off the coast of Hawaii struggles to save herself and her family when a monster attacks mid-trip.

GENRE: Drama | Horror

WHY TO READ: A sci-fi action thriller anchored in character just as much as in vibrant set pieces, this manuscript combines an inventive high stakes creature feature with a touching and nuanced coming-of-age story in a way that portends an adaptation that is sure to be a hit. With a tone of mystery and paranoia sure to remind fans of the CLOVERFIELD series, this manuscript is practically screaming to be made into a movie, what with its vivid setting off the coast of Hawaii, contained locations, and cinematic action. A great teen protagonist who is forced not only to save her family but also to deal with feelings of insecurity around the new woman in her father's life, all readers will be able to sympathize with this complex lead as well as the fully-fleshed out supporting cast. With a rollercoaster's worth of twists and turns as well as a truly memorable conclusion, this is an exceptionally executed ride.

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**TITLE: HAUNTED HEART by Robert Herold**

PITCH: PENNY DREADFUL meets SUPERNATURAL

LOGLINE: In late 19th Century America, a mismatched group of academics and psychics travel the country solving supernatural crimes and mysteries. But when they need to add a new member to their team, as they prepare to tackle one of their toughest cases, it threatens to change their group forever.

GENRE: Drama | Horror | Supernatural

WHY TO READ: The perfect introduction to an expansive world, this manuscript establishes a fun group of endearing characters who have their world rocked by the addition of a discordant member on their finely tuned team. The classic TV pilot set-up, this is the absolute best way to start the story and promises plenty of banter, conflict and emotion as these characters encounter new and dangerous adventures in a countless number of sequels. There's no end to the story possibilities, setting this up to be a successful long-running book series or television procedural. The post-Civil War setting provides a unique look at American history as well as plenty of drama by way of the racial tensions on the team. This is not just a traditional horror story, but something much deeper and more character-driven. Still, the tone and atmosphere are pitch perfect, the plot thrilling and perfectly paced, and the writing both gripping and insightful. A horror/thriller that you will not want to put down.

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**TITLE: HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS WITH FISTS by Lex Wilson**

PITCH: SUPERGIRL meets SCREAM QUEENS

LOGLINE: A teenage girl struggles with the normal problems of high school: her weight, mean girls, homework, and the annoying fact that she's a superhero.

GENRE: Action | Comedy | Young Adult

WHY TO READ: BUFFY by way of Diablo Cody, this imaginative manuscript has a hilarious and edgy voice that never quits, crafting a wildly irreverent spin on the reluctant hero narrative that manages to feel wholly original and relevant while playing with genres and plot points that you may have thought had been exhausted. The perfect blend of iconic high school angst with genuine emotion and the unpredictable twists of the best action comedies, this story will speak to anyone who has felt left out or overwhelmed and wishes they could just punch their problems away with super strength. There's no knowing what's around the corner in this exceptional and tightly plotted story, whether it be a pop quiz, an attack on the city, or a boyfriend turning into a monster. As the reader, you get the joy of sitting back and going along for the ride while our heroine deigns to look up from the latest group chat on her phone and save the day.

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## THE LAUNCH PAD MANUSCRIPT COMPETITION

**TITLE: HOTEL GRAMERCY PARK by Max Weissberg**

PITCH: THE GRAND BUDAPEST HOTEL meets THE ROYAL TENNENBAUMS

LOGLINE: A man chronicles the true story of his family who owned the famous Gramercy Park Hotel in New York for decades, interacting with the rich, famous, and crazy on a daily basis.

GENRE: Drama | Memoir

WHY TO READ: Based on the critically acclaimed documentary of the same name, this manuscript has already proven itself as a fantastic and successful story, one which is deserving of a wider and more diverse audience. Anchored by the author's boyhood experiences living in the hotel, this manuscript is a window into a fantastic cast of characters, from the zaniness of the family members to a revolving door of celebrity guests ranging from rock stars to the Kennedys. Combining drama, comedy, tragedy, suspense, and everything in between, this manuscript has a little something for everyone, and seems primed to be adapted into a serialized drama series. It's easy to see these anecdotes transformed into weekly episodes making the best use of the contained hotel setting and connection to all the power players of the time. Add in the legend of the "curse" that causes so many family members to die, and you've got a truly powerful story that will keep people's eyes on the page.

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**TITLE: HOW TO KISS LIKE A MOVIE STAR by Leslie Nipkow**

PITCH: NOT THAT KIND OF GIRL meets CRAZY EX-GIRLFRIEND

LOGLINE: Based on her real-life experiences, an award-winning soap opera writer details her life as a "real-size" girl breaking into the entertainment industry, telling stories of love, sex, family secrets, illness, and more.

GENRE: Comedy | Drama | Memoir

WHY TO READ: Structured as a series of sharp and insightful essays, this memoir shows off the considerable writing skills of the author. She has a clear voice, a gift for prose, a sardonic wit, and a skill with integrating hilarious pop culture references into her writing. The memoir delivers a strong, relatable message to its readers about how to take control of one's own life and destiny and how to gain confidence in a world where you feel like an outsider, memorably achieving both irreverent comedy and inspirational messages in a single breath. All the ingredients are here for both a juicy showbiz memoir and a fun, intelligent television series adaptation, either a sitcom or a dramedy in the vein of CRAZY EX-GIRLFRIEND. It is also easy to imagine that the writer has another desktop's worth of stories to be told for future memoirs.

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**TITLE: HOW TO MAKE AND KILL THE PERFECT MAN by Sarah Archer Moulton**

PITCH: MIKE AND DAVE NEED WEDDING DATES meets SIMONE

LOGLINE: An engineer desperate to find a date to her sister's wedding creates a lifelike robot who turns out to be the perfect guy for her, which makes things difficult when the time comes to shut him down.

GENRE: Comedy | Romance | Sci-Fi

WHY TO READ: This is a stellar premise, anchored by a capable, smart, modern young woman whose life is a little out of control. This has all the trappings of an old-school studio rom-com mixed with the raunchy female-led humor of Amy Schumer or BROAD CITY. The writer does a fantastic job of crafting a relatable protagonist and putting her through a story that feels both classic and modern, touching and incisive, and humorous and emotional. Intimacy in the age of technology is a topical discussion in film and television today and this story offers up a nice twist on trying to find love in the modern era that still feels perfectly timeless. Intelligent and funny, this manuscript is told in a distinctive and intriguing voice supported by sharp, efficient writing.

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## THE LAUNCH PAD MANUSCRIPT COMPETITION

**TITLE: HUMAN RESOURCES by Robert Batten**

PITCH: WORLD WAR Z meets THE STRAIN

LOGLINE: After a zombie apocalypse, corporations run by vampires create heavily guarded city-states to preserve the human race - as a subjugated food supply.

GENRE: Sci-Fi | Supernatural | Thriller

WHY TO READ: It can be difficult to find a truly inventive supernatural premise in a fiction landscape overrun by zombies, vampires, and werewolves, but this manuscript has done just that. It combines classic tales and timeless archetypes into what is not only an exciting supernatural thriller, but also an intelligent commentary on the dangers of corporate control. Cinematic and thrilling from page one, this manuscript is written with gripping attention to detail, superior visuals, and memorable characters. Not only does this make for an exceptional novel, but it has the potential for endless sequels and adaptations. We truly have been introduced to the next great creative premise, a supernatural chessboard where the author can play out important games of politics, violence, and survival.

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**TITLE: HUMAN, ANEW by Irina Ivanova**

PITCH: I, ROBOT meets MR. ROBOT

LOGLINE: While investigating a suspicious death, a detective in a futuristic city discovers a massive conspiracy involving the artificial intelligence robots used by the police force to recreate the personalities of the recently deceased in order to consult with them in solving their murders.

