

*The Shattered Sword*

Editorial letter

Thank you for the opportunity to read and perform a developmental edit on your manuscript! After the first book, I was certainly looking forward to learning what would come next for Clara and the crew, and I'm confident that the continuing story will more than fulfill readers' expectations. The main areas of focus in this editorial letter are pinpointing and suggesting fixes for a few plot holes, ensuring character arcs are consistent and satisfying, and addressing some stylistic issues.

In addition to this editorial letter, which addresses the development of the manuscript broadly, please refer to the marginal comments throughout the document for specific instances of developmental or style issues you may wish to address in your revisions.

**Structure**

As Clara was the only POV character in the first book, the decision to branch out into multiple points of view in this book, focusing on a different character each chapter, was a significant departure—and well done! There are three specific structural points I believe you may wish to focus on in revisions:

- The book starts with Theodoric sneakily working the adventure into his latest performance, which is an excellent way to bring the reader back into this world.

However, given that the reader's primary concern at this point is for Clara, who is presumably still imprisoned at the palace, continuing with Theodoric as he meets with the southern operatives seems to slow down the start of the book unnecessarily. If you agree, an easy fix for this would be to start off with the performance as a prologue, ending at the line "In the city, the first of the vespers bells rang," which is a natural break. You could

then use the current second chapter as the first, returning to Theodoric and his intrigues in Chapter 2.

- Tatiana has significantly fewer POV chapters than the rest of the central characters. I understand that this is because she doesn't become relevant to the main plot again until about halfway through the book, and I gather you may have introduced the plot line with the northern pirates as a way to keep her somewhat involved until that point. However, the pirate plot never connects to the main plot in a meaningful way, so readers may find her chapters slow as a result. I can suggest two options to fix this: (1) Have her come across another of the central characters earlier in the time line. After breaking out of the palace, Clara and Damien find passage on a ship—but since nothing tells the reader that Tatiana left the city, would her ship not have been their first choice? (2) Connect the northern pirates to the main plot line. Perhaps they're raiding the southern isles to spur on the invasion as well?
- There are a few points at which the time line is unclear, and I have pointed these out via marginal comments. A few require just a quick clarification, but three stand out and are explained in further detail with marginal comments at those points: (1) Tatiana refers to her romance with Clawfoot in Chapter 5 before the two even meet, and it influences her decision to leave the city. (2) Clara and Damien stay at an inn along the Elmwood in Chapter 14 before splitting up, but the Elmwood and the surrounding villages have already been destroyed by that point. (3) Theodoric is in two places at once starting in Chapter 18.

## **Character development**

Your characters develop in meaningful and compelling ways throughout the manuscript, continuing well from where their journeys began in the first book. A few characters see huge transformations and shifts in their interpersonal relationships, and for the most part, these are well done. Characters falling in love and then choosing to be apart because they know they have greater callings is a theme you touched on in the first book ever so slightly, and to see that playing out more fully with Clara and Adnan is bittersweet. Whichever way you choose to take their relationship in the third book, I know readers will be satisfied.

In terms of character development issues, I recommend that you focus during your revisions on hammering out two inconsistencies:

- Theodoric's motivations for playing both sides against one another are never clear. He goes from spying for the southern alliance to then passing them false information—the consequences of which will presumably be revealed in the third book, correct? It's clear that Theodoric is meant to be a sympathetic character, so having him fence sit like this without any explanation or even some small clues is a frustrating experience for the reader. I suspect you ultimately aim to reveal that his true allegiance is with the halflings in Armorshire and that he desires an independent state for them, but even that doesn't explain his actions fully. While you certainly don't need to spell everything out for us, I recommend you give readers a little more to work with on this so his development and decisions make sense.
- Adnan, the ever stoic paladin, is now turning into a fully fleshed human being! I loved this, and I'm sure readers will too. However, as pointed out in a few marginal comments, it seems at certain points that he's conflicted just for the sake of being conflicted. He

knows or at least strongly suspects by Chapter 15 that King Elias is lying about the letter, which is why he cannot deliver the killing blow and instead takes the brunt of the spell from Clara. However, after this event, he seems to double down on his original beliefs only to then abandon his mission and run off with Clara in the final chapter. While his love for Clara certainly explains this, I truly believe the reader needs a few more hints about Adnan's growing doubts in Elias for his decisions near the end of the book to make sense.

### **Tone and style**

The tone and narrative style of this book were quite different than in the first book—in a good way, as the reader gets a window into all of the characters and their different fears, loves, senses of humor, etc. Indeed, while the tone shifts from chapter to chapter, it never feels jarring, and each character has his or her own narrative style without this becoming gimmicky. There are three points of style I wish to bring up in further detail, and these are mentioned in marginal comments at specific points where relevant:

- **Dialogue.** Occasionally, characters provide information in dialogue that we already know, as if to remind the reader, “This is important!” This issue was brought up in the first book as well, and you addressed it perfectly in your revisions, so I’ve pointed out a few such instances in this one for your attention. Another related point concerns the use of names in dialogue. Typically, you want to limit instances where characters address one another by name to particularly dramatic conversations, but there are scenes in this book where they do so two or three times in a row.
- **Narrative.** One of the points I really enjoyed about the first book was that it avoided the “high English” style of narration that fantasy novels sometimes use as if to emphasize the

otherworldly setting. Occasionally, as with the first scene with the scholars at the city gate in Chapter 3, you use this style extremely well as a device for humor—but occasionally you seemed to slip into it where it felt out of place, as well. I've pointed out these instances in marginal comments for your review.

- **Cliffhangers.** Your chapters often end on cliffhangers, as was the case in the first book, and for the most part, I feel this is done well. There were a few instances where I felt that the cliffhangers were somewhat ineffective, which was something you asked me to watch out for, so I've marked those with marginal comments. One example is the ending line for Chapter 26, where Damien says, "Yes, and we'd better get out of here before then." As he's simply talking about Theodoric setting sail, this seems a bit overly dramatic. While he and Clara do have to leave Almost soon, the ship's departure doesn't affect them at all, right? Occasionally, ending chapters on a more meditative note would be a welcome change of pace. In that example, for instance, the previous line, "That evening, they avoided the subject, instead talking about the changing weather, the sadness of southern songs, and the plan for the Blue Bounty to set sail the next day," serves as a perfectly suitable ending for the chapter.

## **Summary**

So much has changed for the central characters in this book, and the reader really gets the feeling that events are coming to a conclusion soon. You've tied up several loose ends from the first book and still left us wanting more in the final installment. After this round of revisions, where we've focused on patching a few plot holes, smoothing out the character arcs, and addressing some stylistic issues, I believe you'll be well on your way to a polished manuscript.

## Example

I hope this editorial letter and the marginal comments throughout the document will help you narrow in on these points and get started on your second draft. Thank you again for the opportunity to work with you on your manuscript, and best of luck with the revisions!

Sincerely,

Talia, your developmental editor at [ProofreadingServices.com](http://ProofreadingServices.com)

ProofreadingServices.com