

How to *Find* an Agent and *Sell* Your Writing

A Practical Guide to the Impractical World of Publishing



by J.A. Konrath

Author of the Lt. Jack Daniels Mystery Series
Coming June 2004 from Hyperion

Seven Tips for Breaking into Print

1. Always listen to industry pros; even if they wind up being wrong, you'll learn from the experience.
2. Seek criticism, not praise. Knowing what's wrong will help you improve.
3. Be ready and willing to rewrite and edit, a lot.
4. Read what's currently selling, and come up with comparable ideas.
5. Don't take rejection personally. This is a business, so be businesslike.
6. Make sure the Work is free from typos, spelling errors, and formatting problems.
7. NEVER GIVE UP.

Four Rewriting Secrets

1. Read your Work out loud--it helps you catch errors.
2. Put the Work away for a month before editing.
3. Cut up the Work with scissors--this allows you to rearrange scenes, and to see how the story works without them.
4. Take advice and try new things. Nothing will be lost; you can always revert back to the original. But everything can be gained.

Breaking Through
How I Got My Agent and a Three Book Deal.
by J.A. Konrath

I'd been waiting twelve years for that phone call.

"We have an offer," my agent told me.

The previous week had been agonizing. Fourteen of NY's biggest publishing houses were reading my mystery manuscript, *Whiskey Sour*. Each time the phone rang, I'd feel it in my bladder.

Anticipation wasn't a new experience for me. Jane Dystel had repped me for two earlier books. For each of them, she'd done a terrific job creating a buzz. From each of them, I'd gotten some wonderfully upbeat rejection letters. My prior novel even garnered some initial interest from St. Martin's, but they ultimately passed on buying it.

So when Jane called that day, telling me there was an actual offer, I was stunned speechless.

"Don't you want to know how much it is for?" Jane asked.

I nodded. When I realized she couldn't see the nod over the phone, I managed to squeak out a 'yes.'

"It's a six-figure offer, for the first three books in the series."

I found my voice after that. No words, really. Mostly whooping and screaming. After professing my undying love and devotion to Jane, and offering my truly heartfelt thanks and a kidney if she ever found herself in need, I asked when the contracts arrive.

"We're not taking the offer yet. There's another editor interested. I think I can get more."

Writers daydream a lot-- it's a side-effect of creativity. In my mind I'd composed awards speeches for the Pulitzer, appeared on David Letterman, been at signings with lines around the block. But I'd never dreamed of this happening. Not to me.

Up to that point, my writing career had produced nothing but ulcers. Not for lack of trying, either. I'd written six novels, all gathering shelf-dust, and dozens of short stories. Since graduating college in '92, a week hadn't passed where I didn't get at least one rejection letter in the mail.

Like most of my writer friends, I walked a tightrope between self-doubt and egomania. On good days, I cursed the publishing world for not recognizing my obvious talent. On bad days, I realized every sentence I wrote was awful.

In 1999, after a million written words and over four hundred rejections, I decided to take a different approach. Instead of writing something, sending it out, and adding the subsequent bong letter to my Rejection Book, I dedicated myself to figuring out what I was doing wrong.

I write genre fiction; mystery, suspense, horror. For comparison, I selected some current, best-selling examples of each of these forms and read them back-to-back. Then I reread my early novels with the same critical eye.

The conclusion was startling; my first novels weren't very good.

They were riddled with typos, poor grammar, and creative spelling. They were also remarkably self-indulgent, showcasing a writer who was in love with his own voice, rather than one who made every word count.

The plots weren't bad, but they could have been streamlined. The pace was messy, sometimes grinding to a halt with long sections of clunky exposition. The characters were pretty good, but spent a lot of time doing things that had nothing to do with furthering the plot. Plus, I'm ashamed to admit, I had a modifier problem. No verb or noun went without several helpers. It was really extraordinarily amazingly hugely very unfortunately bad.

I found the corresponding rejections from these submissions. Many were form letters, but some had comments jotted in the margins.