GENRE: Mystery | Sci-Fi | Thriller

WHY TO READ: An undeniably fresh and topical premise that engages with themes of corruption, law enforcement, and the dangers of technology, this manuscript feels wholly of the moment despite being futuristic, and its thrills and twists are timeless in their execution. Using aspects of noir, conspiracy thrillers, and science fiction in crafting its sinister and paranoid tone, this manuscript deftly creates the perfect atmosphere to enhance the tension and keep the reader enthralled. Electric writing and vibrant descriptions paint a vivid picture of this wholly original futuristic city, grounding the narrative in a strong, engaging setting. The writing is fast-paced and clear, while the characters have distinct personalities and a fun rapport. The combination of the fascinating sci-fi crime investigation premise with this great detective duo suggests a network TV procedural adaptation in the making.

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**TITLE: IMMORTAL LADY, THE by Roy Rocha**

PITCH: FOREVER meets TWILIGHT

LOGLINE: An immortal woman living in secret in a New York City convent meets a strangely alluring man who turns out to be a vampire, causing her to become trapped in a war between rival clans vying for control of the city.

GENRE: Fantasy | Romance | Supernatural

WHY TO READ: This manuscript has all the makings of a great fantasy romance. Written with the eloquence of Anne Rice and the twists and turns of TWILIGHT, this story manages to be a mature and original take on these classic ideas. The prose in this manuscript is absolutely masterful, its concise and beautiful use of language resulting in a captivating narrative that deftly captures the atmosphere of the world as well as the depths of the protagonist and the nuance of its compelling central relationship. The story is packed with twists and high stakes, effectively combining action and romance into a thrilling, sensual ride whose appeal will cross genres.

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## THE LAUNCH PAD MANUSCRIPT COMPETITION

**TITLE: INTO COVERT WATERS by James Hawes & Mary Ann Koenig**

PITCH: ARGO meets CHE

LOGLINE: The true story of a young CIA agent sent to the Congo in the 1960s in order to secretly stop a Communist rebellion led by Che Guevara.

GENRE: Action | Drama | True

WHY TO READ: This manuscript presents a first hand account of a previously unexplored chapter in American Cold War history. Packed with famous figures, exotic locations and innovative espionage tactics, this is like nothing you have read before. The narrative is gripping, the visuals ambitious and cinematic, and since the protagonist was a major resource in writing the book, the historical details have an effortless authority and authenticity. By combining the trappings of an espionage thriller with aspects of politics and war stories, there's no end to the excitement and drama, while the historical relevance has the potential to elevate any adaptation right into the thick of the awards race.

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**TITLE: JOHN WILKES BOOTH AND ME by Staton Rabin**

PITCH: MERCY STREET meets LINCOLN

LOGLINE: A young girl befriends the famous actor John Wilkes Booth just before he assassinates President Abraham Lincoln.

GENRE: Coming-of-Age | Drama

WHY TO READ: Based on the story of a real young girl caught in the middle of a seminal event in American history, this manuscript tells a timeless story of romance, betrayal and doubt. The writer even elevates this inventive premise by infusing the feel of a national epic through the distinctive Civil War setting, infamous character, and the insightful and nuanced take on one of history's great tragedies. Equal parts coming-of-age story, unrequited romance, conspiracy thriller, and road movie – the writer manages to combine the best aspects of many genres into a gripping story grounded by strong character work and filtered through the sympathetic and relatable lens of a misguided 12-year-old girl. You'll never look at this famous story the same way again.

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**TITLE: KILL CREEK by Scott Thomas**

PITCH: THE CONJURING meets THE SHINING

LOGLINE: A publicity stunt sends four bestselling horror writers into a legendary haunted house on Halloween. What starts out as a simple exploitation of their popularity becomes a dangerous proposition when the house's supernatural history turns out to be all too true and they find themselves all writing the exact same sinister book upon returning home.

GENRE: Horror | Supernatural

WHY TO READ: The kind of storytelling that will make you angry every time you have to turn away, this manuscript is completely engrossing, combining an inventive premise with genuine scares, a creepy atmosphere, and effortlessly distinctive and three-dimensional lead characters. This is psychological horror at its best, with each of the leads set up with unique fears to exploit, organic backstories, and believable arcs. The writer is adept at delving into the minds of the characters and presenting their unique points of view in an engaging way through elevated, literary prose that never skimps on the thrills and exudes a thorough knowledge of the horror genre. Combining modern self-aware horror like THE CONJURING with clear inspirations from classics of the genre, this is a well-executed, original premise with a ton of commercial potential.

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## THE LAUNCH PAD MANUSCRIPT COMPETITION

**TITLE: KING'S DAUGHTER by Julia Bobkoff**

PITCH: VIKINGS meets ELIZABETH

LOGLINE: The daughter of Danish king Harald Bluetooth must lead her people amidst a Scandinavia at war after her father is killed in a battle against her usurper brother.

GENRE: Drama | True | War

WHY TO READ: There is no shortage of drama in this thrilling female-led true story. The family politics, the naval battles, the epic scale – all provide a great foundation for this manuscript. Not to mention the fascinating protagonist in Thyra, a world-weary young woman forced to step up and take control. She will be the next great literary heroine as she shows strength and intelligence in all aspects of her life. The characters are complex and layered, and the writing is stark, beautiful, and evocative, with imagery that will stay with you long after the last page. The period details are pitch perfect, immediately immersing the reader in this world of Vikings, kings, and religious conflict.

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**TITLE: KREEP WHURLD by Hampton Flint**

PITCH: THE WALKING DEAD meets DEADLIEST CATCH

LOGLINE: After an invasion by violent insect-like creatures that carry a dangerous disease, a teenage fisherman from North Carolina faces the challenge of her life when she is hired by one of the infected to escort him along the Atlantic coast to Baltimore.

GENRE: Sci-Fi | Young Adult

WHY TO READ: This manuscript does the impossible – creating a dystopian YA world that feels completely fresh, original, and believable. The story is perfect in its simplicity, an aquatic spin on the dystopian road trip movie. There's no overload of new terminology or useless novelties to make the world seem cool, instead this manuscript does more with less and places us in a world that feels so natural, so close to our own, that there's no distance between us and the fantastic lead. Stevie is a great protagonist with clear motivations and weaknesses, and whose drive to help her family is endlessly relatable. The stakes are high, the writing is packed with action, and the insect-like monsters are original and terrifying. The next big YA franchise that will have the same effect as watching JAWS – you will want to stay out of the water.

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**TITLE: LAGOON SWIMMER by Matthew Bookman**

PITCH: AMERICAN HUSTLE meets UP IN THE AIR

LOGLINE: After being fired for incompetence, a high-level PR exec with no real skills struggles to find his way in the world, moving from one odd job to the next.

GENRE: Comedy | Drama

WHY TO READ: An undeniably fun read. The writing is top notch, keeping its humor subtle enough to not feel forced. The dialogue is very distinct and enjoyable, and the sheer amount of randomness crammed into just a few chapters makes this feel like one of those postmodern novels you read in a college class and enjoyed too much to actually mind writing the essay. Skip is a rough, crafty character whose gullibility and bad luck make him an appealing lead and a joy to follow. He's an intriguing example of a certain kind of corporate ladder climbing attitude that resonates across industries - the "creative" networker who never does any actual work. He is ridiculous, but only about one step above the types of people you meet in real life, meaning that his journey will resonate with every reader, whether they sympathize with him or not.

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## THE LAUNCH PAD MANUSCRIPT COMPETITION

**TITLE: LANCE & ART by Noah Sanders**

PITCH: MAN ON FIRE meets TAKEN

LOGLINE: An aging ex-con who works as a bodyguard for the heir of a Chinese crime family in San Francisco will stop at nothing to get the boy back after he is kidnapped.

GENRE: Action | Crime | Drama

WHY TO READ: This manuscript is a highly commercial and traditional action-packed thriller with a ton of original ideas, clear stakes, fleshed-out antagonists, and plenty of twists. Lance is a great lead character, the kind of aging action hero with a distinct voice that would appeal to an actor looking for an exciting role. The vivid San Francisco setting alongside such fun details as the idiosyncrasies of the Chinese mobsters or Lance's parole officer helping him with his criminal activities give this story a distinct edge that keeps it fresh while its kidnapping story hits timeless, thrilling beats. A non-stop action thriller that will keep you rooting for the protagonist until the grizzly end.

