



BOOK PIPELINE

– Title by Author –

CONCEPT/ MARKETABILITY: In *[Title]*, a bold young heroine, living in an alternate reality vampire infested 19th Century England, finds herself trapped in a *Hunger Games* like “Offering”, as well as a *Twilight* like love triangle between her human and vampire lovers. These predicaments open the doors to discussions about classism, feminism and the supernatural, which all nicely lend themselves to YA serialization and fandom. This is familiar terrain for YA audiences, but has great potential for novel permutations. Making the heroism primary, and the romantic plotting secondary, as it appears you have done in the synopsis, is smart. Younger readers have a stronger sense of injustice and appreciate a strong hero as opposed to a girl trying to choose a boyfriend. Due to market taste, it may have more potential as a graphic novel, akin to *Mary Shelley Vampire Hunter*, or any number of other underdog anti-hero period adventure serials. You have the basis here for a high stakes drama that appeals to many demographics.

PLOT/CHARACTERS: We know exactly who our heroine is from the beginning. This is a compliment. Violet Thorne, your heroine, a scrappy street-smart pickpocket and devoted sister and daughter, has been given demons and dimension. She has problems with impulse control and poverty, and getting caught stealing. Violet is a poor thief and a comfortable cross dresser. These qualities are very much in line with modern and not so modern classic heroines. A complicated hero who doesn't quite fit in has more to gain in their bravery and self-sacrifice than they have to lose. Well done. Try not to compromise this ethos in the romantic plot. Violet also does seem to know herself and makes every effort to do the right thing even when it's the wrong thing, which is endearing, and makes us trust her. This reader was baffled when she allows Hugo to buy her a dress, as the resolution of an argument that was a self-described “submission” on her part for no apparent reason. Even Violet's easy relent to go “walking” with her mark rang false. Try not to fall into “no means yes” cliché with your romantic heroine, just because she is an outsider with few prospects whose primary instinct is to be combative. For instance, as Violet's first proclaimed potential suitor, the aristocratic Hugo Howard, is introduced quite immediately and with haste. It is a jarring introduction that lacks the time and finesse required to create the connection that you might be looking for. We need to know both characters better, as they need to know each other, to invest emotionally

in their budding romance. Hugo is written as a clichéd aristocrat, in that we know what he's wearing, but not much more. We know Hugo has an expensive watch and likes to flirt with strangers who rob him of his excessive good fortune and then ask the thief on a date. This gives us the impression that he's superficial and possibly peculiar. Their relationship needs to be drawn out and we need more instances of Hugo's character and why they would find each other compelling, to believe she is making a reasonable choice. Early in the novel we are establishing an emotional connection with our heroine and plotting or character deficiencies will make it harder to root for her in the end. Even when she makes mistakes, we should see why she thought they were the right choices. The robbery and Hugo and Violet's time at the Dressmaker's appear to be the entirety of the plot for the first three chapters, and come to near resolution in a matter of moments. This undermines the credibility of our lovers. I really would recommend spacing their courtship out, possibly laying more world-building groundwork with flashbacks, or parallel plots with characters we will meet in some of the more fantastical aspects of the story, or even having the lovers show us the world of 1825 England as they experience it in a more believable time frame. Your ability to pace action is strong, and there is plenty of time and space to give yourself room to breathe in your writing.

The larger arc of the plot is left out of the submission, for future reading, which could undermine the credibility of the synopsis, to agents and publishers. The story of Violet's first encounter with a vampire might better serve the author if it were told earlier in the novel, and with more gravity, as it is central to the building of the mythos of the primary conflict. Possibly, more reference to the expulsion of the vampires or more thorough clues to the state-of-affairs in her world would give the reader the sense that they are in a novel that meets the expectation set by the synopsis. Three chapters in and, I was quite surprised to not have met an antagonist or encountered rising tension. An antagonist can simply be "poverty" or "class" or "monsters", but none of those things seem to be an actual challenge for Violet.

A good place to leave crumbs and expose clues would be in interactions with peripheral characters. You've established Violet's family with a context and lives of their own, but the mother could use some dialogue or backstory that gives us a sense of where Violet came from. Her interest in Violet's marriage prospects is predictable, but one dimensional without other indications of her character. Of all the women we meet in this novel, only Violet is whole person, with the other women standing in as stock characters; whereas the men have all been given personalities. A few expository hints in dialogue or description would remedy this easily. We visit them all quite briefly, and they could present as well conceived individuals who support her backstory, with a few more details.

VOICE: You have a strong and consistent voice. It is a modern voice, with snippets of inconsistent dialect, and may do you a disservice in a period novel. Had the novel been set in the present, the dialogue and descriptions would have been more fitting. As we are in an alternate universe, anything is possible, but I was pulled from the story by the dialogue. Specifically, it was rife with contractions, clunky clues and

anachronisms, reminding the reader that we are pretending to be in the past. Perhaps period, horror, and fantasy require their own voice.

MECHANICS: The submission is easy to read; no loose ends, confusion, or lost threads. That said; there are typos, missing punctuation, grammatical, and spelling errors. Simple things like “wondered” is not “wandered,” would have been picked up and strengthened the professionalism of your submission. I highly recommend a proofreader. The pacing would be excellent for a graphic novel or television, and does speed the reader along, but forsakes the opportunity to show us where we are and bear witness to the unfolding of the drama. This reader would like to see more and be told less. The dialogue could be tighter; leaving more room for descriptive language and first person narration so often associated with the novel format.

EMOTIONAL RESONANCE: Reading about a young girl fighting for freedom to live her life and support her family in the way in which she sees fit, often contrary to society’s notions about her class and gender is completely relatable to me, as well as readers across a diverse audience. An ongoing war against tyranny, corruption and conspiracy is timely and speaks to the sense of unrest and injustice many readers, as well as myself, know too well in 2020. Generally, these are timeless tropes and excellent fodder for novels. In your submission, we encounter them in the synopsis, but not in the submission. In this submission, we find a rushed romance between a have and a have-not, and a good daughter story. These lines carry their own resonance, with potential heartrending meaning. At this time they are underwritten, and unavoidably risk cliché. I would suggest embedding your romance in a larger story, your larger story, at the outset, to give the reader more of what they came for, and give yourself more breadth to write the relationship your heroine is worthy of.

My feeling, after reading the submission, is that the synopsis is strong and the pacing of the action is good, but the dialogue is excessive without being important. This removes me from the first-person interior thinking that is so essential in emotionally connecting to a novel. On the other hand, the peripheral characters have potential, and remind me our heroine has a family which creates dimension and resonance. I need to know more about them.

The world-building potential for this novel is familiar, maybe, derivative but could carry its own weight and produce something interesting, and compelling should it be fully defined and explored. Bringing that drama and horror to the surface more quickly in the novel could raise the stakes and make the story more exciting.

OTHER THOUGHTS: We are told, by the synopsis, that we are in an alternate universe version of 1825 England, but we are not shown that world. The disconnect between the expectation of the synopsis and the reality of the first three chapters, is a hindrance to a well-received submission. There are too few descriptions of Violet’s surroundings to give rise to the experience of her world. Valuable description and backstory are divulged in rushed encounters. This universe is boiling over with a secret island of vampires who apparently lost a war with an English King, but we do

not see it. The first three chapters are hurried introductions containing dialogue based exposition letting us know there will be vampires, but for a novel that is genre, the reader would be better served by a deep descriptive dive into the fantastical new world they were anticipating. The story starts before the backdrop is in place. The premise holds the promise of something akin to *Pride, Prejudice and Zombies* or even a YA *Interview with a Vampire*.