

Andrea Contos

Pitch Wars 2020 Wishlist!!



WELCOME TO MY WISHLIST!!

Well hello there!

I'm Andrea and welcome to my Pitch Wars Wishlist!

Most of you are probably very familiar with Pitch Wars, but in case you've stumbled on this page by accident, here's the quick version: Pitch Wars is a writing in contest in which writers mentor other writers.

Here's the more detailed version. Pitch Wars is a writing contest founded by the incomparable [Brenda Drake](#). If you want the official description, as well as any FAQs, you can find them all [here](#)!

You can (and should) read through the site, but if you want my version, here it is:

Writers who have experience in the publishing industry volunteer to mentor other writers and help them improve their manuscript in preparation for the agent round. Hopefuls submit their query and first chapter to several mentors of their choice, and then those mentors spend a few months feverishly reading submissions and falling in love with too many books while angsting over which manuscript they can help the most. But then mentees are chosen and the real work begins!

Actual footage of mentees during the agent round.

(David saying, "I think I'm having a heart attack.")
Revision revision revision.

Excitement nerves (slight) terror.

And the agent round goes live! Agents then request materials and hopefully fall just as in love and offer representation!

But here's the most important part of this contest—the relationships you'll form. No seriously. I didn't get into Pitch Wars when I applied in 2015, and was I disappointed? Of course! But I made friends. So many friends. So many friends I'm still friends with five years later! And I learned so much about writing and the industry in general.

The truth about Pitch Wars is that *you* decide how much you get out of it. It's not all about getting chosen. It's not all about getting an agent. Those are both wonderful things that should absolutely be celebrated. But neither are the end-all. And those friends you make? You're going to need them. This is tough industry, and your friends will get you through.

You don't need to be chosen to make friends and learn, and if you do both of those things, then none of the time you put into applying is wasted.

A BIT ABOUT ME!



I am a 2017 mentee, turned 2018 through 2020 mentor! **This year I'm mentoring YA and NA again!**

I'm a young adult mystery/thriller writer, and my debut, [THROWAWAY GIRLS](#), launched on September 1st.

It got a starred review from Kirkus (!!) and this lovely commentary:

"This haunting debut infused with social commentary on privilege and power is one that readers looking for suspense will enjoy. The author uses the relationships between characters, the second narrator shrouded in mystery, and the overall sinister, menacing tone to create a captivating tension that will keep readers going until the end.

A smart, memorable mystery.”

Throwaway Girls is a Pitch Wars success story, (if you’d like to view my entry, it’s [right over here](#).)

Earlier this year, I signed a two-book deal with Scholastic and I could not be more excited about bringing these two stories into the world.

The first book will publish in fall of 2021 and is officially titled [Out Of The Fire](#), but I refer to it as “Fire Book” and will probably continue to until I accidentally do it in an official capacity and embarrass myself enough to stop.

My micro synopsis goes something like: a feminist thriller with girls who are determined to create the justice the world won’t give them.



Mallory Kass at Scholastic has bought *Out of the Fire*, a YA novel by **Andrea Contos** (*Throwaway Girls*), and a second, untitled novel. It wasn't the kidnapping that ruined Cass Adams's life, but the pink envelopes that followed—each a reminder that the man she escaped is always watching. She forms an alliance with three friends who have also been wronged by men, and the quartet sets out on a dangerous quest for justice, until Cass realizes that the

man who ruined her life may be the only one who can save it. Publication is set for fall 2021; Sarah Davies at Greenhouse Literary brokered the deal for world English rights.

I am nearly done with edits and I had the most fun during revisions! (Yes, that *is* possible.) And I am so excited to work with Scholastic and my fabulous editor to bring this book into the hands of readers.

There will be a second YA mystery/thriller in 2022, and it doesn’t have a name yet, but it’s told in dual POV and alternate timelines, and explores the complicated ties of loyalty and jealousy between sisters, as well as the secrets we keep, the lies we tell ourselves, and just how far we’ll go for the ones we love.

My Mentoring Style!