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**TITLE: LANDFALL by Adam Aresty**

PITCH: INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS meets QUANTICO

LOGLINE: Investigating terror attacks becomes near impossible after an alien invasion uses telepathy to control the minds of humans and force them into groups with the sole purpose of taking as many lives as possible.

GENRE: Drama | Sci-Fi

WHY TO READ: The central premise of this manuscript – an alien invasion prepping the Earth for submission by taking over people's minds and forcing them to work together to kill as many humans as possible – is stunning in its simplicity and dramatic potential. The implications for terror investigations, politics, and the eventual war are endless. This great premise is anchored by a fantastic set of characters representing an admirable cross-section of society. These aspects help to ground the science fiction story in real emotion. This is primed for a television adaptation that could easily combine aspects of an investigative procedural with the overarching alien conspiracy, the kind of genre-bending idea that has been dominating the networks of late. At the very least this will be an engaging and captivating series of sci-fi thrillers that will have readers coming back for more.

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**TITLE: LAZARUS by Maryanne Melloan Woods**

PITCH: VERONICA MARS meets GHOST

LOGLINE: A police chief's daughter and her boyfriend make the perfect small town detective team. The only problem? The boyfriend is a ghost and the town is in the thick of a murder spree.

GENRE: Drama | Mystery | Supernatural

WHY TO READ: This manuscript has a fantastic premise that could easily be adapted to a procedural TV series, utilizing its ghostly mythology and creepy atmosphere to tell truly engaging stories. The central mystery, related back to the unsolved murder of our protagonist's mother, is undeniably compelling, packed with unpredictable twists and a pervading creepiness. Still, the relationship between the two leads is so realistic, relatable, and emotional that it's hard not to feel at home while reading. Their love, problems, and conflicts are touching and nuanced, and it only helps that they are surrounded by supporting characters that also feel distinct. All of this adds up to a world that feels fleshed out and real, utilizing a Prairie Gothic sensibility to examine the wide open landscape and the dark, seedy underbelly of the haunted town.

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## THE LAUNCH PAD MANUSCRIPT COMPETITION

**TITLE: LIFE WITHOUT by Robert Giordano**

PITCH: OZ meets SILENCE OF THE LAMBS

LOGLINE: A private investigator, serving a life sentence for the murder of his wife, gathers his allies to uncover the identity of a serial killer who has been killing both inside and outside of the prison.

GENRE: Drama | Thriller

WHY TO READ: Anchored by a truly compelling premise - the search for a serial killer inside a prison, this manuscript excels on the strength of its writing. Told in a unique voice and packed with evocative dialogue, the writer adeptly writes in dialect without slowing down the narrative or creating confusion. The fantastic dialogue imbues life into the script and the characters, so that each one stands out from page one, allowing us to sympathize with them despite the fact that they are all violent criminals. This is practically built for a television procedural, with the protagonist helping with a new problem each week while seeking out the truth behind the killer as an overarching storyline. The fast-paced and engaging prose round out a manuscript that is absolutely the complete package.

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**TITLE: LION AND THE DEAD, THE by E.S. Dahl**

PITCH: DEAD LIKE ME meets SLEEPY HOLLOW

LOGLINE: A man who digs up people killed in wars so they can come back to life and tie up loose ends brings back a Civil War soldier who forms an unbreakable bond with the woman now living in his old home.

GENRE: Drama | Romance | Supernatural

WHY TO READ: This is a well-paced and emotionally written supernatural drama, with aspects of romance and tragedy that makes great use of its Southern setting and well-developed characters. The premise and story engine are perfectly set up for a procedural television adaptation in the vein of SLEEPY HOLLOW, with a case of the week as Walt helps a new soldier gain closure and return him back to his grave. As a standalone novel, the writer has chosen a truly tragic and memorable premise, as the touching relationship between the soldier and the woman now living in his home taps into universal themes that will leave the reader reeling.

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**TITLE: LONDONI, THE by Sultana Choudhry**

PITCH: WHITE TEETH meets SINGLE WHITE FEMALE

LOGLINE: A Bangaldeshi woman travels to London to live with her cousin, and will stop at nothing in order to stay in her new home, no matter the consequence of her actions.

GENRE: Crime | Drama | Thriller

WHY TO READ: This manuscript has such a unique cultural perspective on London, anchored by a well-crafted protagonist whose naiveté comes across effortlessly in the prose, making her both relatable and genuinely flawed at the same time. The writer speaks with authority on these topics of immigration and race, and the juxtaposition of cultures is fascinating. By adding in the aspects of family rivalry and the trappings of a thriller, there's no shortage of drama and tension to be had. This is a gripping bestseller in the making.

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## THE LAUNCH PAD MANUSCRIPT COMPETITION

**TITLE: LONELY PIXEL, THE by Martin Sturrock**

PITCH: BLACK MIRROR meets DIVERGENT

LOGLINE: In a world where everyone works for one of three major corporations who control their employees' lives with virtual reality eyewear, a teenage girl joins a rebellion after she is caught up in a terrorist attack against her corporation.

GENRE: Sci-Fi | Thriller | Young Adult

WHY TO READ: Packed with effective and creative visual imagery, this manuscript crafts a believable and incisive dystopian world where everyone is controlled and guided by virtual reality technology. As these devices become more and more commonplace in society today, this is a relevant and important premise full of smart ideas and insightful warnings. Leila is a character that any teenager can relate to—she's smart but disaffected, she feels misunderstood by her friends, and she yearns for more autonomy. Zach's clear arc from blind loyalty to skepticism is fascinating to read, and perfectly executed. With strong characters, a great premise, vivid writing, and an action-packed plot, this is the ideal YA conspiracy thriller.

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**TITLE: LORD OF THE WOLVES, THE by James Matlack Raney**

PITCH: WHITE FANG meets THE LION KING

LOGLINE: After the violent death of their parents, a lame wolf pup must step up to lead his siblings as they run from the murderous wolf looking to finish the job.

GENRE: Adventure | Coming-of-Age | Family

WHY TO READ: A great morality tale for children, this manuscript is packed with themes of family, survival, and persevering against the odds. The protagonist, the disabled runt of the litter, provides a great example for children about what you can achieve with intelligence, leadership, and loyalty, and that being the biggest isn't always being the best. All of the characters are distinctive and sympathetic, and the emotions are potent and effective. While this could easily become a best-selling book for children, there's also plenty of potential to become a four-quadrant animated hit.

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**TITLE: LORETTA OF THE LAMP by J.R. Manawa**

PITCH: I DREAM OF JEANNIE meets THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA

LOGLINE: After breaking into a museum, a London teenager is sucked into an ancient genie's lamp and goes on an adventure through a desert fantasy world.

GENRE: Adventure | Fantasy

WHY TO READ: In Loretta's journey through the world inside the lamp, we get to see a new side of this classic magical phenomenon in a visually stunning land reminiscent of the most captivating of children's stories. Loretta is an iconic and gritty protagonist, with her lock-picking addiction and working class London upbringing making her stand out amidst the plethora of stock stand-ins that tend to populate these sorts of fantasy stories. Between the fantastic lead, her will-they-won't-they romance with the standoffish genie, and the sheer epic scope of her adventures, there's nothing this superior modern fantasy doesn't accomplish with skill and originality.

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## THE LAUNCH PAD MANUSCRIPT COMPETITION

**TITLE:** **LOVING WRATH OF ELDON QUINT, THE** by Chase Pletts

**PITCH:** DEADWOOD meets THE REVENANT

**LOGLINE:** A farmer takes his recently deceased son across the country in order to bury him next to his wife. He must deal with the worst of humanity and nature as he makes the arduous journey while being mistaken for a dangerous criminal, but things only get worse when he arrives at his son's final resting place to discover that his wife is alive and well.

