

## Manuscript Critique <Title of the Book>

Date of the critique

*This sample is an anonymized composite of material from several critiques in different genres. Its intent is to illustrate the type of feedback you can expect rather than refer to any explicit work.*

I liked your book, and it kept my attention – drew me in to keep reading all the way to the end. Your world-building and characterization are well done. Readers can easily imagine themselves being in those places with those characters and can feel the characters’ emotions throughout their journeys. I like how you allowed your main character to recognize that he was spiraling down into exactly the same sort of web of lies that he so pointedly despised in other people.

There is a big discontinuity relative to the timing of Landon’s death. There’s a reference to it in Chapter 18: “Her heart was broken. How could she go on now that Landon was gone?” But then in Chapter 24, Felicia and Landon are shown in a secret tryst. Then in Chapter 27, there is the scene where Evelyn is recollecting Landon’s funeral, which was “two days ago.” This is likely a side effect of some earlier revision and probably an easy fix, but it’s an “oops” right now.

Your foreshadowing of Nancy’s unreliability on page 33 is well written. Unfortunately, when Nancy reappears on page 124, the relationship between Anne and Nancy is portrayed as strongly positive from there through many more chapters, and Nancy’s betrayal on page 284 comes as a complete shock to both Anne and the reader. This is probably going to have the reader scratching their heads. I’d recommend choosing a path:

- keep the foreshadowing and drop small hints along the way that the reader can pick up on even if Anne remains blissfully unaware (or chooses to keep her head in the sand)
- leave the reader completely inside Anne’s head, blind to or willfully ignorant of Nancy’s ulterior motives until it all comes crashing down around Anne

You might want to rethink the names of a couple of your characters. Niels and Neal are very different characters, but the similarity of their names just invites confusion on the part of the reader. That said, if your point was to set up exactly that sort of confusion for the other characters in the story, it falls short and needs to be much better integrated into the narrative with humor, drama, or some kind of tension resulting from the ambiguity.

The pace lags in the middle section. You probably want to consider some judicious pruning here. In this genre, it's perfectly acceptable to have anything in the range of 75,000 to 90,000 words, so cutting even as much as 8,000 words here would still leave you well above the minimum word count.

You have an opportunity to tighten up the narrative overall. There are many cases of excessive wordiness throughout the manuscript. Here are a couple of examples:

- “It was dark in the living room. The draperies had been drawn over the windows.”  
Readers will know that draperies are used with windows and that lack of light from windows would make a room dark, so all you need to say is “It was dark in the living room. The draperies had been drawn.”
- “He took her hand in his and led her through the door.”  
No need for the “in his.” The reader will mentally supply that detail.

This is the sort of thing that would be addressed in a copyedit.

There's a pervasive problem with dangling participles and dangling phrases. If you'd like to tackle this yourself in the next revision, consider downloading my tutorial on dangling phrases at <URL> *Note: this tutorial will be available in Spring 2019.* This is also the sort of thing that would be addressed in a copyedit.

When you're using specific products and brand names in the narrative, be sure you've done your homework and those products were actually on the market at the time of the story. For brand names, be sure you have the spelling, capitalization, and any punctuation identical to what the manufacturer uses. The only exception would be in dialogue where a character would be intentionally mispronouncing a name.