When I'd first received them, I'd dismissed the comments. After all, those agents and editors were fools for rejecting me, because I knew better than they did. Bravado, to help take away the sting.

Looking at the comments again, I saw that several industry pros had pointed out the very problems I'd discovered on my own. One even said she would take another look if I did a major rewrite.

At the time, I shrugged it off. I never rewrote anything. Rewriting was for the less talented. (I wish I could go back in time and slap myself for being such a bonehead.)

So, I came up with a plan. For my next book, I'd write a bestseller.

The term 'high-concept' is often bandied around Hollywood, used to describe movies that have strong, central hooks. Blockbuster novels have hooks as well. "Shark kills swimmers on New York beach." "Little girl is possessed by the devil." "Science learns to clone dinosaurs." I wanted to write something like that; something that could be described in a brief sentence, but still perfectly conveyed the story idea.

I decided on something with universal appeal. The hook: Satan is being held and studied in a secret government laboratory.

It would be a cross between Jurassic Park and the Exorcist. A thriller that pits cutting edge technology against thousands of years of theology. Plus, it had the biggest monster of them all; a nine foot tall, cloven-hoofed Beelzebub, complete with bat wings, horns, and a predilection for eating live sheep.

To do the story justice, I knew I had to research the hell out of it, so to speak. When I had a confident grasp of the science and religion involved, I worked on developing characters that would interact with the demon, and a story line that would do the concept proud.

A year later, my techno thriller Origin was completed. But I was smart this time. I set it on a shelf for a month, and then read it again with fresh eyes.

There were errors, both mechanically and structurally.

So I rewrote the book. Then I rewrote it again. And again.

When I was finally satisfied I had something comparable to what was on the bestseller lists, I went back to my Rejection Book to review my previous queries. Again, it surprised me to see how poor they were.

The letters fell into two distinct categories; egocentric and desperate. Rather than succinctly pitch my novels, I'd been begging for them to be read, or stating how rich I'd make the publisher once they bought me.

Plus, I was shocked to see more typos and poor grammar.

For Origin, I took a different approach. I decided to do the same thing publishers do to sell books. I designed an ad campaign.

Rather than a standard query letter and sample chapters, I put together a four page package. The first page was a brief excerpt from the novel, when the hero first sees Satan sitting in a gigantic Plexiglas cage. The second page was styled like back-jacket copy, describing the story and the hook in a few sentences. The third page was an author bio, with a black and white photo. The final page was a simple note stating that the book was seeking representation, and my contact info.

No SASE. No return address. I didn't even personalize the note.

I made one hundred and twenty submission packages, and sent one to every fiction representative in the Writer's Digest Guide to Literary Agents.

I sent these on a Thursday.

By Tuesday, I had five calls from agents, all demanding to see the book.

I was in shock. Usually, an agent response took between three and twelve weeks. Now I had them fighting over me.

After sending out manuscripts to, by final count, twelve agents, I decided on Todd Keithley from Dystel & Goderich Literary Management. Todd was my age, had a specific plan to market me, and most of all, he loved the book.

There was rewriting. And more rewriting.

Todd generated a buzz in NY about Origin, and went out to the top fifteen publishers with an expiration date on the manuscript.

The waiting game began.

After two weeks of hope and letdown, Origin received its final rejection. According to editors, it was well written, but it slipped through the genre cracks. Was it horror? Sci-fi? Techno-thriller? Comedy? Where did this book fit on the shelves?

To compound the injury, Todd then left the agency to pursue a law career.

I was devastated.

Luckily, his boss saw potential in me. Before Todd bid his final adieu, I received a phone call from Jane Dystel, who asked, "What else have you got?"

I did have something else; another high concept idea that came to me while writing Origin. I pitched it over the phone to Jane.

"Write it," she said.

I did.

Another year passed, research and writing. When I finished, I gave Jane the same kind of ad campaign I'd designed for Origin.

Jane got behind it. She generated a buzz and went out to seventeen publishing houses.

Waiting time again. Whenever the phone rang, I pooped a brick. By the time the week was over, I could have built an entire house.

