

HOW TO SURVIVE THE SLUSH PILE

All you REALLY need to know about creating a
winning submission.

CHECKLIST

THE BASICS

- Can you slot your novel into a space on an existing bookshelf?
- Have you checked out what publishers/agents are looking for?
- Do you read in your sub-genre?
- Is your basic grammar, spelling, and punctuation up to snuff?
- Does the word count measure up?

THE CHARACTERS

- Do you have a clear antagonist and protagonist?
- Do they both have:
 - a goal?
 - clear motivation?
 - internal conflict?
 - external conflict?
- Have you introduced characters who serve no purpose? i.e. Do they challenge your protagonist in some way? If not, KILL THEM.
- Have you introduced more than two characters in the first chapter leading to character soup?

- Are they well-rounded, three-dimensional characters?

THE STRUCTURE

Can you, on a separate sheet of paper, identify the following points in your novel? BONUS POINTS if you can identify the progress of the protagonist and antagonist's inner conflict at these stages.

- **Set-up:** What does your character's life look like, and what's missing – what has to change?
- **Meet-cute:** Initial meeting between your lovers (if you're writing romance)
- **Inciting moment:** The event that pushes your character into another world...the 'call to action'
- **Fun and Games:** The sequence in which your character learns the ropes of their new world.
- **The Midpoint:** The end of the first half of the novel.
- **Bad guys close in:** All of the 'bad' emotions beat up your character to defeat their goal, leaving to their situation disintegrating.
- **All hope is lost:** As it suggests, your character has either lost everything or everything has lost its meaning.
- **The dark night of the soul:** The character mourns what they've lost

- **Resolution:** Your character achieves their goal.
- **Final Image:** Your changed character in their new environment.

(Adapted from Blake Snyder's Save the Cat: The last book on screenwriting you'll ever)

THE WRITING

- Is there a clear writer's voice that matches the genre?
- Is there more showing than telling?
- Does the tone match the genre?

