

WELCOME TO PITCH WARS 2020!!



What is Pitch Wars, you ask? Pitch Wars is a mentoring program. Teams of published/agented authors, editors, or industry interns choose one writer each and spend about three months working with the writer on revising their manuscript. It ends in February with an Agent Showcase, during which agents read a pitch/first page and can request to read more.

We (Kim Long and Jennifer L. Brown) are returning as MIDDLE GRADE mentors this year! Last year was our second year working together as #TeamKrakenBee, and we loved it so much that we're back for more!

We've split our wish list into two posts. Below you'll find a bit more about us, the genres we're looking for, what manuscripts are better suited for our fellow MG mentors, and what you can expect if we choose you as our mentee. Over at Jennifer's website, you'll find some hints about concepts/themes we love no matter the genre, a glimpse behind the scenes into our process as mentors, and a testimonial from our faboo mentees from 2018 and 2019!

WHO WE ARE

**KIM LONG**



*Ellen Page doing her best kraken impression!*

This is my sixth year mentoring middle grade. I've been writing kidlit for about eight years now, and my debut, Lexi Magill and the Teleportation Trek Tournament, was published on October 1, 2019! I've had quite the publishing journey (Lexi was the third book I wrote and it went on sub with two agents before selling.) To me, Pitch Wars is about sharing what I've learned in my journey and helping writers improve so this or the next manuscript will be the one to get you an agent and/or published!

**JENNIFER L. BROWN (i.e. Jenny B)**



Ellen Page doing her best bee impression!

I am a proud member of the Pitch Wars mentee class of 2017. As a mentee, I learned boatloads from my awesomesauce mentors and now life companions, Tara and Jenna. After Pitch Wars, I dove, belly flopped, and swam about in the querying trenches with my shiny manuscript and a few months later, I

found an awesome agent. Last year was my second year mentoring, and I loved it so much that I'm back with Kim for more!

### **TEAM KRAKENBEE**



The elusive krakenbee!!

Together, we are #TeamKrakenBee, and the krakenbee is ready to help you wrangle your manuscript into shape!

**What We're Interested In: Genres We Love!**



Squid professing love for each other (and our wish list)!

We both write in several different genres and read just as widely, so genre-wise, we're open to a variety, including:

Adventure

High Fantasy

Historical Fantasy

Light Fantasy

Science Fiction

Horror

Magical Realism

Retellings

Steampunk

STEM

Superhero

Upper MG

Time Travel

This year we're really looking for something in the speculative arena. It can be contemporary, as in it takes place in our world, but we really want a fantastical or sci-fi or paranormal element at the heart of the story.

We love other-world fantasy and sci-fi, like *Furthermore*, *Goldelina*, *An Adventurer's Guide to Successful Escapes*, *The False Prince*, *Kingdom of Souls*, *A Wish in the Dark*, *Nevermoor*, *Sal and Gabi Break the Universe!* The list goes on and on! We love unique worlds and strange, new spins on old classics. If your world is wonderful and weird, we're in!

We also love contemporary fantasy and sci-fi that takes place in our world. It could include alternate timelines and puzzles, like *York*, or fantasy-hiding in plain sight, like *The Gauntlet* or *Aru Shah and the End of Time*. It could be a sweet contemporary with hints of magic like *Midsummer's Mayhem*. We love STEM elements mixed with speculative ones, like Kim's book *Lexi Magill and the Teleportation Tournament* or our 2018 mentee's book *The Mutant Mushroom Takeover*, to be released on September 22!!!

BUT, and this is a big BUT, we are less inclined to take something with fairies, gnomes, trolls, unicorns, pixies, and well-known magical creatures that are more typical in younger middle grade. We also are not interested in King Arthur/middle ages stories. If you have a story like this, there has to be some super weird super unique aspect to it that makes it stand out, like a world where everyone owns a unicorn and they are the main mode of transportation. Or a middle ages story with steampunk elements. Or a dystopian where a nuclear bomb freed all the gnomes in the world and now they're battling humans to see who can build the biggest supermarket. Think OUT THERE if you have one of these elements and want to submit to us! Otherwise, there are other mentors taking fantasy that are a better fit.

The one exception to well-known magical creatures is, of course, DRAGONS. We've said this every year, and we are still looking for a dragon book! Friendly dragons, fierce dragons, and lady dragons toppling the patriarchy. Dragons are one of the few traditional magical creatures that we adore every time. You'd think we'd be bored, but no. Send dragons.

Is horror your speculative element? No problem.



Wicked Bee!

We love *The Doll Bones*, *Splendor and Gloom*s, *Small Spaces*, and *Dead Voices*. Jen is working on a ghost story, so please do not submit a straightforward ghost story, as we always pass on manuscripts that even arguably contain a significant element that is similar to something we're working on.