I’ve had two mentees so far, and I fell in love with both their books right away, despite how very different they are. My first mentee wrote an atmospheric, haunting, and lyrical f/f mystery (with ghosts!) and my last year’s mentee had a hilarious, swoony, and heartfelt contemporary.

They have both signed with agents—not because of my mentoring, but because they both wrote fantastic books—but I am so grateful to be part of their writing journey!

I am THRILLED to be able to mentor again this year, and I can’t wait to read all the gorgeous words I hope you’ll send my way! (Please send your words my way! Or I will be very lonely!! 😞)

I believe mentoring is a partnership. That means I'll never force my ideas on you or dictate what your book should be. Those decisions are yours and this will always be *your* book.

My job as a mentor is to use my skills and experience to make your fantastic book even better, and to pass on some of the knowledge I've gained.

I've spent a lot of time in this industry, and I've learned a lot too. I written in multiple age groups and genres. I know what it's like waiting for responses to full requests—or to feel like you're screaming into the query void.

I've also been alongside friends who've gotten agents, left agents, and gotten new ones, while I was still waiting for the right person to love my books. I've seen what works in agent relationships and what doesn't. And I've worked through revision with my own CPs, my agent, and my editors, and I'd like to think I've learned from every one of them.

I've been through Pitch Wars as a mentee and as a mentor. I was incredibly lucky to receive an amazing number of requests during my stint as a mentee, so I know how exciting and incredibly stressful a busy agent round can be! But I also had so many friends with fabulous books that didn't get tons of requests, and I know what it's like to prepare a mentee for any and all outcomes.



My fabulous mentee from last year! Proof that she does not think I'm terrible! I've been through this fabulous Pitch Wars thing from both sides now, and I had such a wonderful experiences I wouldn't trade for anything.

You'll likely receive your first edit letter prior to the call, so you'll be able to read and come up with any questions or comments before we talk. That way we can discuss or brainstorm whatever we need to before the real work starts!

And if you need a testimonial, I am happy to report that I still adore my prior mentees and sometimes they say nice things about me!



A Few Andrea Fun Facts!

* I have a very happy, very fluffy doggo with a very circular head. See evidence^^

His name is Winston and aside from his never-ending love of my daughters' stuffed animals and toilet paper rolls, he is a very good boy.

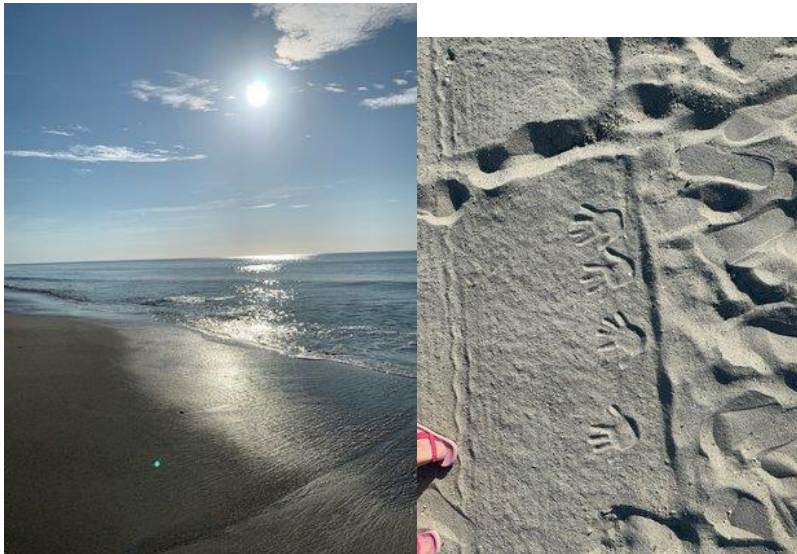
* I have two amazing little girls who inspire, motivate, and challenge me daily. Some days are more challenge than anything else, but I think that means I'm doing things right.



* I bake birthday cakes for those two girls every year, and they are always ridiculously time-consuming, but I can't stop because they make them happy.

* I haven't eaten a single bit of chocolate in an entire year (it gives me migraines) and I'm still in mourning.

