

# Simon Rose

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### **In the Beginning - Hooking the Reader**

You have a great title, fabulous cover art and a back cover synopsis that really intrigues the reader. However, how do you ensure that they don't read the first page of your book then put it down, never to pick it up again?

To hook the reader at the outset, you need to grab their attention and keep the story moving at a fast pace for long enough to make them sufficiently interested to want to finish the book. You also need to create page-turning endings to all your chapters as well, to ensure that they will continue reading.

Think about creating the first part of your story. Intrigue the reader with an action packed or mysterious passage, complete with dialogue, which can mention some aspects of the plot that appear much later or briefly introduce characters.

Here's an example from the beginning of *The Alchemist's Portrait* and a slightly longer excerpt from the beginning of *The Sorcerer's Letterbox*.

#### **The Alchemist's Portrait**

Peter rushed into the studio and slammed the door behind him. A moment later the door was blown off its hinges, and he was thrown against the far wall where his portrait hung.

"Do you realise with whom you are dealing, boy?" Nicolaas van der Leyden bellowed as he stormed into the studio. "I know more about the realm of magic than you could ever learn!"

"I cannot allow you to use my father's work for your own evil ends!" Peter replied defiantly.

"Your father was a fool!" snarled his uncle. "Now tell me where the magic paint is, or you will suffer the same fate!"

"But he destroyed it all!" protested Peter.

"I never should have let you live!" growled van der Leyden, and with a wave of his hand, he imprisoned Peter inside his portrait.

#### **The Sorcerer's Letterbox**

##### *England 1470*

Brother William gazed into the ball of polished glass. Tantalizing glimpses of the future, shrouded in mist and shadows, flickered and disappeared. Carefully, he put the ball back into its velvet sack and ran his fingers over the exquisitely decorated box in front of him. It perfectly matched the image that he had just seen.

He heard footsteps coming up the stairs. That must be the queen, he thought, opening the door. She has come at last.

“Your Majesty,” he said, and bowed as she swept into the room.

“Brother William, I presume?” said the queen.

“Yes, Your Majesty.”

She walked over to the tiny window and peered down at the unmarked carriage waiting below.

“I risk a great deal coming here,” said the queen, lowering the hood of her cloak. “My enemies have spread rumours that I practise the dark arts. My own brother-in-law, the duke of Gloucester, believes that I bewitched the king into marriage. It will do me no good if I am seen with you in this inn. It is said you are a sorcerer.”

“Your Majesty,” protested Brother William, “I am but a humble monk.”

“You were a monk,” the queen corrected him, as she sat at the table. “I know your story, Brother William. You were banished from the monastery, and now there is a price on your head.

“Your messenger said that you had a vision that harm would come to my son and that you would give me something to protect him.” She pointed to the box. “Is this it?”

“Indeed it is, Your Majesty.”

With trembling hands, Brother William gently pushed the box across the table toward her. The queen studied the painted figures on the sides, lifted the lid and peered in.

“It seems like an ordinary box to me. My son’s christening is on the morrow. What more can you tell me?”

Brother William shook his head. “One day the prince will be in grave danger; this box will protect him. He must always keep it close at hand.”

“But how does it work?”

“When the time comes, he must place a letter inside the box, and it will bring him aid when he most needs it.”

“You speak in riddles, old man!” snapped the queen, grabbing the box. “I can tarry no longer.”

Without a backward glance, she hurried from the room, clutching the box tightly under the folds of her cloak.

Brother William quickly gathered up the velvet sack and prepared to leave. Moments after the queen’s carriage departed, he heard a loud pounding at the door and shouts from the street below. It was the sheriff’s men.

But by the time they reached the upstairs room, Brother William had disappeared.