

UNPUBLISHED ENTRY – 2021 COMPETITION

Genre Category: **Thriller OR Suspense**
 Single Genre: **Thriller** **Suspense**

| J1, etc. | Judge # | RC # | RC Verify | Score |
|----------|---------|------|-----------------|-----------|
| J1 | 728 | 7 | Verified | 92 |

Entry #: 203601074

Official Use Only

Entry Title: **Distorted Perception**

**** SCORING KEY ****

| 1 – 2 | 3 – 4 | 5 – 6 | 7 – 8 | 9 | 10 |
|-------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Needs complete overhaul | Needs significant work | Needs moderate work | Needs light work | Excellent to exceptional | Superior: work of genius [use rarely] |

NOTE TO JUDGES

Please email this completed Word document to chairRPLA@floridawriters.net within 1 week of receipt (3 weeks if final judge for book-length submissions).

- Use the criteria to judge each entry as objectively as possible. Please remember you are judging according to RPLA standards.
- Score each criterion on a scale of 1 to 10 (whole numbers only), with a max score of 100 points.
- Comment honestly, completely, and constructively, using a minimum of 250 words for all 10 criteria combined. (You may exceed the minimum.)
 - Recognize strengths and, if appropriate, suggest areas for improvement.
 - Focus comments only on the criterion being explained.

If you have any questions, including those related to genre appropriateness, contact the chair. Please note that word count has already been verified.

HOW RPLA DEFINES THIS GENRE

Thriller OR Suspense. A Thriller arouses feelings of excitement and usually focuses on illegal activities, international espionage, sex, or violence. Often the forces of good are pitted against the forces of evil in a kill-or-be-killed situation. (Example: *The Hunt for Red October* by Tom Clancy) The Suspense genre may involve danger, but is less focused on action than Thriller. Minimum 55,000 words. (Examples: works by Tess Gerritsen or John Grisham) No anthologies, please. (Synopsis required)

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- **What the “OR” means.** Genre tags such as “Thriller OR Suspense” indicate that these two genres are being judged according to their respective genre standards but are pooled only for the sake of conferring awards, meaning first place may be awarded to a Thriller entry and second place to a Suspense entry, or the other way around.

CRITERIA

Criterion 1: Genre

- Assess appropriateness of genre choice. ****SEE GENRE DEFINITION ON PAGE 1****
- Stories need not follow the genre’s formula precisely but should contain the genre’s essential elements.
- If the story fits the primary genre requirements for THIS genre, as defined by RPLA, it should receive a 9 or 10. (Refer to synopsis if appropriate.)
- If the genre selection is deemed inappropriate, please contact the chair.
- [Note to entrants: Choosing a genre for submission to a competition, agency, or publisher is an important skill, which is why RPLA scores this element and offers feedback on your choice.]

Genre Score: 10

Note to judge: Text boxes expand

Comments: Fast-paced, high stakes, life-or-death, international locations, violence, lots of mystery and intrigue...well done

Criterion 2: Hook

- Assess the strength of the first few sentences in establishing a strong opening.
- Consider the effectiveness of the opening scene(s) and/or first chapter in defining the unique take on character, conflict, or setup.

Hook Score: 10

Comments: The first chapter hooks the reader wanting to know what’s going on, why so many people are killed/tortured, who Temmy is, what or who is The Circle, and so much more. It seems obvious who the ‘good guy’ and ‘bad guy’ are, making it easy for the reader to like or dislike characters. There’s a lot for the reader to digest and question.

Criterion 3: Language

- Assess language use, style, and narrative voice.
- Consider whether the vocabulary sustains or enhances the voice.
- If there are inconsistencies, discuss whether they are purposeful and effective.
- [Note: These discussions are distinct from language used in dialogue, which is evaluated under the Dialogue criterion.]

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- Assess the effectiveness of point of view (POV) and whether POV shifts, if any, are executed appropriately.
- Evaluate other language- and POV-related issues, if any, as appropriate.

Language Score: 9

Comments: Language and style were appropriate and consistent through the first 30 pages...some of the narrative seemed lengthy, such as the description of the 'hurry-up-and-wait' and Raul Vasquez visit to the Guna village and green stars of the opposing candidate...these seemed to slow the progress of the read...there were only 2 minor potential POV conflicts noticed one of which is – "Edgardo dropped the gas mask onto the floor and offered the man a bitter stare." This section is from Edgardo's POV so he can't know for sure his stare was perceived as bitter, only the professor can know. Overall, this was an excellent piece of writing

Criterion 4: Creativity

- Assess whether the story is creative in such areas as concept, theme, and premise.
- Please use examples.
- [Note: This is an *overall* assessment of creativity; creativity *within specific elements*, such as dialogue, character, description, etc., should be covered within those elements.]

