



# BOOK PIPELINE

– [Title] by XXX –

## **CONCEPT / MARKETABILITY:**

How do the people you encounter help (or hinder) you in healing from a trauma? The story explores themes of physical and emotional PTSD from a random assault, and the ways in which a person both slowly comes back to themselves and changes who they are in response to a traumatic event.

Ultimately, this is going to be a great story, and finely written. This type of fiction tends to be very popular. To make it even more sensational, focus a bit more on the crime and mystery aspect— again, don't pull anything from Catherine, but teasing it out more and giving more weight to the ending could give things a kick. Consider cutting some of the extraneous plots and focus on the rich story around Catherine. On a more literary plane, round out the plant/Catherine metaphor.

## **PLOT/ STRUCTURE / CHARACTERS:**

The three primary characters we've met in the first few chapters are nicely drawn, and the slow but steady reveal of Catherine's life is effective. The dialogue in particular is well done, and feels very natural so far, which is a great way to build character.

Be cautious, though, that it almost feels on the brink of becoming a white knight story—in addition to the man-saving-the-damsel repetition in the first few chapters (the officer, the doctor, the artist), the synopsis, though mapping out multiple storylines, largely seems to center on how these men save the lost little girl (Billy rescues her from the post-lineup limbo, Max helps her “to reenter the world” and she “no longer feels like a corpse,” Jack's affection to the cat shows her “how loveless her life has been and that she needs to change,” Billy helps her “experience a new kind of joy.”) If Catherine is the protagonist, give her agency; make the story about her. She doesn't have to heal or triumph, necessarily (and indeed it seems like the plan is for her to bow out at the end), but it would be more rewarding to see her with a little more stock in her own story, a little more agency, or at least more action than only responding to what the men do around her.

Also somewhat concerning is that the plots, at least in the synopsis, seem only loosely connected. Frankly, the story you first present (Catherine's attack and subsequent events) is engaging in and of itself, and could very easily be a stellar story on its own. (Tana French's novels, each with its own singular, though richly convoluted plot, come to mind.) The Jack plot in particular feels like an entirely separate story. That's not to say the other plots don't have merit or won't be worthwhile, but as-presented in the synopsis, they seem more tangential to or even distracting from the compelling story you've begun in the first few chapters.

The story essentially starts when a serial assailant allows a victim to see his face. While the manuscript focuses on the victim's recovery rather than the police hunt, there is a violent crime at the heart of the story. That fact seems to get forgotten in the synopsis. Though you shouldn't pull any attention away from Catherine's story or recovery (it's very interesting), consider playing with the crime aspect a little more. Every time the synopsis mentioned a new character or plot line, it seemed like that it would be a clue—but the crime's resolution is glossed over and our heroine leaves town to start over again. Because the crime is the impetus for the story, and in fact the only reason she even meets any of the other characters, that was disappointing, almost as if it was a forgotten thread.

#### **VOICE:**

Though Catherine is indeed lost and confused, with a combination of concussion and emotional distress from the attack, her perspective and voice are clear enough that we easily see things through her eyes. Even if the reader has never experienced any of the things she is currently juggling, her swirling emotions and tenuous attempts to function normally are clear and raw. She is a strong and effective narrator, deftly and competently written.

There is a tendency for somewhat clichéd or grandiose phrasing that feel incongruent to the protagonist/narrator (Billy could perhaps pull some of them off, but they feel out of place from the perspective we're given.), which can be distracting. Otherwise, it's nicely written and pulls off a delicate balance of expressing and reflecting Catherine's confusion and distraction while clearly and sharply telling her story.

#### **MECHANICS:**

Overall, this is lovely, easy prose that's very readable; it's suspenseful enough to keep the reader turning pages, but lovely enough that they aren't going to skip ahead. Again, the dialogue is nicely done thus far.

There are a few small jumps in time that are a little confusing—the large jumps are well executed, but a few of the smaller ones (e.g.: the jumps between the social worker being

at Catherine's apartment and Catherine going to the station again) seem abrupt. This could simply be a technical fix. If, however, this is a stylistic choice to reflect her muddled state of mind, perhaps a little more description around those moments would help make that more clear.

It was a little disappointing that you've set yourself up for a beautiful and epic metaphor about how the eroding topsoil she's left and the aeroponic agriculture she's in now parallels her current situation, but then seem to ignore it. While there is definitely strength in subtlety, it wouldn't hurt to grow and nurture the metaphor just a little. Otherwise her career could be anything and the story stand just the same; since you've picked this, make it do its share.

### **EMOTIONAL RESONANCE:**

The reader is immediately emotionally invested—how could we not feel sympathetic to the (literally) lost person who's just gotten beaten up? The back and forth of her past and present, mental confusion and acuity, and trust and suspicion all work well to engage the reader intellectually and emotionally. The reader is anxious to continue, to learn more about the characters, and understand what she is dealing with and how she does (or doesn't) heal.