**GENRE:** Drama | Western

**WHY TO READ:** A masterfully crafted ensemble of characters populates this ambitious and exceptional Western. The characters all have rich, distinct voices, individual personalities, as well as clear goals and faults. As their storylines intersect across the great canvas of the West, the reader will be absorbed into the writer's vivid world, trusting to the evocative and literary prose to take them on a tireless and emotional journey to find out how everything comes together. Transcending Western tropes through sheer skill and attention to detail, this manuscript packs more drama, suspense, mystery and heart than any other book of its kind. Easily adaptable into a prestige TV drama, this manuscript should be top of the list for anyone who is a fan of the Western genre or great storytelling in general.

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**TITLE:** **MANY BRAVE HEARTS** by Virginia Slachman

**PITCH:** REVOLUTIONARY ROAD meets UNBROKEN

**LOGLINE:** A love story of a couple who met while serving in WWII and the battle to keep their love alive as they face the destructive toll of PTSD.

**GENRE:** Drama | Memoir | Romance

**WHY TO READ:** The captivating story of a family brought together and destroyed by the Second World War, this manuscript uses its Midwestern setting, military content, and midcentury trappings to create what already feels like a classic American tale. A combination of memoir and interview, the manuscript performs a delicate balancing act alternating between interviews in the author's father's own words, and her eloquent and memorable account of growing up in this family always on the verge of breaking down. The juxtaposition of these competing voices creates a stunningly compelling novel that feels both intelligent and emotionally raw at the same time.

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**TITLE:** **MARK, THE** by Kirsten Boswell

**PITCH:** WARCRAFT meets THE MORTAL INSTRUMENTS

**LOGLINE:** A young girl trains to be a soldier in a war against a race of fire demons invading her land, only to be unwillingly named their next leader when a mysterious mark appears on her arm.

**GENRE:** Adventure | Fantasy | Young Adult

**WHY TO READ:** A fantasy epic centered on a fascinating young female character put in an impossible moral dilemma, this story is a clear start to an action-packed series. Written with incredible and vivid detail to bring the unique fantasy world to life, this manuscript presents a fully visualized setting complete with distinctive dialogue employing its own slang, rules, and dialects. The world is epic and absorbing, and all its own, immediately drawing you in. Brilliantly paced, every chapter ends on a cliffhanger or an emotional beat that guarantees the reader won't be able to put it down.

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## THE LAUNCH PAD MANUSCRIPT COMPETITION

**TITLE: MEMORY ROAD by Martin McSweeney**

PITCH: ASSASSIN'S CREED meets THE MAZE RUNNER

LOGLINE: A group of teenagers with historically important ancestors are kidnapped by a criminal mastermind and forced to take a drug that allows them to enter their ancestral memories and change the past.

GENRE: Sci-Fi | Thriller | Young Adult

WHY TO READ: A fun and inventive new take on the time travel genre, this manuscript combines the trappings of a YA novel with a fascinating and intricate historical backstory. The underground setting of the Library adds a tense, contained element to the story and forces the characters to interact in ways that push them to their breaking points, illuminating the darker sides of their natures. The main characters are all well-crafted, with distinct personalities, clear arcs, and immediate tensions. With plenty of twists and turns, this will keep you turning the page, trying to unravel the mystery.

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**TITLE: MITTEN HAND by Jody Giardina**

PITCH: PERSEPOLIS meets SLUMDOG MILLIONAIRE

LOGLINE: After being exiled from her community, a young Iranian girl with leprosy moves to a leper colony in Karachi, where an aid worker helps her obtain entry into the United States, only to discover that the company sponsoring her trip has ulterior motives.

GENRE: Coming-of-Age | Drama

WHY TO READ: This manuscript is undeniably powerful, following a complex young woman who we get to see grow into an amazing adult. The story has a unique, vibrant voice at its center in Rey, which grounds the piece in a dry wit - a much needed relief from the heavy subject matter and intense drama. The world building, character work, and storytelling are all fantastic, and the reader will not be able to stop reading, despite all of the tragedy in Rey's life. The descriptions are thorough, intense, elaborate, and beautiful, bringing the reader into these strange places and making them feel familiar and understandable, an amazing feat that allows for the themes of cultural difference and ostracism to come through with intelligence, subtlety, and even humor.

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**TITLE: MR. & MRS. AMERICAN PIE by Juliet McDaniel**

PITCH: WE'RE THE MILLERS meets MISS CONGENIALITY

LOGLINE: After her husband leaves her unexpectedly, a 1960s housewife moves to Arizona where she befriends a closeted gay bartender, and the two scheme to enter a national pageant for the most perfect American couple.

GENRE: Comedy

WHY TO READ: With a riotously funny premise, great characters, and plenty to say about gender, sexuality and race, this is the rare book that manages to be laugh-out-loud funny, emotional, and insightful all at the same time. Maxine is a hilarious lead with a ton of depth, while the supporting characters are no less complex. The writing is clear and efficient, the dialogue is realistic and funny, and each character has a distinct voice. The midcentury American setting comes across perfectly, while the plot of a divorcee and gay man staging a hostile takeover of a "perfect couple pageant" is packed with hilarious twists and turns that the reader won't see coming.

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## THE LAUNCH PAD MANUSCRIPT COMPETITION

**TITLE: NIGHTSONG by M.J. Rhodes**

PITCH: THE GIRL ON THE TRAIN meets WITNESS

LOGLINE: A woman witnesses what she thinks might be a kidnapping, but doesn't come forward until after the child is reported missing. Now a pariah due to her inaction, she sets out to solve the crime herself and find redemption.

GENRE: Crime | Drama | Thriller

WHY TO READ: Female-led psychological thrillers are dominating the bestseller lists and the box office right now, and this manuscript has a fantastic take on this successful genre, one which speaks to deep-seated fears in all of us. The drama behind a person seeing something terrible happening and not realizing it in time to stop it is very powerful and relatable. We've all seen something strange but decided not to get involved. By expanding this to the worst case scenario and examining the protagonist's mind as she attempts to make amends, this manuscript taps into viscerally human themes. Can you make things right after doing nothing to stop them from going wrong? With strong character work and writing to back up this thematic complexity, the manuscript has both the heart and the suspense to be a successful thriller.

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**TITLE: NINE GRAVES OF GERALDINE GREY, THE by Namina Forna**

PITCH: PARANORMAN meets SHADOWHUNTERS

LOGLINE: A young girl tasked with helping souls from a Louisiana cemetery pass to the other side must fight a powerful witch for control over the gate to the underworld.

GENRE: Adventure | Coming-of-Age | Fantasy

WHY TO READ: This middle-grade novel delves into the eccentric world of the Southern Gothic and provides the perfect blend of fun and creepiness for a young audience. Geraldine is a unique, engaging protagonist with a pure heart and a strong work ethic, and she is the perfect role model for readers of any age. The fact that her job is to oversee the ghosts buried at her ancestral family home only adds originality and humor to an already wonderful tale. These well-written pages smoothly unfold a deeply realized world of Creole magic and mayhem, and the writer's voice is pleasantly peppered with French phrases, bringing this Louisiana landscape to life. The perfect set-up for a children's supernatural book series, this manuscript has atmosphere and character to spare.

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**TITLE: NOWHERE WITCH, THE by A.R. Cook**

PITCH: ALICE IN WONDERLAND meets THE LEAGUE OF EXTRAORDINARY GENTLEMEN

LOGLINE: A witch summons six famous warriors from across history to a hell dimension, where she forces them to fight to the death to determine humanity's greatest fighter, whose blood she needs for a sacrificial ritual.

GENRE: Adventure | Fantasy | Supernatural

WHY TO READ: Packed with recognizable historical figures and set in a fantasy world where anything is possible, this manuscript has more cinematic potential in each page than most books have in their entire length. Beyond that, the writing is strong and engaging, packed with action, while the voice of the Nowhere Witch permeates every page and adds to the sinister tone. This is a visually stunning fantasy epic that will appeal to lovers of action, history, fantasy, and suspense. With an antagonist as developed as the heroes, this is a well-rounded, fun, and entertaining ride.