When the rejections rolled in, they mirrored those received by Origin. Many editors liked the writing, and liked the concept. But what kind of book was this? Was it a thriller, or a comedy, or sci-fi?

One publisher did show interest. There was a problem, however. The book was a hundred and thirty thousand words.

"Can you cut thirty thousand?"

I said I could. The effort was one of the most frustrating, yet rewarding, episodes in my writing career. Because I didn't want to affect the story, I delegated myself to trimming the fat.

And there was fat. A lot of it.

When I finished, the editor read the revision and said, "Cut another ten thousand words."

Now there was no choice; I had to cut story. I was forced to confront my novel and determine what was essential to the plot, and what could be left out without disturbing the narrative flow.

But I did it. And it improved the book.

The editor read this version and said, "You know, I think I like your concept more than your execution of the concept. Can you start over from the beginning?"

Jane stepped in before I popped a blood vessel.

"We'll move on to the next book, Joe."

For my third book with the agency, I decided to make sure I wrote in a specific, distinct, defined genre--the medical thriller. Also, because editors seemed puzzled by the amount of humor I was putting in my books, I completely cut out the jokes.

After another year of writing and research, I gave the results to Jane.

She hated it, and declined to represent it. Jane liked my sense of humor, and a novel of mine without jokes had no spark.

Time to rethink things.

I liked Jane a lot, as a person and as an agent, but I didn't think she'd keep me on as a client if I kept giving her books she couldn't sell.

My last three books were failures, but they were important failures. They taught me how to rewrite and follow professional advice. They taught me that I needed to use humor. They taught me that techno thrillers and medical thrillers weren't working for me.

But maybe a mystery series would work.

So I created Lieutenant Jack Daniels of the Chicago PD. I used every convention popular in successful mysteries; a flawed but funny protagonist, a recurring cast of oddball characters, a catchy title that instantly identified the series, a spring-loaded plot.

I gave Whiskey Sour to Jane, along with proposals for the second and third books in the series, Bloody Mary and Rusty Nail.

Jane loved it.

She helped me tweak the concept, and after two requisite rewrites, she went out with the book.

A week later, I got that phone call.

The series was ultimately bought by Hyperion Books. My new editor, Leslie Wells, had worked on mysteries with Ridley Pearson and Robert Crais; two of my favorite authors. She had ideas on how to make Whiskey Sour even better.

Naturally, I followed her advice to the letter. And naturally, the book improved as a result.

Whiskey Sour will be released in hardcover, June of 2004.

Reflecting on everything that has happened, I can draw a few conclusions.

1. I didn't get anywhere until I treated writing like a business, rather than like winning the lottery. Business requires hard work, dedication, and market savvy.

2. Ego held me back. It was only when I realized that everything I wrote wasn't golden, that I began to improve.

3. There is no conspiracy in the industry that keeps new writers from getting published. I'd been given good advice from pros throughout the years, but hadn't been mature enough to follow the advice.

4. Even after years of work without selling anything, I never gave up. This is the most important truth I learned. There's a word for writers who never says die. . . the word is published.

I'm positive there are people reading this who are much better writers than I am. You're probably one of them.

Remember that talent is only a small part of the equation. You also need persistence, humility, and a sense of humor. Good writing won't ever be seen unless it's well edited and marketed.

Success is within your grasp. If I can do it, so can you. Guaranteed.

See you in print!

CRITIQUING

Rate the story in each of the following categories using 1 through 5 (5 being the best):

The Hook-does the story pull the reader in right away and then hold their interest?

The Conflict-what is at stake in the story, and how is the tension used?

The Characters-are these compelling, real people whom the reader cares about?

Setting and Mood-does the story make the reader feel like they are really there?

Pace and Style-how well does the writer use the words to move the story along?

Resolution-does it have a satisfying ending?

Grammar and Spelling-this must be perfect, no exceptions.

Overall enjoyment-was this a story you'd actually buy?

These eight topics, worth five points each, are a good indicator of if a story is publishable or not. The higher the point total, the likelier the story can be sold.

