



Editorial Report

Date: 18th March, 2021

Author Name: [REDACTED]

Email Contact: [REDACTED]

Title of Manuscript: [REDACTED]

Genre: Fantasy

Target Audience: YA

Type of Edit Undertaken: Developmental

Areas of focus requested: General developmental editing feedback (including character, dialogue, etc); my thoughts on the worldbuilding and descriptions.

Notes on editing:

While the main focus of this edit is macro/developmental, I have noted a number of copy/line edits via track changes to give you an idea of the way I work. Of course, this isn't exhaustive, and I usually do a second pass over a manuscript to specifically focus on copy/line edits.

Please don't be put off by all the comments—I comment when I see things I like, as well as things that might need tweaking 😊. Also, I sometimes include suggestions for word choice, but don't feel under any obligation to use them. You are the author and you know your story better than anyone else!

Also, you will see that my comments appear under the name "Jasmine S [REDACTED]"—this is just my married name (I write and edit under my maiden name of Fischer).

General Feedback:

Strengths:

Thank you so much for sharing your story with me! It was a pleasure and a privilege to be introduced to your world and your characters.

Your manuscript was well-presented (your background as a professional editor really shows) and it was lovely to see things like proper use of em dashes, punctuation, and good spelling & grammar. Very refreshing!

You have many great strengths as a writer; however, I think your greatest strength is character and voice. Your main character, [REDACTED], has a wonderful voice





and you did a fantastic job of *showing* his character rather than simply *telling* us what he was like. His sense of humor and his snarky, arrogant observations bring a wonderful freshness to this story. Your dialogue is good and not too wordy, you use the first-person point of view and present tense to your advantage (it works very well for [REDACTED]), and you also use tension and pacing effectively.

I'll discuss each of these areas in more detail below. Honestly, there is so much to rave about...congratulations on such a good and promising story!

Don't be overwhelmed by the length of the "Suggestions for Growth" section—when a story is solid, it's nice to be able to drill down on the points that will make it absolutely perfect!

Suggestions for Growth:

You do a great job of both description and worldbuilding—I can tell that you've invested a lot of time in painting the world for the reader and connecting them to time and place.

However (and this is really more of a copy/line editing note than a developmental one), my only advice would be to try and tighten up your descriptions so they're a little punchier. Sometimes, the descriptions can be unnecessary (especially in the middle of dialogue and action scenes, where they can slow the story down), and I think it's helpful to try and make them as concrete as possible. I've made notes in the manuscript with some suggestions.

To this end, I would also encourage you to mix up your word choice. Every writer has a list of phrases and gestures they love to use (the number of times my characters wink at each other and raise their eyebrows is beyond counting, haha), so I've noted where you may have inadvertently repeated a particular phrase. You might also want to beware of the narration of obvious glances and movements (alas, this is another particular fault of mine!) and you can reduce speech tags where they don't add significantly to the story, and it's already apparent who is speaking.

On a developmental level, I'm assuming that this story is written for young adults. Your tone, characters, and writing style really works for that target audience, but I'm wondering if young readers (particularly female ones) might be expecting to see the POV of the [REDACTED] introduced a bit sooner. I realize that you might want the element of surprise in this 😊 (especially with what happens at the end of this excerpt), and of course I don't know how the story ends, but we do continue in [REDACTED]'s perspective for quite a long time before anything very significant happens. [REDACTED] is also emerging as a main character, so I wonder if we might need to get to know her a little sooner...even in some small way.

Your story might work better if you changed up the structure/pacing just a bit. For example, could we meet [REDACTED] earlier on in the story (e.g., in [REDACTED]'s





recollections)? Or could you introduce the [REDACTED] and explore some of his motivations for wanting to invade the land? I think this would really help to increase the conflict and tension as well.

I also made a number of notes about [REDACTED]'s POV in the "Interlude". I love that you switch to [REDACTED]'s perspective, but I think that the use of third-person with present tense doesn't work as well. Usually, third-person is paired with *past* tense, because present tense gives us a sense of immediacy and past tense gives us distance. So there's almost a "doubling up" of distancing (from the POV and the tense) when you've just introduced [REDACTED] as an important character. This made it difficult to get into [REDACTED]'s head.

Because it reads somewhat unnaturally, there are a lot more tense errors, and I found this section a bit jarring overall. I think that if you switch [REDACTED]'s POV to first-person, it will read better and also allow you to explore her character and motivations more deeply. So long as you make it clear whose perspective we're in at the beginning of each chapter (either with a name or in the first few lines), then it's usually fine to have two characters written in first-person POV (especially as we've spent so long in [REDACTED]'s POV already).

