

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

**Commented [LL1]:** I think this beginning is great. Both speakers have their own voice, which contrast each other well. The ambiguity of this discussion and the way you've presented it intrigue me. The suggestion that there's a grander scheme than what happens in this story – that it's a story within a story – works really well here.

**Commented [LL2]:** This seems like it's repeating what the previous paragraphs have just explained. If the intention was to emphasise [Redacted]'s role, I suggest rewording to give him more focus, or moving this up a few paragraphs.

**Commented [LL3]:** The flow could be improved in these paragraphs. The subject jumps from one to another without smooth transitions. Could try reordering the ideas so they all connect

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

**Commented [LL4]:** You could do away with the word 'prologue' here. Knowing this is from a book within the story, I think it would come across better if this section was simply named after the chapter of the [Redacted] it belongs to.

Further, there are 3 introductions, which may feel like several false starts to a reader. If you remove the words "Introduction" and "Prologue", it could help to avoid any irritation this may cause otherwise.

**Commented [LL5]:** If they don't play a larger role in the story, it's probably best to avoid naming them here. There's already a lot of information to take in.

**Commented [LL6]:** This is confusing. Consider rephrasing.

**Commented [LL7]:** I'm not exactly sure what [Redacted] wants to use this weapon for, or whom he wants to use it against. I'm content with not knowing at this point, but I feel as though the text is trying to give some indication of what he intends and I'm just not getting it. If this is the case, try to make his intent a little clearer.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**Commented [LL8]:** Use [REDACTED] so it's clear this is referring to him and not [REDACTED].

**Commented [LL9]:** Just wanted to point out that the above scene sets an expectation that this story will ultimately be about whether or not [REDACTED], and that [REDACTED] has a role to play in this. I'll wait to see if the rest of the story meets this expectation.

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**Commented [LL10]:** "Displacing" works better here as it's not immediately clear whether this is a verb or adjective.

**Commented [LL11]:** Unnecessarily wordy. "His legs refused to move" flows better.

**Commented [LL12]:** This doesn't flow on from the first half of the sentence and would be better on its own.

**Commented [LL13]:** Where is the flower exactly? This goes from describing the detail of the wall-skirts and then skips to the flower but I can't place the flower in the setting. Are the wall-skirts more like a shelf, with the case sitting on it? Or is it hanging from the wall-skirts?

[REDACTED]

**Commented [LL14]:** The way this is worded sounds like the man's expression is leant over a staff, not the man himself. Consider rephrasing or separating into two sentences.

**Commented [LL15]:** Similar to above, it sounds like the question is scratching his head.

**Commented [LL16]:** Consider separating this into two sentences, as this suggests he does the actions simultaneously, which creates a confusing image.

**Commented [LL17]:** The story is filtered through [REDACTED]'s perspective, so I don't expect to know anything that he doesn't know. How does he know this person is a traveller? Does her clothing suggest something? Does she have a pack? A bit more description would be beneficial here.

**Commented [LL18]:** Not a question or critique, just wanted to point out that the above scene sets an expectation that this story will ultimately be about whether or not Tristess makes it back to Alhaedsfar, and that Tanos has a role to play in this. I'll wait to see if the rest of the story meets this expectation.

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## Editing Notes

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### Plot Development

I enjoyed this first section of the manuscript, particularly being interested in how many plot threads were initiated.

The introduction was written in such a way that it's open to interpretation, which got my imagination going, and has left me eager to find out how much more about this exterior storyline I might learn. This introduction isn't necessary for understanding the rest of this part of the manuscript, but I think it's a great complementary inclusion.

Your prologue also works well. The world is quite rich and [REDACTED] are involved early and extensively. In 350 words, you were able to give me just enough information to be able to move forward without feeling overwhelmed.

Following this, the reader is introduced to [REDACTED], who wants to [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] in an attempt to accomplish this goal. By page 6, there is already a character pursuing a goal, which won't be easy to achieve and, thus, will drive the story.

It quickly becomes clear that [REDACTED] won't be the focal point of the story; however, he is a driving force as he has set the events that follow in motion. The reader is introduced to [REDACTED], who we know was [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] suggests to [REDACTED] that he travel first to [REDACTED], then to [REDACTED], where [REDACTED] may be able to help him [REDACTED], introducing another character with another goal. There's no fluff in the beginning – it gets straight to the point and begins a story.

Immediately following this is a scene that casts suspicion on [REDACTED]. Who exactly is he? What does he want? The reader doesn't need to know this, as the story is already in motion and doesn't require another driving force at this point. However, this suspicion makes his character interesting – the most interesting that has been introduced so far – and this is another reason for the reader to continue reading.

During [REDACTED]'s journey to [REDACTED], we're introduced to something else: [REDACTED]. As the story goes on, we find out that [REDACTED] aren't just a regular part of the world, rather this is a recent phenomenon that is causing distress. What's caused them to appear? What does it signify? No one knows, but I'd like to find out.

Finally, [REDACTED] himself. [REDACTED] appears to go straight for [REDACTED], as if his purpose for [REDACTED] is [REDACTED]. He fails, and [REDACTED] is able to escape before [REDACTED].