Sample Crit Sheet

Rate each category on a scale of 1 (worst) to 5 (best)

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Hook | |
| Conflict | |
| Characters | |
| Setting/Mood | |
| Pace/Style | |
| Resolution | |
| Spelling/Grammar | |
| Enjoyment | |

You can use this Crit Sheet for short stories and novels, published or pre-published. You can also give it to readers and ask them to rate your story.

Low points in categories indicate what needs to be worked on in the rewrite. Don't submit stories to agents or editors unless you have a score of at least 35.

Cleansing
by Joe Konrath

"There's a line."

A long line, too. Thirty people, maybe more.

Aaron cleared his throat and spat the result onto a rock. He could feel the desert heat rising up through the leather of his sandals. An unforgiving sun blew waves of heat upon their heads.

"It seems to be moving."

Aaron squinted at Gertrude, fat and grimy. The wrap around her head was soaked with sweat and clung to her scalp in dark patches. Her eyes were submissive, dim. A bruise yellowed on her left cheek.

Looking at her, Aaron the urge to blacken it again.

"I cannot believe I let you drag me here."

"You promised."

"A man should not have to keep the promises he makes to his wife. In another nation, you'd be property. Worth about three goats and a swine. Perhaps less, an ugly sow such as you."

Gertrude turned away.

Aaron set his jaw. A proper wife did not give her husband her back. He clutched at her shoulder and spun her around.

"I could have you stoned for insolence, you worthless fool."

He raised his hand, saw the fear in her eyes.

Liked it.

But Gertrude did not finch this time, did not cower.

"I will tell my father."

The words made Aaron's ears redden. Her father was a land owner, known to the Roman court. A Citizen. On his passing, Aaron would inherit his holdings.

Aaron lowered his fist. He tried to smile, but his face would not comply.

"Tell your father what? Any husband has the right to discipline his wife."

"Shall I open my robe to show him the marks from your discipline?"

Aaron bit the inside of his cheek. This sow deserved all that and more.

"Our marriage is our business, no one else need intrude."

"And that is why we are here, Husband. I will not tell Father because you consented to this. It is the only way."

Aaron spat again, but his dry mouth yielded little. The line moved slowly, the sun baking their shadows onto the ground behind them.

As they approached the river, Aaron's throat constricted from thirst. But this river was not fit to drink. Shallow and murky, the surface a skein of filth.

"Perhaps I should tell your father that his daughter has been seduced by a cult."

"My father knows. He was cleansed a fortnight past."

"Your father?" Aaron could not believe it. Her father had clout and status. Why would he jeopardize that by fooling around with fanatics?

Aaron stared at the river, confused. Another person waded into the center. Unclean, smelling of work and sweat, someone's servant.

The man known as the Baptist laid hands on the zealot's shoulders and plunged him underneath the scummy waves.

Then the Baptist yelled in a cracked voice, about sin and rebirth and Jehovah. A few seconds later the servant was released, gasping for air.

"He has been saved," Gertrude said. "John has cleansed his soul."

Aaron frowned. The man did not look saved. He looked muddy and ridiculous.

"You are a fool, Gertrude. This talk of souls and one god is illegal and dangerous."

"It works, Aaron. I have heard the tales. Healing the lame. The sick. Purging anger and hatred from men's hearts."

"I will not let that fool dunk my head in that putrid water."

"Good day, Father."

Aaron followed her eye line, turned.

Gertrude's father Mark smiled at Aaron, clapping a hand on his shoulder.

"There is nothing to fear, Aaron. The stories are true. At my baptism, I felt as if released from bondage. I felt my soul shrug off the chains of sin and soar like a bird."

Aaron stared into Mark's twinkling, smiling eyes and calmed a bit.

"I am not afraid, Mark."

"Good. You are next."

Gertrude and her father stepped onto the bank with Aaron. The warm water lapped against his toes.

"Am I to go alone?"

"We are family," Gertrude said. "We shall all go together."