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## THE LAUNCH PAD MANUSCRIPT COMPETITION

**TITLE: OPERA RATS**  
**by Courtney Silberberg & Jacquelyn Kinkade Silberberg**

**PITCH:** GIRL WITH A PEARL EARRING meets THE INVISIBLE WOMAN

**LOGLINE:** The story of painter and sculptor Edgar Degas and the young dancer he fell in love with at the Paris Opera House, who inspired his most famous works of art.

**GENRE:** Biopic | Drama | Romance

**WHY TO READ:** Based on the life of one of the world's most famous artists, this is a deep and layered story, packed with intrigue, sadness, art, fame, love, and the beauty of Paris. This is the sort of prestige manuscript that will garner attention for its love of the subject matter and depth of knowledge into real life events. This is the sort of biopic that fills the theaters every awards season, employing a successful romantic structure and atmospheric descriptions. The combination of appearances by plenty of other famous artists as well as the beauty of the opera house make this a cornucopia of visual and historical splendor.

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**TITLE: PASCAL LE PIGLET – TRUFFLE HUNTER EXTRAORDINAIRE/HEAD OF THE PIGLET RESISTANCE** by Sebastian Loden

**PITCH:** FANTASTIC MR. FOX meets REDWALL

**LOGLINE:** After an invading army captures their parents, a group of young French animals form a resistance to fight back and rescue them.

**GENRE:** Animation | Family | War

**WHY TO READ:** The first installment in a terrific children's book series or film franchise, this manuscript is unbelievably cute and fun, while still telling an important story from history. The fact that it's a direct allegory for the French resistance in WWII is especially compelling, because it's a part of history that many Americans aren't overly familiar with, meaning that children and their parents will both have something to learn as they read. Pascal's struggle is relatable, and the characters are all lovable, while still remaining distinct. The tongue-in-cheek writing is enjoyable and packed with fun animal puns. This is THE WIND AND THE WILLOWS for a new generation.

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**TITLE: PHANTOM FOREST, THE** by Liz Kerin

**PITCH:** THE HUNGER GAMES meets PAN'S LABYRINTH

**LOGLINE:** A young girl is accidentally transported alive to the underworld during her village's human sacrifice ritual, and ends up teaming up with a demon to return to her world and save her little brother.

**GENRE:** Drama | Fantasy | Young Adult

**WHY TO READ:** The dystopian, fantasy, dark fairytale world of this manuscript could easily be adapted to either film or television. Seicha is a strong-willed and fierce young woman who entertains and entralls the reader. The power struggle between the people in the forest and those in the city has plenty of drama and tension, while the pseudo-religious undertones of the sacrificial ritual allow the manuscript to examine fascinating themes of religion and culture under occupation. This is a complex tale that goes well beyond a simple "escape from" scenario to offer multifaceted moral dilemmas for both the characters and readers alike.

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## THE LAUNCH PAD MANUSCRIPT COMPETITION

**TITLE:           PILLARS OF ELLONDRA, THE by Michael Coon**

PITCH:           THE LORD OF THE RINGS meets GAME OF THRONES

LOGLINE:        In the kingdom of Ellondra, a massive barrier keeps the people safe from dangerous creatures until a breach forms in the wall, threatening the entire kingdom and forcing the next queen to dive head first into a devastating war.

GENRE:           Adventure | Fantasy | War

WHY TO READ:   Well-written fantasy that manages to be easily accessible despite a complex plot, the world of Ellondra is clearly laid out and distinct from other fantasy realms you may have visited in the past. The writing flows from one page to the next and the plot is primed for a series of books. Meanwhile, the characters that populate the kingdom jump off the page and become all too real and relatable. Sierra is a great female lead as she must shoulder the responsibility of so many. With plenty of action, adventure, fantasy, dynamic and unique characters, and even a great romance storyline, this is a four-quadrant hit waiting to happen.

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**TITLE:           PLANETFALL by Nate Shepherd**

PITCH:           THE STAND meets THE BOOK OF ELI

LOGLINE:        In a post-apocalyptic wasteland, a young refugee becomes a messiah when he finds the map to a mythical spaceship that offers salvation to what's left of humanity. As more and more people begin to follow him, he realizes that the hope he wields is the most powerful weapon left on the planet, and could easily corrupt him.

GENRE:           Drama | Sci-Fi

WHY TO READ:   Post-apocalyptic science fiction by way of a Russian novel, this manuscript takes the intellectual approach to its subject matter. The writing is very skilled, providing evocative and detailed descriptions that immediately capture the reader's attention and bring them into the expansive world of the story. Elias is a likable and strong protagonist, and the novel's choice to send him on a descent into power hungry madness provides a truly captivating character study and examination of morality in difficult circumstances.

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**TITLE:           RA by Ben Gentile**

PITCH:           SUNSHINE meets BATTLESTAR GALACTICA

LOGLINE:        Years after the sun went supernova, the space station that shields the Earth and provides heat and light to humanity finds itself the center stage for a rebellion.

GENRE:           Sci-Fi | Thriller

WHY TO READ:   This manuscript is full of fantastic elements that keep your eyes glued to the page. Whether it's the space station keeping the Earth alive, the backstory of the war and the UN's use of slavery to build the ship, or even the use of the artificial sun as a weapon, this sci-fi tale brings it all to the table. This is a manuscript that takes full advantage of its genre and packs the story with great moral quandaries and conversations regarding government, war, politics, and religion. This is what the genre was built to do, and this writer takes full advantage. Meanwhile, the action-packed opening will leave you breathless as it sets up a story filled with twists, turns, and thematic depth. This is easy to see as the next great space opera, with its sprawling ensemble and endless dramatic material.

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## THE LAUNCH PAD MANUSCRIPT COMPETITION

**TITLE: RELEVANT WITCH by Desiree Proctor**

PITCH: SABRINA THE TEENAGE WITCH meets MEAN GIRLS

LOGLINE: After the untimely death of the most popular girl in her class, a teenage nobody takes her shot and gets the lead in the school's production of *The Crucible*, only to find that the subject matter brings forward her own latent magical abilities.

GENRE: Dark Comedy | Supernatural | Young Adult

WHY TO READ: This manuscript is a fun YA premise that promises both a supernatural high school plot as well as an intelligent look at popularity in the age of social media. The "Relevants," with their social media followings and drama club leanings, feel very current, and the fight over the lead role in the musical does a good job of creating inherent conflict in the early chapters. This is a high school story that feels like it could actually exist today, which is a truly unique accomplishment considering the supernatural elements at play. Combining horror, teen drama, and plenty of sarcasm and snark, this hits the perfect tonal sweet spot to be fun and engaging for everyone.

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**TITLE: RETURN TO SUMMERLAND by Noushin Jahanian**

PITCH: PRETTY LITTLE LIARS meets THE CRAFT

LOGLINE: While coping with the tragic death of a friend, a teenager tries to piece together her fractured memories of that fateful night, and soon discovers that she's actually a witch and that her friend was killed in an act of dangerous black magic. Now it is up to her and her newfound coven to stop the vengeful spirit they mistakenly released.

GENRE: Mystery | Supernatural | Young Adult

WHY TO READ: With a great premise and a rollercoaster ride of a plot, this manuscript truly shines when it comes down to character. The characters all feel realistic, unique, and well-rounded, and the girls have distinct, believable relationships. Lark's erased memory makes for a lot of great suspense, and the way they are all haunted by what happened to Beth helps raise the emotional stakes again and again. A fantastic allegory for grief and guilt, the skill and originality of the writing and premise makes this stand out from the crowd, leading to a YA series that young women will respond to in droves.

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**TITLE: RETURNING THE GOLDEN-EYED GIRL by S.G. Meine**

PITCH: DIVERGENT meets ELYSIUM

LOGLINE: Thirty years after a deadly virus swept the surface of their planet, a girl is accidentally transported to a floating city in the sky thought long-abandoned. When she finds out there is an entire population living disease-free, she soon finds herself fleeing from a government that doesn't want its citizens to know about life on the surface.

