

PubWest 2009
Pub 101
Poisoned Pen Press: Life of a Book

Poisoned Pen Press: The Life of a Book
Or
The Ideal vs the Real World of Book Publishing

Sweeping Up Glass
By Carolyn Wall

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- 1.) Editorial
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Query Letter:

Dear Ms. Peters:

Nineteen thirty eight is the coldest winter recorded in Aurora, Kentucky, where poverty is the rule of thumb. On a strip of icy mountain, Olivia Cross raises her grandson Will'm, runs a declining front room grocery store, and tolerates Ida, who lives on her land in a tarpaper shack. Ida is her mother, but, as Olivia says, "I thought if I stopped calling her ma'am, it would end her owning every last thing about me. It never did."

Other than Will'm, the one brilliant star in Olivia's sky was her first and only true love, Wing Harris. However, for 25 years, she and Wing have exchanged nothing but howdies at Ruse's Cafe. And now, up on the mountain, someone is mutilating Olivia's Silver Faced wolves. She knows who the hunter is, but discovers early on that he's tied to her family's darkest secrets. Worst of all, after fourteen years, Will'm's mother has come back for him.

I have completed an 85,000 word historical mainstream novel titled **The Judas Hunter**. This book contains the same bold characters as *To Kill A Mockingbird* and the powerful emotions of *Cold Mountain*. Faced with the hardest decision of her life, Olivia Cross uncovers the ritual of the notorious Cotton Trial lynchings, and discovers that *nothing* in Aurora is what it seems to be.

Included here is my bio, a synopsis, and the first 20 pages. Thank you for looking at my proposal.

Carolyn D. Wall

Author Information:
Carolyn D. Wall
Bio

Carolyn Wall is the Fiction Editor for *ByLine Magazine* and Senior Staff Writer for *Persimmon Hill*, the official publication of the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum. She was chief writer for the children's magazine at the museum for four years. Wall also is a full-time freelance writer, lecturer and teacher of creative writing across the southern and mid-western United States. She conducts intensive classes in Fiction, Short Story and Feature Writing, Journaling, and Writing for Children. As an Artist-in-Residence for the Oklahoma Arts Council, her residencies have been across the state of Oklahoma, and her students range from six to 80 years old.

More than 1,000 of Ms. Wall's stories, photographs, and reviews have appeared in more than 100 magazines and newspapers, and in 1995, she wrote for and edited the book *Braced Against The Wind*, the only literary history of the bombing of Oklahoma City. In the fall of 1998, she wrote, produced and recorded *The Journaling Tapes: Writing From The Heart*, a six-weeks' course in daily journaling.

For the American Education Corporation, she was the voice of the A+dvanced Learning System's computer programs in writing, mathematics, and social studies K-3, and has done voice-over work for radio and television commercials.

Ms. Wall has won regional and national writing honors, and was the recipient of the Creme-de-la-Creme Award from the Oklahoma State Writers' Federation, Inc., in 1997 for a Young Adult short story. OWFI incorporates 35 writing organizations in five states. In the fall of 1998, Ms. Wall was presented with a writing residency in Wyoming by the U.S. Department of the Interior and Wyoming's Bearlodge Writers. There, she took the opportunity to begin her first novel, *The Rule of the Sacred Game*, which recently won the Creme-de-la-Creme from OWFI for a second time. She recently completed her second novel, *The Judas Hunter*.

Reader Responses:

Dear Carolyn D. Wall,

We have finally completed our review of your manuscript, *The Judas Hunter*. I have only two reader's comments for your story, and they are very positive so I have marked your manuscript as ready to go on to our editor-in-chief.

Here are the comments from our readers:

Reader 1:

OVERALL

I really loved this book. It reminded me a lot of *Back Roads* by Tawni O'Dell, not in plot but in voice and readability. Although this book was very enjoyable, I wouldn't really call it a mystery, more of a human drama. As such, I'm not sure if it is appropriate for publication by Poisoned Pen Press. If we don't publish it, though, I hope the author finds another publisher somewhere...it really is a great book.