She took his hand, a gesture that she had not made since their wedding day. As a unit, they waded over to the man called John.

"Are you ready to cast aside sin and be reborn in the glorious love of your Father, Jehovah?"

Aaron looked at Gertrude's father. The older man smiled, nodded.

"Yes," Aaron said. A quick dunk and it would be over.

John put his hands upon Aaron's shoulders and shoved him downward. The water was hot, alive against his skin. Aaron's shoulder were pressed down to the bottom and the muck parted to accept him. He held his breath, straining to hear the words John would speak.

But John spoke nothing.

Aaron shifted, placing a hand on John's thick wrist. He gave it small squeeze, a signal to begin.

The wrist did not yield.

Aaron felt another hand upon him, and then a weight against his chest.

He grasped at it.

A foot.

Alarm coursed through Aaron. Something was wrong. He opened his eyes, peered up through the murk.

John held him firm, Gertrude hunched beside him. Her eyes were venom, and it was her foot that pinned down Aaron's chest.

Aaron tried to twist and thrash, but he had no leverage. A burst of precious air escaped his lungs, bubbling violently up through his field of vision in an endless stream.

This crazy cult was going to murder him.

He reached out his hand, grasping at Gertrude's father. He could not allow this.

Mark caught his wrist, held it tight... and pushed Aaron deeper into the mud.

Aaron screamed, sucked in a breath. The water tasted sour and burned inside his lungs as if they'd inhaled fire instead. He pried at John's fingers with his free hand, and a moment of clarity flashed through the chaotic panic in his mind.

This was not John the Baptist. He'd seen this man before. He was a servant of Gertrude's father.

The crowd by the river. They'd all been servants.

And through the weighty distortion of the water, he could hear them cheering.

END

Crit this story using your crit sheet. What are the strengths and weaknesses?

What can be improved?

Is it publishable? Why or why not?

SUBMITTING

1. Target your market– If you want to sell to mothers, you put flyers on cars in a daycare parking lot. If you want to sell a mystery, you seek out agents and publishers who deal with mysteries. There are many books that say this, but you should take it a step further. **READ** the mysteries that this agent has represented, or this editor has published. Are they a lot like yours? If so, you've found your target market. Now let's make them want you...

2. Make the packaging attractive– Follow your target's submission guidelines to the letter. Double space, 250 words a page, 20# paper, etc. But why not add a little something extra? I'm not saying send flowers or enclose twenty bucks, but if you're trying to sell a book, treat it like a book. You can:

- Include a page with a black and white photo of you, with a brief bio.
- Include a page of back cover teaser copy-- those catchy zingers that make you buy a new book while in line at the WalMart. Try two or three with different styles and wordings. Play with font size and style, to get it to look like the back of Koontz's latest.
- Include a short synopsis that reads like inner jacket copy.
- Include a juicy outline of the book, only a few pages long, showing the target that you know how to tell a good story.
- Include a page of blurbs by other pros (not from friends or family--use only professional writers, editors, and agents. It never hurts to email your favorite author. Or better yet, there are many conferences and conventions where authors meet. Go there and shmooze.

The ultimate goal is to make your work seem familiar to the target, yet stand out at the same time. This is the essence of packaging anything, from candy bars to pop stars.

If you're selling a short story, make sure you've read the market you're submitting to. Get a copy of their submission guidelines. When you send the

story, mail it flat, no staples or binding, making sure your name is in the upper right hand corner of each numbered page.

Also make sure the editor you're submitting to is still there, and include a SASE for their response.

3. Have an irresistible product– This one is the hardest, but also the most important. You have to make sure your writing is the best it can be. Don't send out your manuscripts with hope. Hope is for people who don't try. This isn't the lottery, where one lucky person wins it all. This is a job where only the best succeed. If you aren't sending your best, you're wasting everyone's time. So make it happen. Success is inevitable if you prepare for it.

You want proof? How many published books have you read that were crap? Yet they were published. Make that your mantra. **PEOPLE WITH LESS TALENT THAN ME HAVE BEEN PUBLISHED!** They aren't better writers. They just tried harder. So prove your talent to the world. Treat your submission process with the same respect you treat your writing. Market like your life depends on it, and make your submissions rejection-proof.

