

Overview of the Edit:

First off, [AUTHOR], let me say that *[book title]* has a really interesting and unique premise, and the story you've mapped out for this first installment does have a lot of intriguing mysteries and some solid world-building. Much of what I marked in the manuscript, to me, falls into the category of polishing and can be addressed fairly quickly. That said, I do have some bigger global concerns, which I'll map out here and in the subsections below.

From the notes I was given, you intend for this to be a Young Adult novel. However, I think the level of violence and particularly the sexual undertones that it contains make it a poor fit for that audience. On a similar note, the overly formal writing style you've adopted leads to some tricky sentence structure and obscure word choices that younger readers may find distancing. While I'm not suggesting that you need to dumb down the story, using more concise and direct language, contextual clues, and fewer "big words" will help make this a more inviting read.

Also, while you do have some very extensive and well thought out descriptions in the manuscript (save for the "backward-bending knees" of the Löwa, which is an awkward way to describe the hind legs of a canine), many of the descriptions for particular characters and significant places are scattered throughout the text, rather than being laid out during a first appearance or, at least, in the earlier sections of the novel. This leads to late discoveries about how something or someone looks, which makes those subsequent descriptions seem trivial or tacked on. Also, the descriptions that come up toward the tail end of the manuscript often give out redundant information, which doesn't help, either. I've marked some specific spots where this happens in the manuscript, and I suggest that you look at combining these descriptions into one logical spot, as well as try to parse them down to the essential information, leaving the rest to the reader's imagination.

Another global concern is the shifting points of view. While it's certainly possible to have more than one POV character within a novel, having that POV shift in the middle of a scene, or worse, within the same paragraph or sentence, can be disconcerting and this kind of muddled character perspective only draws attention to itself. Again, I've identified as many of these shifts as I could, but I suggest that when you go back to do your next draft that you work to cut out these POV shifts, or at least separate them from the rest of the scene with a section break.

On a related note, you specifically say from the outset that Einsa's perspective on the world comes solely from what she learned from her dreams. And yet, throughout the novel, she is making observations and having feelings that are most likely outside of that experience. Rephrasing these new experiences so that they better fit within Einsa's

somewhat limited frame of reference is a relatively simple fix, and it will help with the sense of discovery you want the novel to have.

Structure:

The structure of the novel is generally very linear, which works well for a world-building, first-in-a-series novel like this one. However, there were some points where it was hard to figure out how much time had elapsed and what was happening on a given day, and some scenes were presented in an odd order, like for instance the scene when the Löwa arrive for their assault on the village, which doesn't connect in the way that it should to the scenes of Einsa and Willa spotting their incoming attack. These timeline revisions should be simple fixes, too, and I've given suggestions on where these out-of-place scenes might be better placed.

There are also a few points when you try to build a bit of mystery about what appears to be an unknown object or a new character, only to then reveal that it's something or someone that's already been introduced. While I understand that you want to build a sense that the reader is discovering things at the same time as the characters, these delayed reveals only build suspense that doesn't pay off in a satisfying way. I think it would be better to simply name these characters and objects and carry on with the scene. These cuts will also address some of the pacing issues I'll bring up in the next section.

The one major structural concern I have is that we first see Joachim in the Prologue and then he doesn't appear again for almost two hundred pages, which is almost two-thirds of the novel. This ends up burying the character, which is unfortunate, given his importance to the later parts of the story. If possible, try to move up one or more of Joachim's scenes, so that the reader hasn't forgotten about him by the time he comes back on stage.

Finally, a couple of plot points aren't adequately resolved within the pages of this book, specifically the Elder-Shard the king gives Ulf, and the significance of the brand on Einsa's thigh. Granted, we do learn that the brand is the number thirty-six, but that doesn't happen until the last few pages and it was the first time the brand had been brought up in some time. While I understand that this is the first book in a series and that these points could and will play important parts in future volumes, they need more follow-up in the pages of this volume so that don't stand out as possible red herrings.

Pacing:

This was one of the areas you specifically asked me to focus on, but unfortunately, I feel it's one of the places where the novel falls short of what I think you had intended. Once more, the overly formal tone you've chosen to use works against you here, as trying to figure out what's being said will slow the reader down, thus slowing the pace of the story. As mentioned earlier, using more concise language and plainly stating what's going on,

rather than dancing around the action or over-explaining it, will go a long way to picking up the story's pace.

Also, instead of using long chapters with multiple section breaks, I suggest making every scene break a new chapter. There are some scenes that should to keep their close connection, like the later dream sequences with Joachim, which need to fall in between the moments when Einsa goes to sleep. But overall, I think going with short, brisk chapters will give you the pacing you're looking for. As an example, I suggest looking at the young adult novels of James Patterson. Even if his stories are not your cup of tea, he does have a very good command of pacing.

Characters:

You've definitely populated your world with some very interesting characters, and for the most part their motivations are very clear and believable. However, a couple of the major characters—in particular Ghesdalt, Samalle, and Inel—are presented in a somewhat inconsistent manner. One of the better examples of what I'm talking about is Ghesdalt, who is presented at the start as a strong, forceful character and the voice for his brothers in court, but then is shown to be a dandy, is called stupid by his father, is seemingly demoted from major character status by his brother Ulf, and then maimed. I've marked in the manuscript some points where it felt to me as if these characters' behavior or actions wasn't quite lining up with their previous appearances.