GENRE: Conspiracy | Sci-Fi | Thriller

WHY TO READ: This is about as clear as you can get when it comes to a young adult sci-fi franchise starter. This manuscript has all the ingredients of a successful series while putting its own spin on all the genre conventions. From the amazingly cinematic setting of a floating city to a great female lead, the world and characters captivate from the first page to the last. Add in a believable love triangle and a protagonist who bucks the trend of the "chosen one," by simply being in the wrong place at the wrong time, and you have an instantly relatable story and personal journey. The combination of a down-to-Earth protagonist and the floating city in the sky make this one of a kind ride.

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## THE LAUNCH PAD MANUSCRIPT COMPETITION

**TITLE: SEA OF TRANQUILITY by Robert Sheppe**

PITCH: STATE OF PLAY meets MOON

LOGLINE: A journalist investigating a private space company is invited to take a trip to the first ever moon colony, only to discover that there are already astronauts living there, and they don't want any company.

GENRE: Conspiracy | Sci-Fi | Thriller

WHY TO READ: Mixing the fun of a cloak-and-dagger mystery with the grandeur of space and the intelligence of science fiction, this manuscript expertly crafts its conspiracy with strong characters, great writing, and plenty of shocking twists and turns. The dark backstory of the other astronauts on the moon is a satisfying way to create conflict and danger throughout the story and incorporates an original alternate history that plays into decades of moon landing conspiracy theories. This is a well-researched piece that utilizes just as much fact as fiction in creating its world. Meanwhile, the reader will immediately sympathize with the protagonist's curiosity and determination, making this the complete package.

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**TITLE: SECOND LOOK, THE by Wendy Simon**

PITCH: PRISONERS meets TRUE DETECTIVE

LOGLINE: After the violent death of his grandson, a US Marshall travels to a small town haunted by two similar murders from 10 years ago in hopes of finding a possible connection between the crimes.

GENRE: Drama | Mystery

WHY TO READ: An intimate portrait of a small town reeling from the aftermath of a tragedy, and how that tragedy impacts families for years to come, this manuscript deftly combines a murder mystery with nostalgia for American values that not only works for the story, but will also keep the reader thinking. The world that the writer creates is three-dimensional and authentic, while the characters that inhabit it are emotional and complex. Rather than give into thriller and conspiracy elements, this manuscript takes a more meditative and artistic approach that creates an eerie but realistic tone. The quality writing and artistic strength of this piece will certainly attract attention.

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**TITLE: SECRET LIVES OF DEAD PROM QUEENS, THE by Marina Richards**

PITCH: DESPERATE HOUSEWIVES meets THE GIFT

LOGLINE: Living a perfect life, a suburban housewife's past comes back to haunt her when the body of the prom queen she killed in high school is found and an investigation opens. Now she must choose what she is willing to do in order to keep her decade-old secret from coming out.

GENRE: Crime | Drama

WHY TO READ: This is a well-written thriller with a lot of great dramatic twists and turns. The protagonist is authentic and nuanced, with her suburban housewife malaise and reluctance to revisit her past. You'll love to hate her and hate how much you love her. The upper class Massachusetts setting is perfectly (and accurately) drawn to provide great social commentary as well as a twinge of cynical humor. The writing is so good, the details so impeccable, that you are transported into the story with ease, and before you know it you'll be hurtling towards the thrilling conclusion. With all of this backing up one of the catchiest titles you'll ever find, this is a best seller waiting to happen.

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## THE LAUNCH PAD MANUSCRIPT COMPETITION

**TITLE: SEVENTH MARK, THE by Shannon Kelley**

PITCH: THE LORD OF THE RINGS meets OUTLANDER

LOGLINE: When a ghost ship crashes into the harbor of a small town, a manhunt ensues for the mysterious figure seen fleeing from the wreckage. As rumor and lore builds around the event, one young boy befriends a powerful stranger who is being blamed for the tragedy.

GENRE: Adventure | Coming-of-Age | Fantasy

WHY TO READ: A world described in such effortless detail that you'll know it as well as your own neighborhood before the end of the book. This tightly written manuscript has a little something for everyone as a young boy deciphers the truth between fact and fiction. Never a slave to the obvious route, this manuscript is packed with shocking but believable twists and upends the reader's expectations at every turn. The lead characters are complex and compelling, while the scenes are packed with tension. There is just the right amount of action, adventure and drama to keep the plot well-paced and always moving forward. This is a fantasy adventure that ignites the imagination.

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**TITLE: SHADOW KING by Susan Hamilton**

PITCH: LOST GIRL meets THE DEPARTED

LOGLINE: In an alternate version of Boston where mystical creatures live alongside humans, a fairy mobster fights to keep control of the city and expand his empire just as he falls in love with an enigmatic fortuneteller.

GENRE: Crime | Drama | Fantasy

WHY TO READ: This is a fun combination of a crime drama and supernatural book series that adds a bit of levity to a dark genre. A great piece for television adaptation, the plot is tense and suspenseful, while the supernatural twist on the mob drama is a nice subversion of the gritty crime stories audiences have been exposed to for over a decade. The city of Boston comes across clearly in the prose, feeling authentic and giving a distinct cultural air to the story due to its mob history and its Irish influence, which plays into the mythology and helps build the lush fantasy world that is living just beneath our own. The writing is strong throughout, creating complex characters and situations that keep the pages turning. Seireadan and Aohdan have instant chemistry and are great co-leads for the story, providing an endless number of potential sequels. You will be eager to read more.

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**TITLE: SHADOW WITHIN, THE by Mark Stoner**

PITCH: GAME OF THRONES meets THE LORD OF THE RINGS

LOGLINE: In a fantastical medieval realm, a prince takes control of his kingdom from his comatose father, a young guardsman kills a slaver, a young girl is kidnapped by a mysterious demonic cult, and a noble-born teenager flees an arranged marriage.

GENRE: Adventure | Fantasy | War

WHY TO READ: This is an ambitious medieval fantasy epic, which effortlessly balances competing storylines across the vast and creative landscape. The writer has created an entirely new world and made it feel real, dangerous, and engaging. The people and places are rich and vividly described, with intriguing alliances, magic, and difficulties unique to each aspect of the story. There's no end to this universe and there are countless tales to be told over any number of books the author would like. The story unfolds at a perfect pace, consistently holding the reader's interest and teasing new developments. The characters are engaging, with clear motivations and personalities that draw the reader in. You won't want this manuscript to end.

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## THE LAUNCH PAD MANUSCRIPT COMPETITION

**TITLE: SHADY PLACE by David Byrne**

PITCH: GRUMPY OLD MEN meets HOT FUZZ

LOGLINE: When a former detective reluctantly moves into a retirement community, he discovers that his neighbor is an ex-mobster he caught years ago and is now in witness protection. Not only does he have to overcome his hatred to compete for the affections of a woman they both want, the two men must team up to solve a series of murders affecting the residents of this sleepy town.

GENRE: Comedy | Crime | Mystery

WHY TO READ: This is a hit comedy in the making. The manuscript taps into the underserved senior audience with a creative premise, tons of laughs, and a collection of fantastic characters, making this a read for anyone who enjoys a good comedic mystery. If that wasn't enough, should this ever be adapted, these are the roles that any aging star would kill to get their hands on. The added fun of the retirement village helps give this a unique POV with a lot of laughs. Still, the writer does not neglect the emotional aspects of the situation and deftly taps into the mind of the protagonist, effortlessly and effectively conveying his grief and frustration. Meanwhile the plot is chock full of great, unexpected twists, and high stakes to keep the reader engaged.

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**TITLE: SMALL ON THE MAP by David Laurie**

PITCH: ENEMY OF THE STATE meets SNOWDEN

LOGLINE: When a peaceful protest turns deadly, a young British woman finds herself caught in the crosshairs as a witness to murder. Unsure of the truth, she is forced to reach out to a team of white hat hackers who are being framed for the terrorist act.

GENRE: Conspiracy | Thriller

WHY TO READ: With all the right ingredients of a perfect conspiracy thriller, this manuscript handles hot-button issues like hacking, surveillance, and dangerous political movements with an intelligence that makes it extremely relevant. Bella is a great lead, as her average person status is quickly destroyed and she is thrust into a world of lies, betrayals, murder, and cover-ups. This is easily the start of a political thriller series as Bella will be changed forever by the end of the story. With so much to offer in regards to character and story, this is a tale that will keep you on the edge of your seat page after page.