FICTION MARKETS

Some places to find agents and markets for your fiction:

[Novel and Short Story Writer's Market](#) by Writer's Digest Books
(www.writersdigest.com)

[Writer's Market Guide to Literary Agents](#) by Writer's Digest Books

[Writer's Guide to Book Editors, Publishers, and Literary Agents](#) by Jeff Herman
Prima Press (www.primapublishing.com)

[Writer's Handbook](#) by The Writer, Inc. (www.writermag.com)

[Writer's Digest Magazine](#) (www.writersdigest.com)

[The Writer Magazine](#) (www.writermag.com)

[Mystery Writers of America](#) (www.mysterywriters.org)

[Science Fiction Writers of America](#) (www.sfwaweb.org)

[Horror Writers Association](#) (www.horror.org)

[Romance Writers of America](#) (www.rmanational.com)

[The Directory of Small Presses](#) (www.dustbooks.com)

There are many other places available to find markets—pick up any magazine, and it usually has submission information somewhere inside. Or go to your favorite magazine's website—everyone has a website these days.

You can also check out the [Literary Market Place](#) at the library or online at www.literarymarketplace.com. Or try an internet search for 'writing markets' on www.dogpile.com, www.google.com, or any other search engine.

HOW-TO BOOKS

Some books that will help you improve your writing and marketing skills:

Your Novel Proposal by Cameson and Cook

Making Shapely Fiction by Stern

Writing Popular Fiction by Carr

12 Keys to Writing Books That Sell by Krull

The Sell Your Novel Toolkit by Lyon

Everything How to Get Published Book by Rubie

Complete Idiot's Guide to Getting Published by Bykofski

Getting Your Book Published for Dummies by Zackhiem

How to Get Happily Published by Applebaum

Spider, Spin Me a Web by Block

These should be available at your local library or book store, or online at www.amazon.com, www.bn.com, www.booksamillion.com.

Query Letters

A query is a question. A query letter is a letter that asks an agent/editor if they are interested in you or a piece of your writing. For our purpose, we're going to be discussing short story queries. But before you query anyone, you have to have a few things:

1. A finished story, as perfect as you can make it– no typos, spelling errors, crossed out words, whiteout drips, etc. It should be typed, double spaced, a readable font (Courier 12 point or similar), roughly 250 words per page, each page numbered with your name in the right hand corner.
2. A place to send the story– a magazine, literary journal, website, anthology, etc. You need an address and submission guidelines, and you also need to know if they are currently accepting submissions.
3. A contact at that place– an editor's name. You don't need to know Ed personally, but you have to make sure that Ed is still working there. Submissions to "Dear Editor" or "To Whom it May Concern" are thrown away. And make sure you spell Ed's name right!
4. Mailing stuff– good 20# white paper, first class 9"x12" envelopes, letter sized envelopes (for the SASE), and plenty of stamps.

Simple enough? Good. Now the query is made up of 4 main parts:

THE GREETING– Dear Ms. Whomever.

THE HOOK– Catch the editor's attention with your first line, and sail right into your story pitch.

THE BIO- Who are you? What have you published before?

CLOSING– Thanks, hope to hear from you soon.

Anything else is extraneous and a waste of Ed's time. Why waste twenty sentences to describe your story in the query? Describe it in five sentences, and make Ed want to read it.

Queries shouldn't be longer than a page. The writing should be perfect, compelling, and error-free. Ed is a professional. Present yourself as a pro as well. Don't waste Ed's time being talky, cute, or amateurish. Get to the point, and get out of there.

NEVER call Ed, unless you know her or already have a publishing contract with her. Phone queries waste Ed's time; at worst, she'll dislike you, and at best, she'll ask to see your writing, which you should have sent in the first place.

I have had some success with online queries, but before you send Ed an email make sure:

1. Ed accepts electronic submission.
2. You send in the proper format (txt, doc, pdf, rtf, etc.)
3. You've followed all of the above rules.