Speaking of Ghesdalt, I was very surprised that so much focus was put on him in the opening chapters, only for him to end up being not as important as Ulf. My suggestion would be to have Ulf greet Ghesdalt upon his arrival, rather than Darluch. That way their rivalry can be established earlier in the manuscript, and readers won't be that surprised when Ulf becomes the major villain of the novel.

Also note that while you are good at providing detailed descriptions of your characters, there are some, such as Edwir and Willa, who get hardly any description at all, particularly when you look at Berthold, who gets a fairly lengthy description and is then summarily killed off a few pages later. Similarly, the group scenes can get rather confusing, as many of the "mob characters" are simply referred to as "one of them," or "another one." Particularly since some of these characters have speaking roles, giving them a name or at least a title (leader, Long Hair, Purple Tunic) will help the reader identify them within the crowd, as well as within a dialogue.

Tone:

As you may have gathered from my opening remarks, it's my feeling that the tone of this book isn't appropriate for the Young Adult audience you say you're trying to reach. Putting aside the level of violence, the whole seduction of Einsa by Kline is too

suggestive, and even gets explicit at a few points. Considering Einsa is a teenage girl, Klinde could easily be seen as a sexual predator, which will be very off-putting to the young girls who are a majority of the Young Adult readership (not to mention that a significant number of YA editors are women and/or parents). While I know you had wanted to me to comment on whether or not Klinde's seduction of Einsa is believable, I feel the better question is whether or not it should be part of the story at all.

Though this may be an unpopular suggestion, if you really want this to be a Young Adult book, I think you need to completely re-evaluate Klinde's relationship with Einsa. While that choice is of course up to you, my suggestion would be to make Klinde's domination of Einsa more of an actual possession that she can be freed from at some later point in the series. While that may be a bit predictable, it doesn't have the same connotation as the current relationship between the pair.

You could also opt to aim for a more adult audience, but do keep in mind that we're still talking about an older person/being trying to—and succeeding at—seducing an underage girl. Making Einsa older will offset that to some degree, but Klinde's possible perception as a predator will still need to be addressed, and any later heroism on his part will most likely be tainted by his earlier behavior.

Grammar:

The one advantage to your writing style is that I was able to see that your grammar skills are pretty strong, which is great. But in achieving that style, you've created some very difficult sentences to parse, set up some difficult pronoun/antecedent relationships, and used several archaic-sounding words incorrectly. As I mentioned earlier, that first bit can distance your reader from the text, as it's hard for them to become invested when he or she is having trouble figuring out what you're trying to say. And the use of "big words," such as *chatelain*, *patina*, and *occult* as a verb, will not necessarily motivate a Young Adult reader to find their dictionary; most likely, it will make them want to put the book down.

One thing I'd really like to call your attention to is your overuse of similes. There were usually at least four or five per page, and sometimes even more than one in the same sentence. While similes are a great tool and can help build a more complete picture in your reader's imagination, this many can get overwhelming. Another problem in using them so often is that they soon lose their impact and it becomes too easy for a reader to start judging your similes, which only distracts them from what's going on in the story.

There were also a significant amount of comma splices throughout the manuscript. I ended up revising quite a number of them in order to clarify which phrases are modifiers and which are continuations of the main sentence. I encourage you to refrain from using them so frequently, as it can make for a very choppy and confusing read.

Also, be on the lookout for repeated phrases or words. For instance, you used “turn,” “casting a glance,” “amble,” and “arched back” quite frequently in the manuscript. While in some cases this can’t be avoided, many can be easily fixed. But don’t then fall into the trap I mentioned earlier and end up using an apparent synonym incorrectly.

Other:

- Be careful of how much attention you pay to the actions of your characters. Being so precise as to say “...after looking her up and down a few times with slow sweeps of his eyes...” or “snuffed out the candle with his breath” or having people use the “fingers of their hands,” only overcomplicates something that shouldn’t be that complicated. As mentioned earlier, be more simple and concise and allow the reader to assume the rest of the details. Likewise, try to avoid phrases like “throwing” or “sending out” one’s hands. Though they may fit in with the archaic-sounding style you’re trying to create, they sound a bit unnatural.
- You’ve created a rather extensive vocabulary for your world, and you do a fine job of providing enough contextual clues so that readers can understand each word’s meaning. However, a lot of these terms look and sound very similar, and not all the relationships are made clear, particularly in regards to the geography of the world. If you’re intending to include a map with the book, that will be helpful, but these kinds of relationships need to be spelled out in the text as well.
- I was a bit confused about the technology level of the world. For the most part, it seems to be like any other fantasy world with villages, blacksmiths, swords, and sorcery. The introduction of the clockwork guardian seemed to fit okay, but when Rainer pulls out a gun and Ulf orders his men to arm themselves with harpoon guns, the world lost some of its plausibility. I’m not saying that your world can’t have guns and similar elements, but they need to follow the same rules as any other tool or implement you’ve already introduced.

I know all of this may seem like a lot, [AUTHOR], but I want to stress that many of my comments, as well as the notes within the manuscript itself, are specific fixes or simple queries that need to be addressed. As I said from the start, I think you have a strong and intriguing story. All that I think is needed now is some additional thought on who you want your audience to be, and then polish the manuscript accordingly, making sure to focus on making your language clear and accessible for your chosen audience.