* I work out nearly every day because I super suck at managing my expectations of myself, and I have a bit of a perfectionist streak. Exercise seems to keep my brain in check so I don't melt into a puddle of stress. It's also a great place to brainstorm plots and my mentee's feedback!



* I love the ocean and we've gone to visit every year for four years now—aside from this year, and I miss it so much. I would move to the coast in a millisecond.

One day.....



* I adore all my writing friends—so many of whom are not pictured here. I could not do this without them and I wouldn't want to.

<—Writer friends hanging out pre and post-covid!

(And just so you don't think I'm completely conceited I did NOT take that group screenshot with my massive head as the focus. I'm just borrowing it because I didn't think to take one of my own!)

Let's Get To The Good Stuff Already!

These are the genres I'm accepting! **Young Adult and New Adult only!**

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<)]^u **Mystery**
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<)]> **Contemporary**
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(•_•) 🖋️
<)]^u **Horror**
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((> **Contemporary Fantasy (If it's firmly grounded in our world!)**
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Genre Breakdown!

*** Give me all subgenres of YA mystery & thriller!**

✂️ Mysteries and thrillers, psychological suspense, cozies, whatever! If there's a mystery, lots of twists, or suspense elements, I'm in!

✂️ Think: SADIE, FOUL IS FAIR, YOU'RE NEXT, THE BOY IN THE RED DRESS, GENUINE FRAUD, LITTLE MONSTERS, ONE OF US IS LYING, YA GONE GIRL, DANGEROUS GIRLS, DAMAGE DONE.

*** I love speculative twists and/or elements, including magical realism and fabulism.**

❖ **Contemporaries or mystery/thrillers** that are set in our world and have **speculative twists and/or elements**. I've written fantasy before, so I have experience with all sorts of speculative elements! My 2018 mentee's book had a supernatural bent as well!

❖ Think: THE WALLS AROUND US, BONE GAP, LIKE WATER FOR CHOCOLATE, I'LL GIVE YOU THE SUN, or WE WERE LIARS.

❖ **This includes Contemporary Fantasy** as long as it's firmly grounded in our world. But please **DON'T** send fantasy or sci-fi. I love them, I do. But if your book is about dragon lords or space elves, then it's fantasy or sci-fi. There are so many amazing mentors accepting those genres so *please* don't waste your pick. I am not the best fit for largely paranormal-based contemporary fantasy. Think: fairies, demons, angels, were-anything etc etc

* **Contemporary!**

❖ From light to dark and everything in between! As long as it has heart and makes me feel all the things, I'd love to see it!

❖ Think: HAVE A LITTLE FAITH IN ME, YOU SHOULD SEE ME IN A CROWN, STARFISH, THE LUCKY ONES, THIS IS MY AMERICA, ALL THE BRIGHT PLACES, THUG, SPEAK, IF I STAY, OUR YEAR OF MAYBE, UNDEAD GIRL GANG, STARRY EYES, FROM TWINKLE WITH LOVE

* **Horror**

❖ Think: Danielle Vega's THE HAUNTED. Something that has mystery and a creepy, psychological angle. I'm not the best choice for lots of gore and excessive violence.

* **Disaster/survival contemporary.**

❖ Think: I AM STILL ALIVE Or anything with the environment as a character or threat. Snow storm, desert, middle of the ocean—give me all the threats of death!

* **I am accepting NA manuscripts. HOWEVER**, NA is a difficult sell, and I will likely ask you to change your manuscript to YA if chosen.

YES PLEASE! and NO THANK YOU!

All the things that make my heart happy!