Conventional Query Package for On The Rocks

Janet Hutchings
Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine
475 Park Avenue South
New York, NY 10016

Dear Janet-

My name is Joe Konrath, and I've recently sold a mystery series to Hyperion. The first book, WHISKEY SOUR, will be released in hardcover May 2004. The lead character is a Chicago Homicide Lieutenant named Jacqueline Daniels.

Jack's ability to excel in a male-dominated profession is due to her relentless determination, keen insight, and self-effacing sense of humor. She can solve the cases that no one else can- such as the one I've enclosed.

ON THE ROCKS is a 4500 word novella in which Jack is faced with a classic mystery scenario; a locked room murder.

The victim is found with the murder weapon in her hand, the only entrance door locked from the inside. Suicide? Or is it just meant to look that way?

I've been a fan of EQMM for over twenty years, and you were my first choice for ON THE ROCKS. I hope you enjoy it-and please let me know if you can solve the mystery.

Looking forward to hearing from you soon.

All Best,

Joe Konrath

1906-Something is discovered by workers digging the Panama Canal. Something dormant. Sinister. Very much alive.

2001-Project Samhain. A secret underground government installation begun 95 years ago in New Mexico. The best minds in the world have been recruited to study the most amazing discovery in the history of mankind. But the century of peaceful research is about to end.

BECAUSE THE THING JUST WOKE UP.

ORIGIN by Joe Konrath
You can't contain evil.

"You've got Satan in there," Andy said.

"Don't worry," General Murdoch replied with a big Southern grin. "He's not violent. I've even been in the dwelling with him. He's just scary looking, is all. And that Plexiglas barrier is rated to eight tons. It's as safe as visiting the monkey house at the zoo."

Andy tried to find the words.

"You're a lunatic," he decided.

"Look, I've been watching over him for thirty years. We've had the best in the world here--doctors, scientists, holy men, you name it. We've found out a lot, but the rest is just guessing. Now he's finally awake, and trying to communicate. You're the key to that. Don't you see how important this is?"

The linguist looked at the thing; nine feet tall, mouth crammed full of jagged teeth, rubbery wings billowing out behind it like a giant black parachute.

"Biix a beel," it said.

Andy ran like hell.

ORIGIN by Joe Konrath
Time to give the devil his due.

In reality, Satan is not a handsome gentleman as portrayed by a Hollywood leading man. Viewing him through the Plexiglas, he's a frightening beast, massively muscled, with hoofs the size of washtubs and the serrated teeth of a carnivore. The demon can be pleasant, even chatty, and delights in showing off his power of resurrecting the dead sheep he dines upon. To some of the staff studying him at the secret government compound, he's even likable.

That is, until he breaks out.

ORIGIN is a mainstream thriller combining the techno-science of Crichton with the theological horror of Blatty. Let this unconventional submission serve as a solicitation for author representation. Thank you for your time.

ORIGIN by Joe Konrath

Call or email for

Sample chapters

Brief Synopsis

Detailed Outline

or

Request the entire manuscript on an exclusive basis

(123) 555-5555 haknort@comcast.net

*Billions around the world fear the concept of the devil.
Now they'll have a chance to fear him in person.*



J.A. Konrath graduated from Columbia College in Chicago in 1992.

He's written for corporate and cable television, assisted the brewmeister at a local micro brewery, performed improv comedy on stage, and regularly attends mystery and horror conventions.

Joe has one wife, three kids (that he knows of), a dog, and a house in the suburbs, where he's hard at work on a his second novel. Email him at haknort@comcast.net.

Six Things You Should Never Put in a Query

1. Don't be needy. Pros don't mope and moan about how hard the publishing biz is, or beg to be read. I once started a query, "I've had forty rejections on this book so far, but I'm not giving up yet." Do you think the editor even bothered to look at the manuscript?