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**TITLE: SPY WHO LOATHED ME, THE by Chris Westphal**

PITCH: HAIL, CAESAR! meets THE AMERICANS

LOGLINE: A Russian spy enlists the help of an amateur screenwriter to produce a script on the leader of the Communist Party, Leonid Brezhnev, all while being monitored by an FBI agent who is madly in love with her.

GENRE: Dark Comedy

WHY TO READ: A postmodern farce in the style of Thomas Pynchon or David Foster Wallace, this manuscript deftly combines Cold War anxieties and Hollywood satire into a truly wild and unpredictable narrative. The writing is very strong, and the writer has a subtle and detached voice that ends up providing hilarious commentary on international relations, the entertainment industry, and much more. The trio of main characters each have intricately drawn backstories which enrich and inform who they are in the present, preventing this from sliding so far into the comedic as to lose sight of the emotional core.

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## THE LAUNCH PAD MANUSCRIPT COMPETITION

**TITLE: SUPERKID by Matt Harry**

PITCH: SPY KIDS meets KICK-ASS

LOGLINE: When a teenager discovers his baby sister has super powers, he and his best friend become her babysitters and sidekicks. They soon learn that saving people is not as easy as it seems, and that their whole world has been turned upside down.

GENRE: Action | Comedy | Young Adult

WHY TO READ: This is a fun and engaging read that sets up a young adult series that will connect to and entertain teens across the world. The writing is smart and witty, with a clear, consistent voice that makes reading the book a joy on so many levels. The voice is funny, self-deprecating, and relatable, and really enhances all of the other aspects of the writing. Young kids everywhere will relate to Ravi's character, as he feels like a bit of an outcast but has an opportunity to do something great. There is also a lot to learn from this story as it is about responsibility, discovery, and family. In addition, the dialogue is great, with lots of little character details that really let us know more about these people and their lives. The idea of a baby superhero is also really funny and after so many serious, gritty superhero tales, it's enjoyable to read something more lighthearted.

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**TITLE: TALLOK by David Luz**

PITCH: GAME OF THRONES meets MISTBORN TRILOGY

LOGLINE: In a world where a winged race has enslaved humans for centuries, a human resistance arises, led by a young princess.

GENRE: Adventure | Fantasy | Young Adult

WHY TO READ: This manuscript is the start of the next big fantasy franchise. The writing is active and engaging, combining beautiful prose with detailed world-building. The characters explode off the page, each one distinct and relatable, combining wonderful attributes with clear flaws. In particular, Princess Grasdin, who has all the GAME OF THRONES' Daenerys Targaryen qualities you could hope for, while still remaining incredibly distinct. This dichotomy in each character extends throughout the manuscript, allowing each side of the conflict both positive and negative traits, creating a true moral complexity that only the best of fiction can achieve. Packed with explosive action, exciting conflict and political intrigue, this book has something for everyone.

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**TITLE: TAOS HUM, THE by Troy Nethercott**

PITCH: THE SIGNAL meets THE CHERNOBYL DIARIES

LOGLINE: A documentary filmmaker teams up with an army vet whose husband is missing in order to investigate a mysterious sound heard by residents of a small New Mexico town, unearthing a dangerous government conspiracy along the way.

GENRE: Conspiracy | Drama | Thriller

WHY TO READ: Based on a fascinating and mysterious real life phenomenon, this manuscript effortlessly taps into pervasive fears of surveillance and government control while grounding its twists and turns in the gritty excitement of a conspiracy thriller. The documentary bent to the story helps increase the paranoia and the feeling that you're along for the ride of uncovering this mystery, placing you right in the heart of the action. With a pair of fantastic, mismatched leads, there's an emotional core to this manuscript that other such stories often forget, raising the stakes even higher. This is the next low budget found footage horror hit waiting to happen.

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## THE LAUNCH PAD MANUSCRIPT COMPETITION

**TITLE: THIS CHANGES EVERYTHING by Kirsten Maron**

PITCH: QUANTUM LEAP meets THE FAMILY MAN

LOGLINE: A man must deal with having the uncontrollable "gift" of his spirit jumping randomly into other people's bodies, while managing the rest of his life, which is falling apart due to his periodic absences.

GENRE: Dark Comedy | Supernatural

WHY TO READ: This high-concept manuscript is anchored by a fantastic protagonist, who is given depth and complexity even outside of his supernatural "gifts." The tension in Nick's relationships with his family, friends, and wife all feel natural and realistic, raising the stakes for the body-swapping, rather than vice versa. The body swap scenes are fantastically written, providing intriguing challenges and plenty of opportunity for thematic examinations of the possibilities of empathy. This is an original take on the body-swapping story that will both entertain and educate.

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**TITLE: TREV by Val Mote**

PITCH: SKINS meets THE WIRE

LOGLINE: Three friends from a poor London estate have their lives overturned when they witness a gang hit outside their apartment building.

GENRE: Crime | Drama | Young Adult

WHY TO READ: This manuscript captures a unique voice and experience with unparalleled detail and care. This is a coming-of-age story in a world that many people are not familiar with, that of lower class London. The world-building is incredibly impressive, effortlessly conveying the umbrella of hopelessness and danger that these kids live under 24/7. If that wasn't enough, the story also expertly analyzes the dynamics of gender, race, age, and class that permeate lives on every continent. However, the real strength in these pages is the fantastic character work. Trev, with his artistic ambitions, Ali with his beat boxing, and Stu the quiet genius are a great lead trio. We care so much about these kids that once they are placed into the dangerous and thrilling position of being witnesses to a gang-inspired murder, it's impossible to turn away.

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**TITLE: VICTORIA THE FIRST by Bill Osinski**

PITCH: SUFFRAGETTE meets THE KING'S SPEECH

LOGLINE: The true story of Victoria Woodhull, who goes from sham psychic to prominent political activist, leads the suffragette movement, and becomes the first woman to ever run for President of the United States.

GENRE: Drama | Political | True

WHY TO READ: With the 2016 election having the first ever major female presidential contender, this is a story that will be in the zeitgeist for years to come. This is a thrilling fictionalization of the life of one of the most fascinating, and unknown, American historical figures. She was not only a woman of fantastic contradictions and questionable character, but also had a hand in just about everything going on in late-1800s America. There's a biopic bursting out of these pages. It's perfect for adaptation, and this is a character that any actress would kill to play. This manuscript deftly elevates her eclectic experiences to the scope of a national epic while interweaving modern day themes and social issues that have been plaguing our country for more than 150 years. The writing is strong and intelligent, capturing Victoria's voice and the time period with wit and emotion to spare.

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## THE LAUNCH PAD MANUSCRIPT COMPETITION

**TITLE: VINCENT ISLAND by Amelia Fergusson**

PITCH: 12 YEARS A SLAVE meets DEADWOOD

LOGLINE: The inhabitants of a Caribbean island in 1845 are a mixture of freed British slaves and white colonists, struggling to find their place in a post-slavery world filled with race, class, and religious conflict in their lawless outpost of the Empire.

GENRE: Drama

WHY TO READ: This manuscript combines strong, literary writing with a fantastic setting absolutely filled with thematic and dramatic potential. The vivid island setting occupies a fascinating untold chapter of history, with its racial and class divides, religious conflict, Wild West style law enforcement, and strange position as a colony of free blacks close to pre-Civil War America. The writer's skill for prose captures many characters quickly and efficiently, immediately drawing you into the world. The voices are strong and the plotlines are all set up with a bang. This is not only compelling as a novel, but also has all the makings of a great premium cable drama series.

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**TITLE: WE JUMPED ANYWAY by Katelynn Dey**

PITCH: THE FAULT IN OUR STARS meets ALL THE BRIGHT PLACES

LOGLINE: Just before their high school graduation, six friends are caught in a devastating fire that leaves one of them in a coma and the rest struggling to understand what happened, and where to go from there.