RECAP: If your manuscript meets one of the above, we are Super Grabby Hands!



He won't let go!!

### **Other Things that Matter!**

#### **VOICE!**

We are suckers for narrators with a distinctive MG voice. Whether the phenomenal first person of *Howard Wallace, P.I.* or the wry third person of *The Boy Who Knew Too Much*, we love it all. We love the snark of the narrator in *Hook's Revenge* and the country twang in almost anything by Natalie Lloyd. *It Ain't So Awful Falafel* is another masterclass. Whatever the genre, send us your voicey narrators please!

#### **INCLUSIVITY!**

We love diverse stories, particularly those written by diverse or marginalized authors. If your story is #ownvoices, we'd love to read your words, no matter the genre. Importantly, if you are from a marginalized community, do not feel like your book must be about that marginalization! Uh, no, not at all. Give us a unique world, great story, and we're all in! Now more than ever, the world needs to hear from marginalized voices. We've mentioned a few of our recent favorites elsewhere on this wish list, but something like *Sal And Gabi Break The Universe*, *Kingdom Of Souls*, and *Aru Shah* are all books by people of color that include a different cultural perspective in a fantastical backdrop.

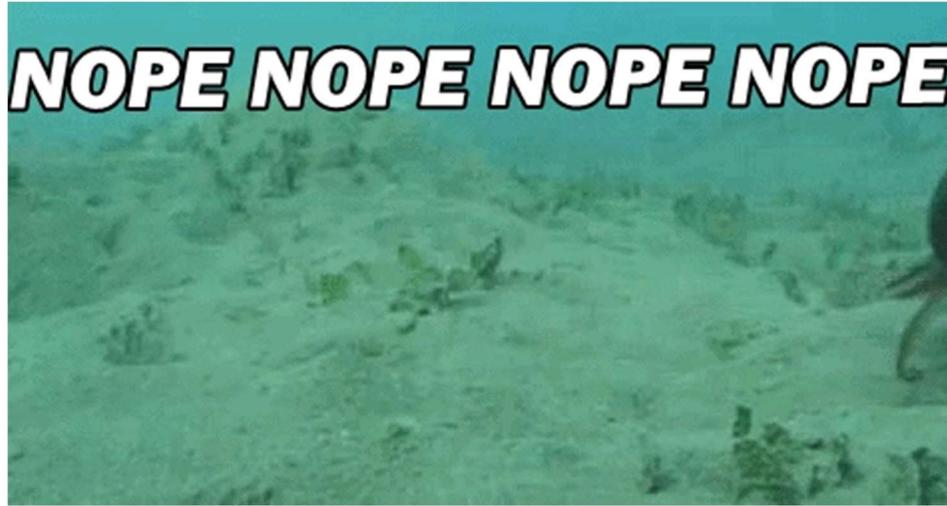
We would love all the authors who submit to us to write inclusively. Your cast should reflect the world in which we live, and that means people from all walks of life with all sorts of backgrounds.

We caution cis-White authors about featuring a marginalized main character if you do not belong to that group. We strongly believe that, until publishing offers equal opportunities to marginalized groups, books featuring marginalized main characters written by cis-White authors are taking opportunities away from marginalized authors.

Please read [this](#) for a breakdown on the lack of POC authors in publishing for more information.

### **Manuscripts NOT Well-Suited for the KrakenBee**

Now, along with what we love, there are some specific things in certain genres that we are not looking for this year. We mention them below because we do not want you to waste one of your four picks on us when there may be a very fine mentor/mentor team who is more likely to enjoy your words!



Just: no.

### ***Portal Fantasy***

Portal fantasy will be an uphill battle for us. What is a portal fantasy, you ask? The best definition we can give is that a portal fantasy starts in our world and then the characters get transported to a fantastical world somehow, some way. A cupboard, a library, a book, a locker, a tree. Basically, there's a "doorway" that transports the kids Here to There.

We're not saying great portal fantasies can't be done. *Narnia* is the quintessential portal. *The Gauntlet* is an awesome portal. But even though we like reading the occasional portal doesn't mean we are the right mentors for this sort of story. They tend not to be our cup of tea. We're earl grey drinkers, for future reference.

### ***Sick/dying/diseased kids, parents***

Not for us. Jen needs to stop crying on the subway. It's becoming a problem.

### ***Graphic novels***

We love these, but we don't know what to do with them! There are other awesome mentors actively looking for these stories.

### ***Animal main characters*** UNLESS it's a sidekick to a human.\*

(\*This is the Phib exception, named after Diana DeBolt's frog, Phib, in her Cinderella retelling. Diana was Kim's mentee in 2017. If you have an animal sidekick and wish to sub to us, make sure to thank @DianaDebolt and the snarky Phib.)



