

An Author's Analysis of the First Two Pages of
Aries: The Sign Behind The Crime, Book 2
By Ronnie Allen

I decided to focus this blog on the first two pages of *Aries*, my latest release from Black Opal Books that hit the market on Jan. 23, 2016. I'll break up my pages and discuss each section, below it.

Eyes cemented shut in deep concentration, palms placed upon her midriff, she felt the power she craved being directed straight into her core by Tuesday's new moon, as if a cord attached the moon to her solar plexus. She interpreted the moon's personal signal as something she'd better heed. The charts she referred to told her tonight marked the night. Perfect for an Aries to invoke her deepest desires. Nothing else mattered now.

As an author, I'm a big believer in letting the reader know what they are getting in a book, early on. Right away, the reader can tell the tone will be dark, it's paranormal, and how the title came about. Yes, I did have reservations writing *Black Magick*, since I'm only about the positive universal energies. My protagonist in *Gemini* is psychic and clairvoyant and practices the positive spirituality. When I started plotting, I didn't know if my character would be Dr. Trenton from *Gemini* or a different character. But at any rate, in my thrillers, I introduce my antagonists first. And my villain had to be the opposite. The protagonists in *Aries* are Detective Samantha Wright and forensic psychiatrist Frank Khaos. Samantha (Sam) has the white magick that will combat the antagonist here. Here, the reader gets a glimpse that this character wants to do something. Telling exactly what that is, here, would be too soon. It would throw off the timing and pacing. As a writer, one has to be careful about building suspense, no matter the genre. You want the reader to wonder about what is next.

Opening her eyes, she checked the light-resistant blinds on the window facing Garfield Place, leveling the way they fell on the sill. She pulled them tightly to make sure they shut out any reflections from the streetlights. The last thing she wanted was someone taking a glance in her direction, intruding on her peace.

Here, what's important to note is the location. The reader must know where they are. I didn't want to dump a description of the local here, so I decided to sprinkle it throughout. And I'll talk more about that. One of my writing strategies is to write an info dump in a section. It's what I want the reader to know. Then as the novel progresses, I remove that dump and weave bits and pieces of what is necessary throughout the plot.

She needed to remain low profile now. Everyone had told her that she'd been and would be "low profile" her entire life. She hadn't realized how important those two words would become. Low profile—low, unsuccessful, pitiful, minuscule, never good enough. From the time she entered school, those words had drilled apart her soul.

In writing psychological thrillers, I like to get deep into the minds of my killers. Every character, the antagonist as well as the protagonists, need to have their GMC (goal,

motivation, conflict) known. This is what I believe keeps the reader turning pages. Even the villain needs their ‘why’ and the reader has to see this. Up front and personal. This is what makes an empathetic antagonist. We may hate what the killer does but we must understand their reasons. Emotional conflict must be seen early in the novel. How many readers could identify with this? I could. How many of you were denigrated by a person in a position of trust, in your childhood? I was. Authors put a lot of themselves into their novels. Authors need to create novels that readers can relate to on an emotional level. So putting out the character’s emotionality early, is important. If a character is happy go lucky on the first few pages, readers may be turned off. Especially if they’re going through their own struggles. So my advice to writers? Dig into your own traumas and let them come out. Now, if these emotions drive the character in the plot, they’re important. If you say, she’s sad because of the rain and it’s not relevant to the plot, don’t go into it. That brings me to another issue. Everything you write about, everything you include has to drive the plot forward. You’ll see how the above section does. The feelings expressed drives her through the novel. Because she’s the killer, she doesn’t have to change or grow. Your protagonists do.

Even at night, this upper crust Park Slope neighborhood didn’t sleep. Her tree-lined street was residential, but an avenue away the new age shops, restaurants, cafes, bakeries, and fresh-food markets all hopped until midnight. The aromas of fresh baked bread and European cuisine found their way into her windows, especially now, in late fall when Brooklyn had cooled from the hot summer.

The residents, though, minded their own business, so she could do what she wanted, when she wanted. In fact, they ignored her. She’d been living in this northern part of Brooklyn eight months and not once had any one of them asked her how she could afford it. They just gave her dirty looks, as if she didn’t belong. She assumed that’s what they were thinking. They had no idea if she rented or owned. These yuppies were too busy climbing their own ladders in the arts to be bothered with a nobody like herself. But she’d show them. All of them. Soon she’d be at the top, looking down on exactly the right people.

Okay, here is where I talk more about her surroundings, the neighborhood. Just in a few sentences. My readers in NYC like that I mention specific areas. What I did, and it was a conscious effort, was weave in her relationship to the neighborhood. How was she different? Making a comparison makes the information relevant. It also shows more about her internal conflicts.

“They just gave her dirty looks, as if she didn’t belong. She assumed that’s what they were thinking.”

This sentence in quotes above, I want to talk about separately. If I had just written the first sentence, it would have been a point of view switch. How could she know what they were thinking? I like having only one POV in a scene or in a chapter. Switching POVs is known as head hopping and can be jarring to a reader. By adding the second sentence, I’m telling the reader it’s an assumption. May be correct or not. However, I stayed in this character’s head.

