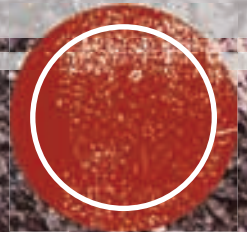


SEEKING REPRESENTATION: NEXT LEVEL QUERYING

Presented by Sera Rivers, Speilburg Literary





SERA RIVERS

LITERARY AGENT

Represents:

- Adult Fiction
- Picture Books
- Young Adult

Publicly open to ONLY Adult Fiction the first 7 days of each month; Closed in December to catch up; Reopening January 2026

Speilburg Literary Agency represents award-winning and debut authors and illustrators and offers hands-on editorial attention and business management throughout clients' publishing careers.



EXAMPLE OF A SUCCESSFUL QUERY LETTER FROM A REAL CLIENT

Dear Ms. Rivers,

OPENING HOOK: You're more likely to read about self-care in a lifestyle magazine than a children's story, but my debut picture book, **THE BIG SQUEEZE**, hopes to change that. After the year we've all just had, what better time than now to talk about dealing with burnout and anxiety? I'm writing to seek representation for this tale.

SPECIFIC PITCH: **THE BIG SQUEEZE** is a 500-word picture book starring a helpful little sponge who dutifully cleans up every mess in the kitchen. That is, until she grows so bloated and gross with food and spills that she can't soak up anything else. This story features food-flying fun plus a dramatic character transformation, as the sponge literally absorbs and becomes weighed down by everyone else's problems. In the spirit of the popular adage "you can't pour from an empty cup", the sponge learns that in order to be her best version for others, she has to be able to ask for help, and that a hug is a powerful thing.

AGENT RESEARCH: Your MSWL mentions being interested in picture books that tackle tough topics. Stress, responsibilities, and burnout are all topics that are hard for *adults* to talk about, never mind children. But after a year of families being stuck inside with no outlets and mental fuses blowing left and right, I think you'll agree that these are conversations that need to be had. I hope my earnest and overwhelmed sponge will act as a great conversation starter for families, not just today but through any stressful time.

RELEVANT AUTHOR BIO: I'm a fellow Massachusettsian and a graduate of Boston College, where I majored in English. In my professional life I have always made sure "writer" is in my job title (currently a technical writer), with the ultimate hope that I would one day write for children and young adults. Having recently become a mother, I finally find myself bursting with the right ideas for connecting with kids through good humor, wordplay, and relatable characters. **THE BIG SQUEEZE** is the first of these that I'm ready to send out into the world.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration!

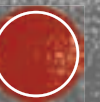
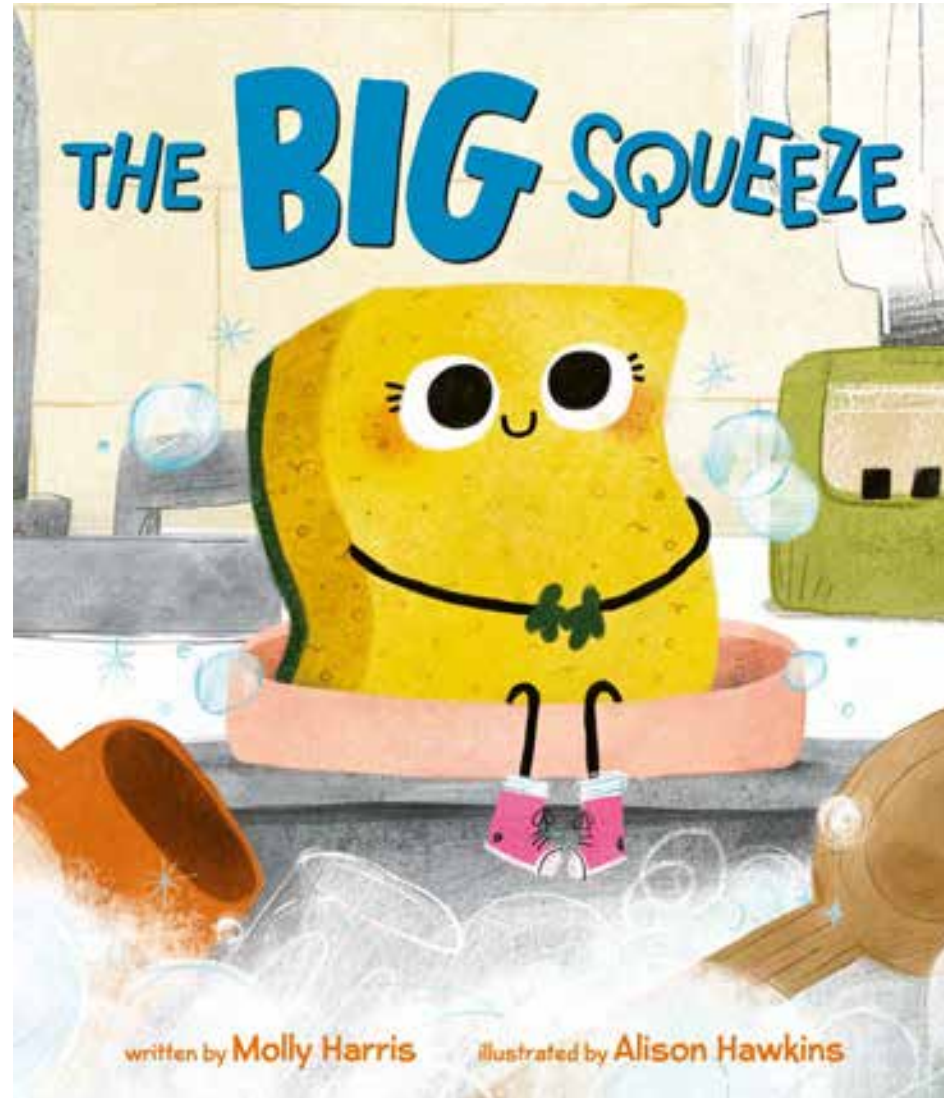
Kindest regards,

UNIVERSAL = burnout; self-care

DISTINCT = cute little sponge!