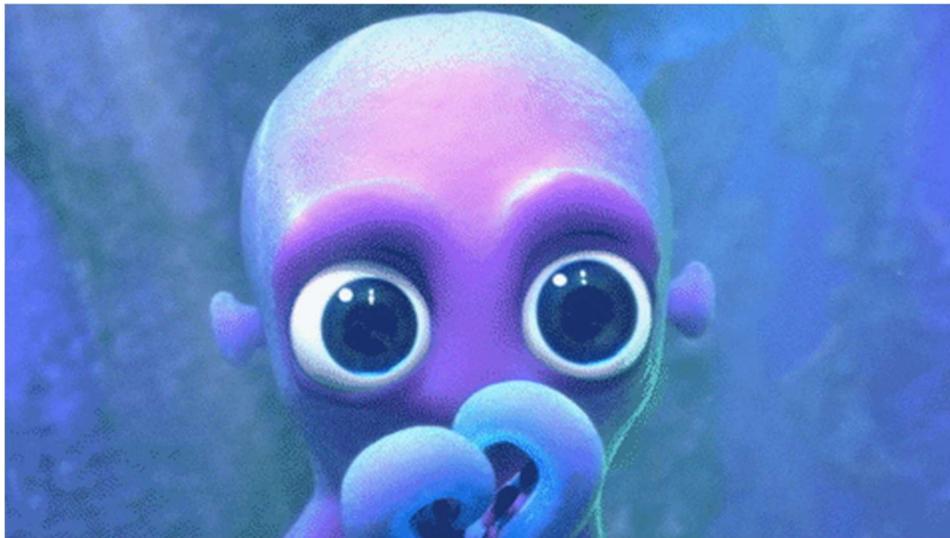
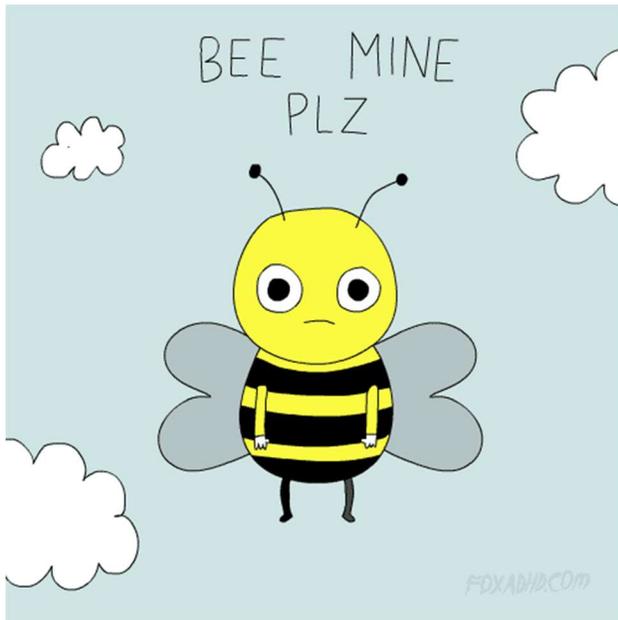
A musical bee with a top hat is the kind of sidekick that's A-OK in #krakenbee land!

#### WHAT WE'RE LOOKING FOR IN A MENTEE!

Overall, we want to fall in love with a story. Voice, yes. Concept, yes, and then . . . a mentee who has a polished manuscript, but is open to revising and even gutting characters or sub-plots if it makes the manuscript better. Declining a suggestion/revision because it's too much work is not acceptable to us. Please do not sub to us if you really are not open to considering massive revisions or changes. No hard feelings! Honest!

Pitch Wars is for writers who are seeking developmental help with their manuscript, whether pacing, plot, character arc, or overall structure. We want a mentee who will consider our suggestions and then run with them. We'll shine a light on things that need revising, whether that's adding an inner journey, an outer journey, a plot element, solidifying the emotional aspects, or whatever the fix is. We're not going to tell you what to write. We're going to tell you why something isn't working. We are so happy to brainstorm revision ideas with you, but the story is yours. We'll never say: you must revise *this* way.

We love helping writers. Outside of Pitch Wars, we are critique partners. We bounce revision ideas off one another. As our mentee, we want you to join our team!



Be ours like this bee and octopus!

For more info on whether you might be a fit for us, continue [HERE](#) to Jenny B's blog for Team KrakenBee's Wish List of Dreams, part 2. There you'll find:

1. Other tropes/concepts we'd love to see in our inbox
2. A Peek Behind the Curtain into our submission process, and what to expect if you become our mentee
3. A note from our 2018 and 2019 mentees, Summer Short & L.K. Frank!
4. Even more gifs

Thanks for reading, and remember: #TeamKrakenBee wants YOU!