Everything builds up to this final chapter in which [REDACTED]; however, the conclusion has left me a little confused and underwhelmed simply because [REDACTED] escaped so easily and, for all his concern, [REDACTED] was able to [REDACTED] without much difficulty. That's not to say that there will be no fallout – which I'm eager to read about – but it has left me wondering how the plot could develop from this point. [REDACTED] is the greatest antagonistic force at play – he's the enemy of [REDACTED], and he appears to want to [REDACTED] – but he was overcome and, for the time being, is no longer a threat. With everything that happened, [REDACTED]'s goal seems like less of a priority, and yet there is no other conflict to overcome or goal to pursue. I'd expect there to be a lull following the [REDACTED], but it feels more like a stall, like the plot has hit a dead end.

None of this means that I suggest making changes to this final chapter, as good pacing would dictate that these things be addressed in the following chapter once the characters have had a chance to stop and catch their breath. I would, however, like to bring this to your attention as, if it doesn't already, the first chapter of the next sections needs to reinvigorate the plot by giving the characters something to do.

### Characters

[REDACTED]

Due to his relationship with [REDACTED], I see [REDACTED] as the protagonist of this story. [REDACTED] is still trying to find his feet in this part of the story, and I like that there's a small arc that takes him from [REDACTED] to being a little more [REDACTED], although it is an abrupt change and I'd like to see how this transition occurs, either through his thought processes, or through a scene where he learns a lesson or decides to make a change. Perhaps something like [REDACTED]. This: "[REDACTED]." otherwise seems out of character for him, and makes me feel as though he only made this decision because you wanted to force him and [REDACTED] together. It'd be great to see how he gets from A to B.

I neither like nor dislike [REDACTED], and don't really have a connection with him, but I can understand his actions in the beginning and see his potential to grow into a more interesting character as the story progresses. However, I wouldn't mind seeing more of his personality in this section. I only really see one side of him, so he doesn't feel fleshed out. I know this might be difficult given how much needs to be covered in this section, but even hinting at other aspects of his personality would go a long way.

I find [REDACTED] very interesting; in fact, he's the character I'm most interested in. I'm not quite sure what to make of him, and that's what intrigues me. He has a distinct voice that comes across well through his dialogue, and he's a lot more fleshed out than [REDACTED] in this part of the story, showing both humour and solemnity, and both confidence and fear. I look forward to seeing how his role in the story develops. Including his conversation with [REDACTED] so early on was a great choice, as it contrasted with the opinion of him I'd formed earlier and it was a nice surprise to see that there was more to him than what was shown when [REDACTED].

While I find [REDACTED] to be the most interesting character, [REDACTED] is the most likable of the three main characters. Even though I didn't see much fighting from her, her reputation as a warrior is shown through the way the other characters act and speak about and to her rather than just being told. You haven't written her as a stereotypical "strong female character"; she's authentic, and I'm certain she'll become more compelling as the story progresses. I do think there's an opportunity to make the ending of this part of the story more compelling by getting into her head a little more to approach [REDACTED] with much stronger emotion.

## World Building

Overall, the world building was well done. For the most part, all of the terms, names, etc. were introduced in passing so that there wasn't extensive exposition, which would have slowed down the pace of the story and likely would bore readers. There were two terms I wasn't quite clear on: [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. An extra sentence that clarifies each at some early point of the story would be beneficial.

## Style

Some sentences throughout this part of the manuscript are convoluted, which makes the tone too formal for a compelling narrative, so keep that in mind. Sometimes, less is more, and more common words are better suited to narratives than overly formal ones. This was mostly an issue in the prologue and beginning of the first chapter, but once there was dialogue in the story (which was well-written and sounded authentic), the style settled to create a much better tone.

In general, I think the story would benefit from some more scenic and sensory details. The settings don't need to be described in a lot of detail, but there needs to be enough detail that the reader can form a clear picture in their mind. If they can't easily create a picture in their mind, it's less likely they'll be engaged in the scene and more likely that they'll be distracted from reading because they can't place themselves in the scene. Things such as where objects and people of note are in relation to other objects and people of note; directions that people are facing or moving in; and transitions between actions and movements are all important for establishing a strong image. Further, subtle details can go a long way to making a scene richer, as long as they flow with the rest of the text and don't steal the show. Small movements, colours, a quick inventory of what's in the room ... you've done this in many places, but there are other places where I didn't have much of an idea what the setting looked like and what the characters were doing as

they spoke, and every so often I would eventually come across a detail that contradicted how I'd filled the blanks in my head, which would pull me out of the story briefly.

The final thing I want to note is that scenes can become much more compelling and engaging when you incorporate the point-of-view character's senses. You have done this in places, but there are other places, such as [REDACTED], where all five senses would be active, but they weren't mentioned. After sight, hearing is the sense that will be referenced the most. When it is, just remember that we don't really begin to process a noise until it's heard, so when a character hears a significant noise that you need to draw attention to (e.g. [REDACTED]), it's best to describe the noise at the beginning of the sentence before describing characters' reactions to it or how they process it.

Smell is probably the next most important sense to incorporate, as it can add a lot of depth to your description. Smoke, sweat, blood, animals, dirt, corpses ... these things have strong, distinct odours, so when a character is around them, it's odd that they don't seem to smell them.

Touch can also add depth to your scenes. For example, when a character falls to the ground, they might jar their wrist or bang their hip, or feel gravel digging into their palms. If they're running through a city that's on fire, they're going to feel the heat in the air. They're going to sweat. Their legs might start to ache. I also think your story would benefit from more emotional feelings as well, as there are a few scenes where the characters are feeling strong emotions (fear, loss) but the narration rushes over them so I can't connect with them as well as I'd like.

Overall, it was a good read, and I'd love to know what happens next!

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