SETTING

The Judas Hunter is set in the backwoods of Kentucky, in a small town in Pope County. Much of the action occurs in a small country grocery store, the tiny town's inn, in the woods or on the farms of various characters.

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

I loved the characters. The main character and narrator is Olivia and we get to see much of her life. Her stories of the hills she lives in start during her youth and the book follows her until she is a 42 year old grandmother raising a wolf-loving grandson name Will'm. Other main characters are Olivia's father and mother, Tate and Ida, her husband Saul, her childhood lover, Wing, and her good friends Junk and Love Alice Hanley.

DIALOGUE

I enjoyed the dialogue immensely. Each character's voice perfect fits. Years and experience can be heard in each sentence. The language just flows.

PLOT

The Judas Hunter tells the story of a town coming to grips with its racist past, of young love and mothers and daughters becoming more alike. A background to all this is wolf poaching and a young boy who loves animals. The stories are too varied to describe in a single plot synopsis...it is really just about life.

WRITING

The writing style is excellent and gripping. The first half of the story is a slow burn, details and information are gradually added and characters are filled in. About halfway through the story picks up speed and builds to a beautiful finish. Again, I really enjoyed reading this book.

Reader 2:

Wow. If I had any influence at PPP I would have you camped out on the author's doorstep begging her to let us print it. This is the best manuscript you have sent me and one of the best books I have read this year. Great story.... and a popular contemporary theme.... backwoods growing up, hard times etc., race relations, romance in a spare, cold universe.

Incredible plot twist. Writing is great. It reminded me of *THE YEAR THE COLORED SISTERS CAME TO TOWN* by Landry and *WISH YOU WELL* by David Baldacci.

It also made me think of one of my favorite books of all times, *CHIEFS*, Stuart Woods' debut novel.

But is it a murder mystery? But do I care? There is a mystery and murders.

It is not a who-dun-it, but a slow unraveling of mystery.

This is a skilled author at work. This book could be a classic, and would make a great movie. Or Oprah. This would be a great Oprah pick.

It might need about another 20 pages, but maybe not. It is tight and taut. This reminds me of several books I have read lately in that it begins with a girl's life and traces it through hard times into adulthood.

Originality. Nearly excellent. This is in the footsteps of TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD, but the treatment is very original

Setting. Excellent. I was in that cabin, smelled those wolves, inhaled the damp earth. I didn't realize they were in Kentucky until far into the book. That might be introduced earlier. I thought they were in the northwest, probably because of the wolves. The setting was an integral part of the plot.

Characters Excellent ++++ Everyone, even the minorest of minor characters breathed. The main characters were unforgettable.

Dialogue Excellent++ One of my all time favorite books on this score. Her expressions, the voices of the blacks and the children, all deftly rendered. The mad mother, Ida, her rambling just enough. This would make a great audio book.

Plotting Excellent. Intricately plotted. You were in the action. I think I would have liked a little more about the daughter, maybe a few more pages.

Everything built on the subtleties that went before. You went, "Whaaat.... well, of course...."

Excellence in writing Excellent+++ She chose a very difficult voice and tense and carried it off superbly. I don't think I spotted one misused word or grammar mistake. Actually there was one misused word. Usually my manuscripts are scribbled on and underlined and filled with "notes to self, exclamation point". There is only one mark in this manuscript, but I can't find it now.

The HOOKExcellent I was drawn in from the first and there were subsequent hooks.

Cadence Excellent. Timing and musicality... this book defines those concepts.

The VOICE... Excellent+ Starts off strong and never wavers. This is no plaster saint. this is a heroine who makes bad choices and lives with the consequences, but we root for her. A few more pages might have been inserted to explain those choices.

Characters Excellent++ These are characters that will stay with me

Uniqueness Excellent: the language! the writing!

This is a book I would buy and give to friends as a gift.

I hope I wasn't too effusive. This gripped me. As I said, I think it could use another 20 pages or so. But it could be sent to the printers as is. I didn't like the title at all.

Someone will publish this book and make a lot of money. I hope it is PPP (on both scores)