GENRE: Coming-of-Age | Drama | Young Adult

WHY TO READ: This manuscript has incredible forward momentum, with each scene leading into the next with suspense and tension. The intricate structure preserves the mystery of the central tragedy until the very end, where everything pays off in an organic and cathartic conclusion. The ripple effect of the fire on all of the main characters results in so much emotion and tension that you are instantly invested in their lives and relationships. The dialogue is spot-on, the writing evocative, and the coming-of-age themes universal. This is an all-around powerful and emotional read.

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**TITLE: WEST OF WEIRD by Harrison Cheung**

PITCH: WHITE OLEANDER meets FRESH OFF THE BOAT

LOGLINE: A 15-year-old Caucasian in foster care is adopted by a single Chinese-American father and has to adjust to the cultural shift, unwittingly becoming involved with a sexually sadistic neighborhood couple in the process.

GENRE: Coming-of-Age | Drama | Young Adult

WHY TO READ: There's an undeniable force and power in this story of an adoption across racial boundaries that speaks to modern ideas of family, race, and identity through the lens of a simple and emotional character-driven tale. Charlie is a fantastic protagonist, with his unique point-of-view coming across effortlessly in the writing. Readers will be completely invested in seeing him warm to his slightly strange but well-meaning adoptive father. The best part of this story is its potential to be adapted in almost any way you could imagine: the indie comedy-drama film, the quirky sitcom, or even a darker drama focusing on some of the sexual undertones of the manuscript are all viable options.

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## THE LAUNCH PAD MANUSCRIPT COMPETITION

**TITLE: WHITE CROW, THE by Paula Rogers**

PITCH: MERCY STREET meets MEDIUM

LOGLINE: After she sees a vision of her brother on the day he dies thousands of miles away fighting in the Civil War, an epileptic woman follows a charismatic medium into his Spiritualist commune where she struggles to find the truth in a faith built on séances and sleight of hand.

GENRE: Drama | Supernatural

WHY TO READ: This is unlike any Civil War story you have ever read before. Tapping into the fascinating cult of Victorian spiritualism, this manuscript makes the most of its setting to create drama and atmosphere without resorting to any clichéd war tales. Anna is a compelling protagonist as she deals with both external and internal torments. The grief over her brother's death mixed with the implications of her epilepsy makes her complex and relatable. It is the overlap of mental illness and the supernatural that speaks so loudly from this project. In addition, this manuscript manages to do the near impossible, create a love triangle that does not feel exploitative, but instead a believable one with thematic force behind it.

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**TITLE: WORLD WAR 2.1 by Mark E. McCann**

PITCH: THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE meets FREQUENCY

LOGLINE: A young man accidentally opens a portal to 1943 Germany after tinkering with a Nazi artifact brought back by his grandfather from WWII. What begins as a fascinating trip to the past quickly turns into him causing significant changes in history that could turn the tide in favor of the Germans.

GENRE: Adventure | Sci-Fi | War

WHY TO READ: From its cinematic opening in World War II to the more intimate scenes between our characters in the present day, this manuscript has a clear idea of its themes and goals, and tells a complicated and thrilling story anchored by a fantastic sci-fi premise. The writer's gift for creating vivid action scenes and complex characters helps elevate this alternate history story above others of the same ilk. The best thing this manuscript does however, even beyond its well-executed twists and turns, is providing intelligent meditations on generational differences and the way that we communicate with those we love.

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**TITLE: WORLD WAR METAL by Luke Preston**

PITCH: I, ROBOT meets ZOOLANDER

LOGLINE: When all the world's robots rise up to destroy humanity, a supermodel will stop at nothing to find her son in the chaos, and might just end up saving the world along the way.

GENRE: Action | Comedy | Sci-Fi

WHY TO READ: This is the kind of fantastic sci-fi comedy premise that manages to be pure fun in a way that few other stories can accomplish. Abigail is a fantastic protagonist, remaining strong, witty, and intelligent as the world around her falls apart. Her relationship to her son is the emotional core a story like this needs, while her supermodel looks juxtaposed with Mad Max-style action heroine grunge make her original and hilarious. The writer has packed this manuscript with unique ideas and an unrelenting sense of humor. Practically begging for a great cinematic adaptation, this book is a page-turner in its own right, managing to do the hardest job in fiction – making a book laugh-out-loud funny.

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## THE LAUNCH PAD MANUSCRIPT COMPETITION

**TITLE: WRECKAGE by James Morris**

PITCH: LORD OF THE FLIES meets PRETTY LITTLE LIARS

LOGLINE: After six prep school students survive a plane crash in the Amazon, they must struggle to live in the jungle with little hope of rescue. Only one girl makes it home alive to tell the story, or, at least, her version of it.

GENRE: Drama | Thriller | Young Adult

WHY TO READ: The sheer definition of a page-turner. This manuscript deftly combines the survival thriller with aspects of a young adult romance story. The result is an intriguing and powerful book that provides layered mysteries ready to unfold and tons of high-stakes action. With a fantastic and complex cast of characters all surrounding our protagonist, who is a brilliantly-written unreliable narrator, this manuscript manages to take a genre everyone is familiar with and give it a new teen soap twist that is as modern as the story itself is classic.

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**TITLE: YARDELL CHRONICLES by Lisa Renee Jones**

PITCH: JESSICA JONES meets SHADOWHUNTERS

LOGLINE: A young woman with the ability to speak to spirits is charged with guarding a portal to purgatory as she works alongside her friends at a paranormal investigation agency in San Francisco.

GENRE: Drama | Mystery | Supernatural

WHY TO READ: This manuscript has a distinct, foreboding atmosphere that enhances the tension and suspense of the supernatural procedural formula. Practically made for a network television adaptation, this has all the necessary ingredients: high stakes, a great protagonist, a fun supporting cast, the antagonistic cop love interest, and that greatest of story engines – the detective agency. The supernatural bent and San Francisco setting only elevate it, combining darker story elements with plenty of sarcastic comedy to strike a foolproof tone. Perfectly balancing a timeless story formula with a wholly original premise, this is a genre success waiting to happen.

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**TITLE: YUAN FEN SHANGHAI TORAH by Briana London**

PITCH: SHOAH meets LETTERS FROM IWO JIMA

LOGLINE: As World War II erupts, a young Jewish scribe flees Lithuania with his most prized possession – his in-progress copy of the Torah – setting him on an unusual collision course with a family of Chinese calligraphers living under Japanese occupation.

GENRE: Drama | War

WHY TO READ: Effortlessly balancing the epic and the intimate, this tale of intertwining destinies at the apex of human conflict feels like it should already be on your bookshelf alongside other classic explorations of the human experience. As the story unfolds like the most intricate of historical fiction novels, this writer intelligently engages with themes of religion, family, nationality, and the power of the written word. This story is packed with complex and unique characters that jump off the page and into your heart, with no role too small to be treated with depth and personal care. Anchored by well-researched, organic, and powerful writing, this manuscript is a true literary accomplishment.

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## THE LAUNCH PAD MANUSCRIPT COMPETITION

**TITLE:** **ZERO ECHO SHADOW PRIME by Peter Samet**

**PITCH:** EX MACHINA meets ORPHAN BLACK

**LOGLINE:** A brilliant teen programmer dying of cancer is saved by a tech mogul's risky cloning procedure, only to awake and discover that the mogul separated her into four separate entities, each of which she must fight to gain freedom while figuring out how to become whole again.

**GENRE:** Drama | Sci-Fi | Young Adult

**WHY TO READ:** This manuscript stands out in a world filled with dystopian YA novels, as it grounds its story in a realistic and familiar future with a compelling protagonist. This is a story centered on complex characters, presented in a new and interesting way. The protagonist is the kind of role that any young actress would love to play in an adaptation, a science prodigy who must look inside to pull the various aspects of herself back together – it's the kind of role that launches a career. This is a thematic and dramatic goldmine, one which prioritizes the personal, intellectual, and emotional elements over loud explosions and contrived rebellions. To top that all off the writing is superb, with a strong voice and realistic dialogue that capitalizes on its fantastic premise at every turn.

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