

## ***W<sup>4</sup>, or How to get the GMC into Your Pitch***

Debra Dixon does an excellent break down of how to get to the heart of your pitch in her book *Goal, Motivation & Conflict: The Building Blocks of Good Fiction*. Her method is to ask four questions:

**Who?** Who is your main character?

**What?** What do they want? (Goal)

**Why?** Why do they want it? (Motivation)

**Why not?** Why can't they have it? (Conflict)

Here's how I applied these questions when I pitched a romantic suspense.

**Who?** *Molly Nyland, a twenty-six year old forensic artist who can tell what people say doesn't match what they saw. These powers came to her when she was hit by lightning at age 12. The accident covered her arm and shoulder in white scars that itch when people aren't telling the full truth.*

**What?** *She wants to keep her secret at all cost.*

**Why?** *Her rural, religious, uneducated family and community labeled her a witch after the lightning strike. She was treated as a freak and called the devil's spawn.*

**Why not?** *Her new working partner, Detective Desmond Rankin is a master at ferreting out secrets and knows that Molly is keeping something from him. She ends up as one of the suspects in a serial killer case and is hunted by the real killer. The only way to clear her name and stay alive is to trust Rankin.*

It took me a while, but realizing I could change the order of the information freed me up creatively. Here's the first draft of my pitch:

*Twenty-six year old freelance forensic artist Molly Nyland doesn't want anybody to know that the reason she draws such great composite sketches is because she can tell when what people say doesn't match what they actually think. Growing up in a rural religious community, twelve-year-old Molly was labeled a witch when she survived the freak lightning strike which gave her these powers and covered her left shoulder and arm in white spider-web scars.*

*Working with hot, hard-assed, and cynical detective Desmond Rankin is challenging enough without him knowing about her abilities, which he would call "new-age metaphysical crap." But keeping her secret is becoming increasingly harder as the leaders of an ancient society are showing suspicious interest in Molly and her powers.*

*When a murder case hits close to home, Molly struggles to work with Des to solve the case without giving away her secret. But when she ends up on the list of suspects, she has to learn to use her abilities in new ways, stretching their limits, not only to clear her name but to actually stay alive.*

Not too shabby, right? But, it could be better. Where's the setting? The stakes? THE ROMANCE?

This is the same pitch, but more fleshed out. I added a little setting, and did an abbreviated W<sup>4</sup> on the hero.

*Twenty-six year old freelance forensic artist Molly Nyland doesn't want anybody to find out that the reason she draws phenomenal composite sketches is because she can tell when what people describe doesn't match what they actually witnessed. Growing up in a rural religious community, twelve-year-old Molly was labeled a witch when she survived the freak lightning strike that gave her this ability and covered her left shoulder and arm in white spider-web scars. She now lives in the mid-sized town of Pine Rapids, where the only person who knows about her talent and injuries is her best friend.*

*Assigned to a brutal murder case, Molly finds working with hot, hard-assed, and cocky detective Desmond Rankin extremely challenging. Not only is she trying to keep her ability a secret, but the sexual tension between them is through the roof. Molly's not interested in dating another cop. Her previous boyfriend was a detective who used her skills to advance his career before he dumped her. Des isn't interested in relationships--period. He has a secret of his own, which involves a bad drug bust and the details of how his former partner died. He moved to Pine Rapids for a fresh start. The last thing he needs is some woman messing up his plans, especially when he can't keep his hands off her.*

*As the pressure to solve the murder increases, it becomes harder for Molly and Des to keep their secrets. And when more bodies are discovered, it's clear that the town is dealing with their first serial killer. To find the killer before he strikes again, they both have to learn to trust in the other. And Molly is forced to stretch the limits of her abilities, not only to save her town, but to actually stay alive.*

Time for you to do a W<sup>4</sup> on your WIP and/or Pitch:

**Who?** Who is your main character?

**What?** What do they want? (Goal)

**Why?** Why do they want it? (Motivation)

**Why not?** Why can't they have it? (Conflict)