Specific feedback by topic:

Story Structure:

Your story flows beautifully, and I especially like how you work to create tension (e.g., by starting the story in the middle of an action scene). I felt "hooked" by the story quite early on. I also love how you end each chapter; these suspenseful finishes are difficult to do well, but you accomplish them superbly. The chapters are short and punchy—perfect for a YA fantasy.

As I mentioned above, I think it would help to change up the structure in terms of character POV. [REDACTED] is wonderfully spoilt and quite endearing at times, but readers might get exasperated after several chapters of his petulant ways. I would love to see his voice contrasted with some scenes featuring the plucky [REDACTED] or the cunning villain, even if they're just in [REDACTED]'s flashbacks.

Plot:

The complication of the story ([REDACTED]'s desperate attempts to preserve his freedom by avoiding getting betrothed) is introduced early on and there's a good amount of action that follows. I always felt that there was something "around the corner," so to speak. I didn't note any major plot holes or inconsistencies.

Character development:





As I said before, character is undoubtedly your greatest strength as a writer. [REDACTED], [REDACTED], and the rest of your cast are realistic, consistent, authentic, and compelling. Once again, you show a mastery of showing and not telling. Your characters also have a wonderful sense of humor that makes [REDACTED] a pleasure to read.

World-building/depth of research:

You've done a great job of building your world, and I have quite a clear image of each setting so far. As I said in one of the comments, I'd love to see a world map, which would be helpful in orienting readers to all the different place names and distinguishing your world from the many other medieval worlds that are out there. I adore the quotes at the beginning of each chapter—they set the scene really well, since they're also relevant thematically and they match the chapter titles.

I did wonder if the use of the word [REDACTED] was a bit cliché or dated. I know that's what you're ultimately parodying in [REDACTED], and you show [REDACTED] reacting to the word, but I think I prefer the word *princess*. That way, it also makes it clear that only women of royal birth get stashed away in towers to be eventually rescued (if that's what actually happens in your world). That wasn't clear to me until partway through the manuscript.

Themes:

While this is just the beginning of the story, it's nice to see some clear themes emerging, particularly through the character of [REDACTED]. As I wrote several times in your manuscript, I'm loving how you contrast [REDACTED]'s humble, gentle ways with the brash arrogance of [REDACTED]. However, you still manage to make both characters likeable, and I think this will go a long way to enriching the story's themes and making the character arcs convincing.

Dialogue:

Your dialogue is nice and punchy; I also like where you're chosen *not* to let characters speak—for example, [REDACTED], and the advice-giving dragon. This speaks volumes about your characters—literally! Once again, you resist the temptation to tell and not show.

Point of view/voice:

As I said above, the choice of first-person POV and present tense works really well in [REDACTED]'s sections, particularly given this is YA fantasy. However, just watch your tense





at times—present tense is so difficult to write in, and we writers are always tempted to slip back into the past tense 😊.

General craft issues:

There is so little to comment on here. Your first chapter is engaging, you avoid lengthy exposition/info dumps, you do a lovely job of foreshadowing future action, and you avoid “rookie” mistakes like head-hopping or telling-not-showing. [REDACTED] does a good job of following genre conventions, expectations, and rules.

As I mentioned above, I think the main thing to focus on from a “micro” perspective is tightening your descriptions. At times, they can be a little odd or even cross-sensory, e.g., “shouts of warning *swarming*” or “[the scent] turning to adrenaline in my gut”. Your copy/line editor will catch some of these, but where you can, I would recommend asking yourself questions about how things move in your world. For example, do trees tighten or do they shiver? Do hooves clop or do they thunder? You might have to cycle through a few descriptions until you find the one that fits “just right” for the moment and the mood—the poem “The Lady of Shalott” by Alfred, Lord Tennyson is a masterful example of this.

Where to from here?

This manuscript shows great promise for publication! I look forward to one day seeing your book in print and finding out what happens next 😊.

If you’re in the querying stage and hoping to publish in the American market, I would just suggest using US English rather than British/Australian English, as American acquisition editors will appreciate that extra level of attention to detail [REDACTED] [REDACTED] 😊.

Other than that, well done on an engaging and entertaining story! [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Wishing you all the best for all your future writing and editing endeavors!

Warm regards,

Jasmine 😊