2. Don't be cocky. Telling the editor or agent how rich you'll make them, or how brilliant your idea is, always backfires. For my fourth unpublished novel, I send out a query that stated, "Here's your next blockbuster." Among the form letter rejections I received, one had a hand-written note that said, "Guess again."

3. Don't use fancy paper. There are many wonderful colors and patterns of paper available at the office supply store. I've used pink, blue with white clouds, intricate Aztec borders, and paper that appeared to be stained with blood. The rejections I got back were on plain, white, 20# bond, because that's what professionals use.

4. Don't use fancy font. Stick with Times New Roman, Arial, or Courier, 12 pt and double spaced. I tried sending a query once using an exotic, calligraphy font, because I thought it made me stand out and appear intelligent. The agent returned it asking, "Next time, submit in English."

5. Don't include a SASE. Everyone in NY requests that you send a self addressed stamped envelope for a reply. In fairness to the publishing biz, they get a ton of unsolicited manuscripts every day, and couldn't afford to send rejection letters to everyone out of their own pocket. Keep in mind that SASEs are for rejections. In fact, it makes it even easier for them to reject you. If they want your work, they'll gladly spring for the stamp, or call on the phone. Do you think Tom Clancy sends SASEs?

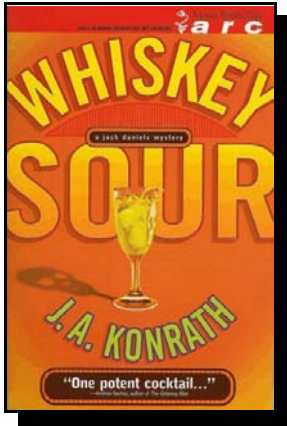
6. Don't address is to unknowns. Dear Editor and Dear Sir letters get thrown away. Find out who the editor is, and then call up and make sure that editor still works there. Publishing is a turbulent business, and editors are constantly moving from house to house. Make sure you've addressed you package to a real person who still works there.

Five Ways to Look Like a Pro

1. Have your own website. The publishing business is becoming increasingly internet dependant. Editors spend a lot of time online. A good looking homepage, with a bio, writing samples, and contact information, is a cheap and easy way to get noticed.
2. Roll with the punches. If an editor suggests changing something, go with it. Always. This is a business, and should be treated like one. Pros don't let their egos interfere with their work.
3. Be personable. Editors and agents don't want to work with someone who isn't enjoyable to be around. Writers who are easily upset, depressed, anxious, or overly enthusiastic don't last very long in this business.
4. Make deadlines. Always. No excuses. If you're always early, you'll be loved for it.
5. Cloak yourself in the trappings of professionalism. Have business cards and letterhead, a fax machine, an email address, and an office phone. I answer my phone, "J.A. Konrath." It's much more effective than "Hello?"

What Agents Want

- 1. A book they can sell.**
- 2. A writer who is easy to work with.**
- 3. A writer who can accept advice and criticism.**
- 4. A writer who understands the market.**
- 5. A writer who can meet deadlines.**
- 6. A writer who is in it for the long haul.**
- 7. A writer who doesn't call and pester them constantly.**
- 8. A writer who is grateful.**



J.A. Konrath signed a three book, six-figure deal with Hyperion. His first novel, the mystery thriller **WHISKEY SOUR**, will be out in hardcover June of 2004.

Recent short story sales include "On the Rocks: A Lt. Jack Daniels Novella" to *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, "Finicky Eater" to *Horror Garage Magazine*, the "The Screaming" to *The Many Faces of Van Helsing*, an anthology edited by Jeanne Cavelos, coming in April 2004 from Berkley, and "Redux" to Spooks anthology coming from Twilight Tales.

He also has an article in the June 2004 edition of Writer's Digest magazine.

When Joe isn't posing with lifesize acrylic statues of Col. Sanders, he's hard at work on the second book in the Lt. Jacqueline Daniels thriller series, **BLOODY MARY**, for release in 2005.

J.A. currently teaches fiction writing and marketing at the College of Dupage in Glen Ellyn.

Visit Joe's Homepage at WWW.JAKONRATH.COM.

