

## PitchWars Wishlist - Part 2

Hello, Pitch Wars Hopefuls! Welcome to Hoda & Lyssa's wish list – we're so glad to have you here. This is Part 2 of our wishlist where we talk about ourselves and why you should choose us as mentors! To read Part 1, click [here](#).

[Pitch Wars](#) is a mentoring program where published/agented authors, editors, or industry interns choose one writer each to spend three months revising their manuscript. It ends in February with an Agent Showcase, where agents can read a pitch/first page and can request to read more. To read more about it, check out the website: [www.pitchwars.org](http://www.pitchwars.org).

Our story begins with Pitch Wars 2018, when Hoda picked Lyssa's manuscript for mentoring. Our friendship--and our skills as writers and mentors--have continued to grow every year since! Though Hoda has mentored for years, this is our first year mentoring together, and we're thrilled to combine our brain power to help someone else's craft grow.

### About Hoda:

Hello! I'm Hoda, and I'm happy to be mentoring for a fourth time. I have worked in the publishing industry since 2016. I've interned at several literary agencies where I had the opportunity to dive into the slush pile and learn what it takes for a manuscript to stand out. In 2017, I was an editorial intern at Entangled Publishing and was promoted to Editorial Assistant that same year. I've had the chance to work with some amazing authors on their books! It's helped me develop my editorial eye and spot the strengths and weaknesses of a manuscript. I was a mentee in 2017, so I've been where you are and can offer any advice you may need as a mentee. I still regularly speak to my past mentees (who lovingly call themselves #TeamHoda),

and trust me, they're eager to welcome another mentee into our family. Although acquiring an agent and a book deal is NOT the goal of Pitch Wars, I've loved cheering on my mentees as they've queried, signed with agents, and met with top editors (some VERY exciting announcements coming soon...!)

What else? I have a master's in English Literature and am currently doing my Ph.D. My non-writing related interests include photography, film, and travelling. I speak French, English and Farsi.

### **About Lyssa:**

Hi! I'm Lyssa, and I'm excited to be mentoring for the first time. I was Hoda's Pitch Wars mentee in 2018, and after querying that manuscript hard, I wrote and revised my YA romantic fantasy, REVELLE! REVELLE!, which was selected for Pitch Wars again in 2020, under the brilliant mentorship of [Emily Thiede](#). This manuscript eventually landed me my incredible agent, Lauren Spieller at TriadaUS. There's even more exciting updates about REVELLE! REVELLE! that I can't share yet, but let's just say... after years of query trenches and mentorship programs, I'm pinching myself, because I can't believe my dreams are finally coming true.

Mentoring this year is special to me for a number of reasons. First, as a two-time mentee, I know the ins and outs of PitchWars and what it means to "win" (hint: it's NOT signing with an agent). I am an active member of the Pitch Wars community, which is a fancy way of saying that I talk to the friends I've made through Pitch Wars every single day. I also beta read and provide critiques for a ton of authors, many who got their big break through Pitch Wars. I don't do this

solely for an early read of not-yet-released books (though it is QUITE the perk), but because I am a huge craft nerd. I repeat: I *love* craft. I devour storytelling techniques and tips on conjuring pretty prose with the same enthusiasm I usually reserve for a bacon-egg-and-cheese on a New York bagel. Helping others perfect their stories is one of the most satisfying experiences I've had, and I can't wait to help our future mentee, too.

Outside of writing, I have my PhD in Clinical Psychology and run a small practice in NY that specializes in teens and young adults. I've got two adorable sons and a pretty awesome partner. I spend my free time going on nature walks with my family (aka finding bugs), riding my beloved Peloton, and planning trips we can't yet take.