Creativity Score: 9

Comments: The idea of mosquitos delivering 'payloads' of genome editing of DNA, the secret of this ability getting out, a mob-style fixer tracking down the leak, a presidential election in a third-world country and an insurance company executive potentially becoming involved after connecting with his soulmate after many years is an interesting combination.

Criterion 5: Description

- Assess the effectiveness of the setting(s), particularly how they illustrate a point, character, or mood.
- Assess whether sensory elements are vivid, effective, and appropriate.
- Discuss other issues, if any, relating to description and sensory appeal, as appropriate.

Description Score: 8

Comments: The addition of the sense of smell in the industrial building, cordite after the mortar explosion, the room with the decomposing body, and at the seashore would make the reader feel more 'there'. The settings are well described and set the mood, such as the industrial building, and the embankment where the soldiers were holding their position

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Criterion 6: Character

- Assess how well-drawn the characters are and if readers can identify with them.
- Assess if there is/are an evident character arc(s). (Refer to synopsis, if necessary.)
- Discuss other character-related issues, if any, as judge deems appropriate.

Character Score: 9

Comments: Further description of the characters such as height, weight, facial features, hair color, body build, some identifying feature (perfect teeth, pockmarked face, overly large ears, balding, for example) etc. would allow the reader to more fully identify and/or connect with the characters. Each character has their own personality, pattern of speech, motivation, and background, which allows them to stand on their own.

Criterion 7: Dialogue

- Assess the balance of dialogue to narration and how well that balance propels the story. If there is no dialogue, discuss whether that is an effective choice.
- Touch on whether dialogue sounds authentic and distinctive from character to character.

Dialogue Score: 8

Comments: Edgardo frequently uses phrases (thought and spoken) in Spanish which informs the reader about his background without having to use narratives. When interrogating the professor Edgardo seems to have an outstanding grasp of genome editing and the potential consequences, which is surprising considering his background and non-interrogation speech. A lot of information was provided in that string of dialogue. The exchanges between Raul Vasquez and his wife seemed appropriate for being in a Central America country. Rex and Jessica's speech seemed similar, but that may be because their interactions were limited in the first 30 pages, hopefully they'll begin to differ as the story unfolds.

Criterion 8: Plot

- Assess how well the plot sustains the story. (Refer to synopsis, if necessary.)
- Consider pacing.
- Assess the effectiveness of the story's conflict.
- Discuss other plot-related issues, if any, as judge deems appropriate.

Plot Score: 10

Comments: The plot has a great deal going on regarding conflict, what people want, and varied multiple story lines that hopefully will eventually come together. Pace is fast throughout the first 30

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pages, things keep happening and moving that keep the reader interested and wanting continue turning the pages to see what happens next.

Criterion 9: Mechanics

- Assess and cite a few examples of how grammar, spelling, and syntax enhance or hinder the work.
- [Note to judges: While it is acceptable to discuss formatting, please do not deduct points for formatting issues; the formatting was reviewed when the entry was accepted.]

Mechanics Score: 9

Comments: Addition of Spanish phrases adds a level of reality. They also help establish setting and character backgrounds. Overall, the first 30 pages were written at a language level commensurate with what one would expect for an adult targeted audience.

Criterion 10: Overall Impression

- Discuss how well this work comes across as a whole.
- The Overall Impression score may or may not be in line with the other scores. If it is not, discuss how the whole is greater or less than the sum of its criteria-parts.

Overall Impression Score: 10

Comments: After just 30 pages it's obvious this work has a tremendous number of positives working for it...multiple plot lines that grab the reader and won't let go, diversity of characters, unique plots, high levels of apparent authenticity, international settings, high stakes for several of the characters not to mention the world. There were many unanswered questions, such as who is Temmy, what is The Circle, how does an insurance executive fit, what's a Latin America presidential election have to do with anything, and weather Rex and Jessica will connect in a long-term relationship. There is plenty here to keep the reader turning pages as fast as they can read. This is a great story and I wish you luck.

TOTAL: 92

Thank you!