

Dear (Author),

First off, I really liked this story. It was entertaining and insightful, surprising and heartwarming. I thought the strongest points of the book were the interrelated storylines, the diverse group of characters, and the story concept as a whole, which I found to be very unique and compelling. You have a strong writing style, smart sense of dialogue, and a skillful touch about how to weave subplots together.

I'm curious to know what genre you would place this in. While I lean toward general adult fiction, there's so much that makes your book a unique and untold story, I think with some additional work it, will stand out very well in the current market. That being said, the main areas that stand out to me as needing more development are: getting a more balanced approach of dialogue and exposition, refining internal conflicts and expanding internal character development, and streamlining the structure of the text. Let's look at these items in more detail.

Show and Tell

As you mentioned, this story is very dialogue-heavy. Dialogue is a great technique used to show instead of tell, and you often handle this in a very skillful and natural way. However, the downside to having so little exposition in a story is that beyond what you show readers, they're left to guess at what's going on inside a character's head, what past forces have influenced their current behaviors, and how they feel about the current actions and situations they're caught up in. It also has the effect of setting a pace in the story that is too fast and makes scenes feel they haven't been fully realized.

For example ...

While adding exposition is one way to go about this, another would be to take sections of dialogue and transform them to expository passages wherever appropriate. Although a developmental editor could guide you in this process, the exposition you already have is spot-on, very skillful, so I think if you wanted to give it a shot yourself first, it's definitely worth it.

Characters

Your characters are one of your strongest aspects. They are each unique with distinctive dialogue and very singular characterization. However, as mentioned above, without exposition, the focus feels narrow. What drives the characters to act as they do? What motivates them? Because the story is restricted to (name)'s point of view, character development of secondary characters must be done through (name)'s voice. Some specific aspects that jumped out at me ...

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Conflict

Your story is rife with delicious external conflict. But because of the items mentioned above, internal conflict is very sparse, and readers are left to guess at characters' motives, intent, and feelings about the circumstances they're caught up in.

Other elements:

Setting

The setting is extremely important in any story as it can add a whole new dimension and richness to the text. Your story takes place in a variety of very interesting places, and while you give some details about the surroundings, I feel there's definitely room for development. If you can engage the readers' senses in describing these places, you'll draw them further into the action of the story—one way of achieving this may be through your expanded exposition.

The other thing to consider with setting is how it serves the plot and the characters. For example ...

Hooks/Pacing/Tension

You've got a great initial hook in this story. I love the first line, and the whole first section creates an air of mystery and expectation for the book that I think will really draw readers in. But I feel many of the action scenes feel rushed. For example ...

Structure

I'd be curious to know why your book isn't divided into chapters. I found this to be confusing. Maybe you're planning to add those later on?

While I loved the opening section, it was difficult for me to transition to the next section, to find my bearings when we jump so far back in time without any explanation from the narrator. There are several ways you might address this ...

I was then also confused to see the opening repeated in the middle of the story. I'm wondering why you've approached it that way? Why not just pick up where you left off with (name)?

Plot

I love how complex and interrelated the plot is and, as I mentioned before, you handle all the various storylines so skillfully. However, I still think the transition from the opening scene to the next scene needs some work to establish the trajectory of the story. Readers go from (name) on the whale-watching trip, acting violently to escape being annoyed and blackmailed, to (name) back in time going to live with (name) and hanging around with his best friends (name) and (name). It's hard to get grounded in where this story intends to take us. I'd suggest working to refine your major story questions in the opening section and then tie them into (name)'s early years as a way of guiding the reader's focus.

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Dialect

As we've talked about, there are many places the American phrasing isn't quite right. A few examples ...

Mechanics

Your writing is really solid. Your sentence structure, prose, syntax, dialogue, grammar, and punctuation are pretty polished. But there are some things that a copyedit would clear up like changing internal thought to italics instead of quotation marks and conforming the manuscript to general style/mechanics expectations for the fiction market.

Marketability

I think this book is so unique and interesting that it would do well in the current market, but I do feel it needs work to get there. By achieving a stronger balance of exposition and dialogue, expanding inner character development, strengthening the story structure, and addressing the weaker plot issues, you'll really capture an enthusiastic and loyal reader base.

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