### **Why YOU should submit to US.**

**We know our stuff.** We've cut our teeth on all things writing and publishing. Hoda brings the proven track record of a mentor who has helped her mentees hone their craft, polish their manuscripts, and make tremendous gains towards their individual writing goals. With her academic background in literature, as well as her years of experience sifting through editors' slush piles and assisting them to ready manuscripts for publication, she brings an impressive level of expertise. She knows how to make a manuscript stand out, and how to help writers improve their craft (and their manuscript) under time crunches. Since being Hoda's first mentee, Lyssa has continued to absorb everything she can from other industry professionals who believe in her writing. Her 2020 mentor, Emily Thiede, passed on everything she'd learned from *her* experience as a debut author at a top YA imprint. Lyssa then signed with an editorial agent because she wanted to revise with an industry professional who could deepen her craft even

further (and those revisions were INTENSE--Lauren Spieller is a top YA fantasy agent for a reason!). Although we can't yet discuss the super exciting details, Lyssa is now working with a brilliant editor whose list includes several NYT bestselling YA novels (Lyssa is STILL pinching herself!). A craft nerd through and through, Lyssa has been squeezing ALL the knowledge she can out of the best around, and she's ready to pass it on to you.

**We've been in your shoes.** Between us, we've been Pitch Wars mentees three times, and we've applied--and not gotten in--many years before that. We believe writers succeed by continuing to grow and learn. Even though we keep hinting at exciting, undisclosed news, we both know Pitch Wars is not a golden ticket to your dreams coming true; it's about honing your writing skills. It takes hard work and persistence. Blood, sweat, and tears (okay, maybe not *blood*). We plan to mentor with the compassion of people who have sat where you're sitting. We know what it's like to have a disappointing showcase, an exciting showcase, and everything in between. Although we'll follow your lead in terms of the amount of support with which you're most comfortable, empathy will be the backbone of our mentoring.

### **What our future mentee can expect from us:**

Good feedback includes highlighting a writer's strengths (so we can build on them) as well as weaknesses (so we can work on them). Our feedback will be solidly rooted in our appreciation of your words and of your trust in us. We will glow about the things we love (expect LOTS of exclamation points!) and we will also be thorough in identifying weaknesses, as that's where the real growth occurs.

There's going to be *two rounds of edits*. First, we'll give you an editorial letter that will address big picture issues. This letter will likely be long (because Lyssa is wordy) but also cohesive (because Hoda is organized). Our goal is to leave no stone unturned so that you have all the information you need to perfect your manuscript. Ideally, we'll help you build on your manuscript's many strengths and provide guidance for fixing areas of weakness. While you revise, we'll stand by, ready to jump on a call or whatever you need. For the second round, we'll go through your manuscript again to see if the changes have landed. Our feedback will most likely be screaming in the comments about how awesome you've done, but we'll also be ready to point out any lingering issues. Ideally, we'll provide line edits in this round. Once we get closer to the showcase, we'll help you strengthen your query, synopsis, and pitch.

There's never just one solution to a problem; so when we notice something isn't working, we'll offer several possible solutions. We can also bounce ideas back and forth to come up with something together. We'll always explain why we think a certain change is important, but because this is your book, we will never force you to make a specific edit. We want our mentee to feel comfortable enough to tell us when they disagree.

In terms of communication, we're pretty flexible so it'll be whatever you're most comfortable with: email, texts, video chat, DMs, etc. Truly, it'll be up to you. In addition to Lyssa, we've also got some eager #TeamHoda past mentees already offering to be an additional source of support throughout the process, should you choose.

### **What we expect from our future mentee:**

Above all else, we're looking for a mentee who is *eager to learn*. There are an assortment of reasons people enter Pitch Wars, but the only guarantee we can make is that we'll help you improve your writing. Our ideal mentee is someone who is hungry for knowledge, who wants to improve their craft, and who keeps an open mind towards constructive feedback. We don't expect our mentee to agree with all of our suggestions, but we do expect our mentee to at least consider them. And while we hope to be an invaluable resource to our mentee, we hope our mentee will also make use of the incredible Pitch Wars writing community so they can learn from other mentees and Pitch Wars hopefuls.

And that's it! If you have any questions, feel free to reach out on Twitter (@HodaAgharazi and @LSmittyWrites) or Instagram (same names: @HodaAgharazi and @LsmittyWrites). We also have a thread on the Pitch Wars forum; if you're more comfortable asking questions there – click [here](#).