

Editorial Letter and Comments for [REDACTED]

Hi [REDACTED]

Thank you for sharing [REDACTED] with me. It was a pleasure to read and edit. Following, you'll find my scene-by-scene breakdown of your story. I've also made comments in your manuscript file using track changes.

When analyzing [REDACTED], I considered the many elements that make a good story, including character goals, entry and exit hooks, tension, conflict, backstory, setting, and dialogue. I also looked at the protagonist's character arc (the emotional ups and downs as she moves through the story) and the story arc (the story structure) with its key points—the inciting incident, plot point 1, the middle, plot point 2, the climax, and the resolution.

Key comments I would make are

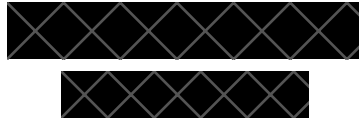
- Be conscious of narrative description that tells rather than shows the reader what to think.
- Give your point of view (POV) character a clear goal in each scene. What does the POV character want to achieve in that scene? (In this case, [REDACTED] is the POV character throughout.)
- Give your protagonist obstacles she needs to overcome so the reader will start cheering for her. Take [REDACTED] (and the reader) on a roller coaster ride of emotions. Give her wins and losses throughout that take her further away from or closer to her final goal.
- Build tension in every scene and throw in some conflict now and then. But also take a breather once in a while—give the reader and characters time to reflect.
- Make use of all the senses (sight, sound, taste, touch, smells) and the weather/atmospherics to really bring the reader into the story.

My comments and edits are merely suggestions. Please don't feel you must include these—this is your story and your voice.

Take as much time as you need to absorb the information I've presented and let me know if you have any questions.

Best regards,

Melanie Haycock



Genre: Short Story

Note: I have put hard scene breaks (marked by asterisks) where a natural scene break could occur (change of setting, shift in time, or change of point of view), so my editorial comments are centered on these seven scenes.

Scene 1

The scene opens at [redacted] house when she asks her parents to help with a school genealogy project. This prompts them to research their [redacted], where they learn more about [redacted] using [redacted] father's atlas and iPad. [redacted] parents tell her of the [redacted] they both knew.

This is a long scene, and while it's great at providing history and backstory, it is heavy on information and narrative description. Ideally you want tension in a scene to grip the reader and make them want to keep reading.

We are a third into the story until the inciting incident where the [redacted] is revealed and we get a hint of [redacted] overall goal—[redacted]. To grab the reader's attention sooner, I would suggest bringing this inciting incident forward (within the first 10%–15% of the story, which is around page 3). The inciting incident should kick-start the action and shake up your protagonist. It's the point that drives her forward and starts her on her journey towards her story goal. Perhaps you could focus on [redacted] parents' [redacted] first, bring the [redacted] forward, and move the less significant descriptions to either a new scene where [redacted] is researching the [redacted] or during the museum visit (perhaps these are told by the guide or [redacted] reads them on an exhibit).

The protagonist or POV character must have a goal in every scene (otherwise, the story has no impetus), and each scene should have some element of tension and/or conflict. Without conflict, the story is too easy and can become dull or lose the reader's attention. You can achieve conflict by placing obstacles in the way of your protagonist reaching her scene goal. For example, in scene 1, [redacted] goal is to research her family tree for her homework assignment. An obstacle could be that there's a power outage at the precise moment they reveal the [redacted]. This could trigger all sorts of outcomes or consequences in the scene that drive the plot forward and help the reader become invested in the story and our protagonist. In every scene, think about what happens if the goal fails. Even if your character succeeds in their goal, what would the outcome be if they failed?

Another important aspect of each scene is the POV character's internal goal. This is usually a flaw or weakness that they need to overcome, and it adds depth to a character. Without a weakness, the character can appear flat. We learn later in the story that [redacted] flaw is self-importance—she feels superior around her friends with her new-found powers, and it damages their relationship. She must overcome this flaw to reach her final goal of [redacted]. Can you bring something of her internal character into this first scene?

The entry hook to this scene is great, and we're brought straight into the action with tight, compelling dialogue. But the exit hook is a little weak. If you can keep the reader hungry, they won't put the story down—the goal at the end of every scene is to make the reader want to start the next scene. We know [redacted] wants to tell her friends, but can you heighten the tension? Perhaps foreshadow trouble or leave a question hanging? What's going to happen next?

Scene 2

In this scene, [redacted] explores the top floor of the museum on her own. We get a sense of [redacted] curious and determined nature (internal character), exploring areas without the guide or her classmates. This is another long scene (1,200 words) that could be split at the point where [redacted] leaves the group to explore upstairs.

The entry hook is a little heavy on description, which weakens its impact. Perhaps you could start in the middle of action and let the description follow. How can you link this scene with the excitement of the previous one? Does she have the [redacted] on her mind? Does she get called out for not paying attention? Is she lost among the exhibits? Maybe the boys banging the breastplates shake her out of a daydream where she's in [redacted] in the past.

This scene is our plot point 1, which is the point of no return for our protagonist. It's the moment where the story shifts into a new phase, and there is no going back for [redacted]. The set up for the story has ended, and now we're moving into the next stage or "act." [redacted] discovers [redacted] and meets the ancestors who reveal that she is "The One" spoken of in the [redacted]; her destiny is revealed. Her life will not be the same from that moment forward.

There is some great dialogue in this scene between [redacted] and the ancestors, and we see a shift in [redacted] character as she experiences her powers for the first time—hovering above the ground and commanding her friend [redacted] to go back downstairs. Again, don't make life too easy for our hero. What if [redacted] saw her hovering above the floor? What if he knocked the vase over, and she used her powers to stop it from smashing at the last second? What if it smashed? Think of an obstacle and then take it a step further! How far can you go with it?

There is some tension in the scene as she explores the museum on her own, and we have some conflict when she is interrupted by her classmate and deals with the emotional impact of realising she has *commanded* him to walk back down. Think about ways you can boost the scene's climax and exit hook. [redacted] would be reeling from what has just happened! Don't make the story too easy for our protagonist.

Be conscious of areas where you are telling the reader what's happening rather than showing. You can show through actions, dialogue, or internal thoughts. Avoid adverbs. Remember that you have other senses to play with in each scene—smell, touch, taste, sound, sight. Putting yourself in your character's shoes and describing her experience using the senses helps to show rather than tell: Does she sneeze from the dusty exhibits? Does her classmates' laughter echo from downstairs (a world away)? Does she touch the [redacted] and does it tingle through her fingertips? Does she knock the barrier over or bump a [redacted] the sound reverberating down the corridor? These are just examples of how the senses can add mood and bring the reader into the room with your protagonist.