❖ **YES PLEASE!**

- Feminist themes! Any and all. Bring it.
- Inclusivity! I want diversity in all forms and love #ownvoices books
 - * Sidenote on #ownvoices—I recognize not everyone has the privilege to be vocal about their marginalizations, so I won't ask if you share your MC's.
 - * I'm open to any and all romantic subplots, but serious bonus points for f/f representation.
- Sex positivity
- Unlikable female characters (this is an always-and-forever love—I am 100% committed to letting girls be “unlikable” without having to apologize for it.)
- Lyrical and literary writing. I love gorgeous prose and beautiful turns of phrase.
- Unusual formats or structures. I wrote a book with a POV character who isn't named. If, while writing, you thought to yourself, “I will never pull this off,” I'll probably love it.
- Complex friendships, especially between girls.
- Complex parent/child relationships.
- Sisters! (Though I am writing a sister book so check with me to make sure they're not too similar!)
- Enemies to lovers.
- Romantic subplots! I love a slow-burn with lots of surrounding plot! Insta-love™ is hard to pull off believably, but if you give me insta-chemistry and an earned romance I am all in.
- Twists! Give me all the surprises and unexpected endings! (Or midpoints! Or all points in between!)
- Villain origin stories/protags who could be seen as the villain (everyone is the hero of their own story!)
- Immersive settings. Settings that feel like another character. Settings woven so seamlessly into the narrative they color the entire book.
- Anything dark, gritty, and raw.
- If you've got something that makes me feel like the intro to *Mindhunter* I will cry if you don't send it to me.
- Major thanks to Kelsey Rodkey's trash talk for reminding me that I'd love a circus setting!

✂ NO THANK YOU PLEASE

These are the things that make my heart sad.

- Rape as a plot device or method for character agency (this includes no rape of female-identifying character as a way to provide agency or motivation for male-identifying character.) If it's handled with care and is necessary for the story, then I'm open to seeing it. If it's just because your character needs a tragic backstory, then it's not for me.
- Discrimination or bigotry (Addressing those is okay! Having them as an acceptable element in your book is definitely not.) Related: anything that tells a story from the POV of the oppressor.
- On-page abuse or death of young children
- Manuscripts that center on abuse or addiction. You can have these elements in your manuscript, but if the main premise is your MC enduring or recovering from them, then it's probably not for me. I'm also not the best book for books about suicide. (Feel free to ask on the forums or my twitter feed if you're unsure if your ms applies!)
- Historical. I'd love to see anything as far back as the 80s, but nothing beyond that. I'm just not the best fit.
- Clowns

So what can you expect if you're chosen as my mentee?

I'll be available for DMs, emails, Skype calls. Whatever you need to feel comfortable. And once selections are announced, I'd love to have a Skype/Google/whatever chat so I can ramble semi-incoherently about how much I love your book and how much time I spent hovering over your entry! This is not mandatory though! I know some people don't do video or calls and that is perfectly okay!

I usually make inline commentary as it relates to the bigger-picture items you'll find in the edit letter, so chances are good you'll receive not only an edit letter, but your full manuscript with inline comments as well. As a writer, I always find it helpful to see *exactly* where someone would suggest I address big-picture concerns, so I try to do the same for my mentees.

After you revise, I'll read again and make notes of any lingering big-picture items, as well as inline commentary focusing on things like word choice or sentence structure.

We'll also work on your pitch (which you'll need for the agent round!), your query (which you'll need for agent requests and, well, *queries*) as well as your synopsis.

I love both big-picture AND sentence-level revisions. I am primarily a mystery/thriller writer—even when I wrote SFF my plots always involved some element of mystery! So I'm very well-versed in **tightly-plotted manuscripts, unexpected twists, and I understand the importance of pacing, tension, and stakes.** And my agent is a fierce wielder of the red pen, so I have learned how and where to tighten and refine at both a big-picture and sentence level.

I also write a damned fine sentence. That means I can definitely help with **streamlining and refining your prose, as well as adding texture and flow to your writing.** So often, agents reference the importance of voice, which is a very hard thing to teach. But sometimes sentence-level changes can clear away the clutter and bring out the voice that's been buried beneath it.

I believe critique can be honest without being hurtful. I don't give feedback with the intent to make someone cry. Critique can hurt—it's hard to see someone pull apart something you've worked so hard on—but I believe pointing out a manuscript's weaknesses also helps bring out its strengths. And I believe pointing out the things you've done well is just as important!

I am not a plotter. I am a **capri-pantser**. A semi-plotter/touch-my-capri-pants-and-I'll-kill-you-in-my book sort, if you will. I start off with an idea, and an end, and a few plot points along the way. About halfway through, I usually outline the rest of the book.