**Published by HarperCollins on July 9, 2024.
Available everywhere children's books are sold!**





A query letter must have:

- Compelling opening hook, pitch with specific details, and relevant author bio
- Personal connection to the story/agent querying
- Any other relevant info

For help with writing a full synopsis (as well as your novel's plot), check out:

- *Save the Cat* by Blake Snyder
- *Story Genius* by Lisa Cron
- *The Plot Whisperer* by Martha Alderson
- Author Lisa Papademetriou's Outlining Workshop (virtual)
- Highlights Foundation blog post: "Writing a Synopsis? Read On" by Alison Green Myers

To research agents, check out:

- QueryTracker.net
 - Create an account (it's free)
- Publisher's Marketplace
 - Do not need an account
- ManuscriptWishList.com **AND** MSWishList.com
 - Agent/Editor Search: "Sera Rivers;" "Jennifer Baker"
 - Keyword search: "witches;" "BIPOC;" "friendship"
- LiteraryAgentsofColor.com
- Google
 - "Sera Rivers, Literary Agent"
- Books of same genre/theme
 - Acknowledgments/Author Note
 - Author/Illustrator website/ social media for agent
- Conference Faculty Lists
- Word of Mouth
- Query Shark

When preparing for agent interviews (offer of rep), check out:

- "Questions a Literary Agent Might Ask You When Offering Representation," Kidlit.com
- "10 Questions to Ask An Agent Before You Sign," Writers Digest.com
- "The Agent Call and 10 Questions to Ask," Latinx Pitch.com
- "THE CALL, Or What to Ask A Literary Agent When Offered Representation," Literary Rambles.com

Speilburg Literary Agency serarivers.com speilburgliterary.com

THE DON'TS OF FOLLOWING UP

Agents are people too, and we appreciate professionalism and kindness.

- **Message** agents on their socials
- **Email** when they only use QueryManager for subs
- **Check in if/when** they mention
 - Inundated with work
 - Personal issues
 - Use their stressful experiences as an excuse to follow up
- **Respond to rejections**
- **Contact by phone**
 - Do not text/call their personal/agency phone number
 - Do not text/call their family, friends, or colleagues
- **Follow Up in Person**
 - Do not ask about your submission at a conference, event, their agency, or any other place you see them in person
- **Send a letter, gifts, etc.** to their home/agency address
- **Follow up repeatedly**
- **Receive full requests by other agents**
- **Have an updated version of your novel, UNLESS** changes are significant





THE DOS OF FOLLOWING UP

If an agent requests your full manuscript:

- **Do** follow their guidelines for how they would like it submitted
- **Do** wait out the new timeline guidelines before following up
 - “It takes me 2–4 months to review full manuscripts.”

If you receive similar feedback for revisions (and you agree):

- **Do** send the **revised** manuscript to agents who also had requested the full
- **Do** wait to hear back before following up again, **UNLESS** you have news, such as a **WITHDRAWAL** or an **OFFER OF REPRESENTATION!**





THE DOS OF FOLLOWING UP

- **Do** read agent guidelines beforehand
 - Check query response timeline on website: “I will do my best to respond to queries within 2 months”
 - Check social media updates : “I have responded to all queries sent before or on 11/19/2025”
- **Do** “Reply All” or Forward original query in your follow-up email (Query Manager does this for you)
- **Do** be polite; Agents are people too
- **Do** let agents know if you are withdrawing your submission



Writing Career

with
Sera Rivers
Literary Agent

Consultant Services



Start 2026 with a clear plan! Schedule a 1:1 Zoom meeting for January to discuss your writing career!



Tailored to your specific writing goals, a typical session could include:

- ✓ Querying Advice
- ✓ General Writing Advice
- ✓ Brainstorming Session
- ✓ On-the-spot critique
- ✓ Writing Career Planning



Book now, meet in January! For more info, visit my website at SeraRivers.com/shop.

WRITING CAREER CONSULTANT SERVICES

Schedule a Zoom meeting with lit agent Sera Rivers to discuss your writing goals/career! **Maximum meeting time is 60 minutes per person** to allow a chance for others to schedule a meeting. **May purchase as a gift** for someone else. Email sera at speilburgliterary dot com to give recipient's name/email.

Tailored to your specific writing goals, a typical session could include (for example):

- Querying Advice
- General Writing Advice
- Story Idea Brainstorming Session
- On-the-Spot Critique
- Writing Career Planning

Please Note: Meetings cannot be scheduled before January 5th. Once you pay for the meeting, you will see a purchase note with directions on how to book your meeting. Please use the same name and email to book the meeting to match the purchase records.





THANK YOU!

Follow me on Socials: **@writeloudly**

Sign up for my newsletter **W.R.I.T.E Agent** on my website **SeraRivers.com** for tips on the craft of writing, industry news, and agenting updates.