You also get a glimpse of her goal in the last sentence of that section. I don’t tell it exactly, just a hint. Suspense like this keeps a reader, reading.

She stood facing her altar in the dark basement with her arms up in the air, spread apart, palms facing each other. Under her black ritual robe, she felt the heat swell within her, rising up from her core to the top of her crown. She was ready.

Again, showing where she is. Black ritual robe—I let the reader know what she was wearing without making a list. I then prepared the reader that something was about to happen. Sometimes, I get thrown out of the story when a writer says, ‘she wore...’ and it usually happens for each character in the book if that’s the author’s style. I prefer showing what she wore through another character’s observation, or if the character is looking for something specific in her wardrobe. Notice in books you’ve read how authors do it and see which style resonates with you.

“Oh, Goddesses of the Dark, and Aradia, the Devine Queen of Witches, hear my call tonight,” she whispered. “In the light of the moon in the Mars hour, I, BlackRam, High Priestess of the Covenant of Lasting Darkness, hereby summon every deity in my circle to come to me now. As I use my wand to consecrate the four directions in your honor, I vow to you my complete devotion.”

BlackRam glanced at the clock on the wall behind the altar. Nine p.m. She nodded. She had marked off this hour as the moon in Mars conjunct, perfect for plotting an evil deed. And, yes, she was evil, down to her demon soul. She faced east, held her right arm out in front of her, and, with her selenite wand grasped in her hand, encased herself with spiraling motions. First, her aura in front of her, then above her head, and lastly behind her back. All the while, making sure that she stayed within a two foot circumference. “I invoke, from the Dark Goddesses, commitment to my beliefs.” Then she turned south and repeated the same movements with the selenite wand. “I invoke, from the Dark Goddesses, success and strength.” Then she faced west. After repeating the movements with the selenite wand, “I invoke, from the Dark Goddesses, a flexible nature.” She turned to face north. The selenite wand whisked through the air. “I invoke, from the Dark Goddesses, accomplishment.” Now facing the altar, she continued the invocation.

“Oh, Goddesses of the Dark, I have proved my devotion to you. My triple-beholden will require your strength to walk the left-hand path. As I gaze into your light, bestow upon me the power and energy to command my triple-beholden, BlackMoon, BlackFlower, and BlackCloud, to carry out my deeds. Command them to worship me, obey me, without fault or hesitation. Make their obedience unfaltering.”

Okay, this invocation was extremely difficult for me to write. First, because I only create invocations for the positive. I have been practicing white magick, Dianic Wicca—after the Roman Goddess Diana—since the mid- 90s. I do make the circle, use my selenite wand and invoke Goddesses. Mine are of the light, Greek Goddesses, and Lord Ganesh. I was really nervous about invoking the dark. Would I actually bestow them upon me? Here’s where I had to step back and say, ‘it’s fiction.’ As authors of thrillers, we have to create villains that are scary, that go against our own nature. I thought long and hard if this was the direction I should take. When you read through page four—this is the end of page two—you’ll see the complete ritual that this character performed and the tools she used. A word of caution, please do not do this at home. A negative ritual completed by an untrained person can backfire. By the end of the scene in the middle of page four, you’ll know this character’s GMC. Her goal—what she plans to do. Her motivation—why she wants to do it. And her conflict—which you saw early on. GMC can be internal and external. Here you’ll see the internal, which is what I believe keeps the reader turning pages.

My advice, by the end of the first chapter, you should have an idea of the plot. Some publishers and editors say, they should have an idea of the plot by page 3. I set it up so that a glimpse of the plot started on page 1. Because I did that, my publisher saw that I had a focus. Not to toot my own horn, but I will tell you that I have evidence of what I advised for you, here, does work. I received my contract on *Aries*, the first time out, two weeks after submission,

It's also important in the first chapter to tell the reader if this antagonist will be working with others or all alone. Here you can see that BlackRam will have three people—you don't know if they're men or women, yet—to do what she wants. This also tells the reader that this will be a complicated plot.

I hope my tips on what you should include in your first two pages, help your readers.



Ronnie Allen is a New York City native, born and bred in Brooklyn, New York, where she was a teacher in the New York City Department of Education for 33 years including the obtaining of a New York State license as School Psychologist. Her various roles included classroom teacher, staff developer, crisis intervention specialist, and mentor for teachers who were struggling. In the early 1990s she began a journey into holistic healing and alternative therapies and completed her PhD in Parapsychic Sciences in 2001. Along the way, Allen has picked up many certifications. She is a Board Certified Holistic Health Practitioner as well as a crystal therapist, Reiki practitioner, metaphysician, dream analyst, and Tarot Master Instructor. She has taught workshops in New York City and in Central Florida where she now lives. Combining a love of the crime genre and her psychology background, with her alternative therapies experiences, writing psychological thrillers is the perfect venue for her.

Here is my author central page, where you can buy *Aries* and *Gemini*, find my trailer for *Gemini*, read my latest blogs, and see my upcoming appearances. <http://www.amazon.com/-/e/B00YSLGOSY>

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