It makes no sense, but it works for me. Whatever works for you, works for you. So I won't make you to fill out a detailed outline or beat sheet (they give me hives,) but I will give you some suggested reading for craft books that have made an impact on my writing. And we will review your overall plot, your character arcs, and how your themes pull through your entire narrative.

More than anything, I promise to take the entire process seriously--because I know this is your career, and that your manuscript means as much to you as mine does to me. But I also believe you have to laugh when you can. So, we're going to make your amazing manuscript even better, but we're going to have fun while doing it! And then we're going to celebrate all your successes!

Still Have Questions?

Feel free to reach out on twitter ([@Andrea_Contos](#)) or the [Pitch Wars forums!](#) I have an AMA on the forum [here](#).

I'll also be participating in the Pitch Wars #askmentor twitter chats on Tuesday, Sept 8 - 8pm

Sunday, Sept 13 - 8pm

And a video chat on Friday, September 4th at 8pm!

Pitch Wars 2020 Young Adult Mentors' Wish Lists

1. [Aiden Thomas \(Accepts NA\)](#)
2. [Sarvenaz Tash \(Accepts NA\)](#)
3. [Chloe Gong and Tashie Bhuiyan](#)

4. [Abigail Johnson](#)
5. [Kit Frick and Carlyn Greenwald](#)
6. [Sonora Reyes \(Accepts NA\)](#)
7. [Laurie Dennison](#)
8. [J.Elle and Emily Golden](#)
9. [Andrea Contos \(Accepts NA\)](#)
10. [Emily Thiede \(Accepts NA\)](#)
11. [Amanda Panitch](#)
12. [Allison Saft and Ava Reid \(Accepts NA\)](#)
13. [Emery Lee \(Accepts NA\)](#)
14. [Carrie S. Allen and Sabrina Lotfi](#)
15. [Shannon A. Thompson and Sandra Proudman \(Accepts NA\)](#)
16. [Adiba Jaigirdar and Gabriela Martins](#)
17. [Michaela Greer \(Accepts NA\)](#)
18. [Tash McAdam](#)
19. [ST Sterlings \(Accepts NA\)](#)
20. [Maiya Ibrahim and Ayana Gray \(Accepts NA\)](#)
21. [Meg Long and Xiran Jay Zhao \(Accepts NA\)](#)
22. [Margie Fuston](#)
23. [Jamie Howard](#)
24. [Nova McBee](#)
25. [Amelia Diane Coombs and Sophie Gonzales \(Accepts NA\)](#)
26. [Rachel Griffin](#)
27. [Susan Lee and Auriane Desombre \(Accepts NA\)](#)
28. [Ciannon Smart](#)
29. [Sasha Peyton Smith and Kristin Lambert](#)
30. [Lane Clarke \(Accepts NA\)](#)
31. [Lyndsay Ely \(Accepts NA\)](#)
32. [Anna Sortino \(Accepts NA\)](#)
33. [Jennieke Cohen](#)
34. [Bethany Mangle \(Accepts NA\)](#)
35. [Sunya Mara \(Accepts NA\)](#)
36. [Kat Dunn and Daphne Lao Tonge](#)
37. [Sheena Boekweg and Alechia Dow \(Accepts NA\)](#)
38. [Liz Lawson and Dante Medema \(Accepts NA\)](#)
39. [Sarah Dass \(Accepts NA\)](#)
40. [Zach Hines \(Accepts NA\)](#)
41. [Hoda Agharazi \(Accepts NA\)](#)
42. [Dawn Ius and April Snellings \(Accepts NA\)](#)
43. [Kara McDowell and Kimberly Gabriel](#)
44. [Kylie Schachte \(Accepts NA\)](#)
45. [Deborah Falaye](#)
46. [Rona Wang \(Accepts NA\)](#)
47. [Becca Mix and Grace Li \(Accepts NA\)](#)
48. [Aty S. Behsam \(Accepts NA\)](#)

[Click here to view all Pitch Wars 2020 Mentors' Wish Lists](#)

Pitch Wars YA Blog Hop!

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SEPTEMBER 10, 2020 [COMMENT](#)

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