

Sample of Critical Review and Consultation (No Editing)

Description: Our critical review and consultation services include specific and general feedback on all aspects of the manuscript's flow, structure, cohesiveness, story arc, character development, plot structure, marketability, and readability, as well as any other issues that may affect the quality of the book. We typically provide a separate page of review in addition to the inline comments displayed below. Critical review and consultation is also available via phone or in person.

Note: This is **not** an editing sample, nor has the text below been copy edited. This sample showcases the type of feedback a client should expect when ordering **only** critical review and consultation.

--Previous content has been truncated for sample purposes--

Phiniaie's hands shook **delicately** as she opened the cedar door and teetered into the dimly lit relaxation chamber. The air was **sickly sweet with the scent of lavender and eucalyptus** and candles flickered in the spindly arms of a chandelier that hung low above a massive marble soaking tub. Exotic flute music echoed dimly from a distant unseen source, adding a nostalgic allure to the **anachronistic atmosphere**. **There was nothing of the sharp-edged, sleekly metallic metropolis here—nothing of the endlessly bright lights, incessant flash of products and progress, or the ubiquitous visual assault designed to assure all people at all times that they are never ever alone.**

With measured exhalation, Phiniaie steadied herself as she visualized all of her cells rejuvenated—each one soon to be completely regenerated and new. She slid off her pillowy bathrobe and stood stark naked and **perfectly innocent**, staring into the whirring, bubbling water before her.

"Loia, I'll be ready for my treatment in 5 minutes," she said aloud to the empty wooden walls.

Editor 12/15/2014 4:11 PM

Comment [1]: I changed this to "delicately," since "tepid" means lukewarm or unenthusiastic. Also, a word like "feebly" would indicate to the reader that she's ill, which, I presume, you don't want the reader to know yet.

Editor 12/8/2014 1:24 PM

Comment [2]: Consider using a word other than "noxious." For most people, the scents for lavender and eucalyptus are pleasing, not harmful or poisonous. I have revised to: "The air was sickly sweet..."

Editor 1/19/2015 12:18 PM

Comment [3]: The diction in this paragraph is a good fit with the content.

Editor 12/8/2014 1:28 PM

Comment [4]: I suggest changing the ending of the last chapter so that the contrast between the two scenes (i.e. that of the city and that of this almost temple-like environment) is clearly demarcated.

Editor 12/8/2014 1:28 PM

Comment [5]: If she has done this process before, innocence would probably not be involved.

Phiniaie noiselessly exhaled a gentle stream of air from her nostrils as she stepped down into the tub and paused on the top ledge, her ankles barely covered. She savored the sensation of the water lapping at her skin, the steam rising and coaxing her to soften. Step by step, she descended the submerged stairway, immersing herself until she stood in the center of the bath with only her eyes and nose above the surface. She reveled in the simplicity of this ritual; to her, it felt pure and ancient to envelop herself in water, the elixir of life, just as humans had done since time immemorial. *If only*, she thought to herself, knowing that this simple ritual was only a preparation. The real treatment was yet to come, but first she had to open her skin and make herself ready.

Holding her breath, she released her legs and allowed her body to sink slowly downward. She was weightless and free, without strength, unable to resist. In this moment, she felt that she was home, as though she were in a womb—safe and unblemished, her every need cared for before it arose. Phiniaie held her bittersweet remorse in suspension; for this singular moment, she was able to push out of her mind the impending desperation that would surely follow. Inevitably, even in the soft underwater hum that surrounded her, she began to feel the familiar, unwelcome prickle—the hunger and the frenzy. *Just a few more minutes of peace!* She felt the customary aches begin to course through her body. Her very anatomy was conditioned to recognize that as her pores opened in the soft warm water, something more potent was to soon come. *Why can't this be enough?* Her torment grew into a burning, physical craving. She futilely tried clinging to the stillness of the water that surrounded her. *Please...* But it was time; there was no delaying the inescapable. Phiniaie burst upwards

Editor 12/8/2014 1:32 PM

Comment [6]: The congruency between the peace the tub provides and the remorse she subsequently feels needs to be teased out more thoroughly. It has the potential to confuse the reader as it is now.

Editor 12/15/2014 4:12 PM

Comment [7]: In the chapters that follow, we need to make the craving, hunger, and burning more apparent. As of right now, there is too much of a disconnect between what happens to Phiniaie when she undergoes this process and then her actions in the two chapters that follow. The erosion of self that Phiniaie experiences should come out on a symbolic level.

out of the water, gasping and broken. Loia's hand quickly came to rest on her shoulder, calming her with the unspoken knowledge of what was to come.

It was not only Phiniae who was ready. Loia's eyes were greedy as she led Phiniae from the soaking tub to the treatment table, which was low to the ground and disguised as a dais of relaxation. Phiniae, devoid of any remaining will, pliantly reclined on the table. Loia trembled, almost in tears, as she lifted the Caduceus. With a touch of her finger, Loia activated the fine metal rod, and though no visible change occurred, both she and Phiniae exhaled with relief. The unseen pulses emitted by the Caduceus conferred the gifts of complete cellular rehabilitation and the deferment of the aging process. The effect was utterly irresistible, and anyone near the pulsing wand would be drawn to it like moths to a flame.

Loia began to slowly trace Phiniae's body from head to toe, passing the Caduceus over each of her meridian points. The treatment produced a buzz in Phiniae's head like the noise of some far-away spacecraft hovering over all human civilization. Instantly intoxicated, she lost herself in fantasy and power, her pleasure heightened by the edge of pain that electrified her muscles. She leaned into the sensation, pounding with each pump of her heart, riding the crest of control and recklessness. Yet Phiniae knew even then that this crest would ultimately crash and she would be left flailing in the fray.

In some sequestered corner of her brain, Phiniae mourned. *How long will these euphoric effects last this time? A month?* She should be so lucky. Thirty days was now nearly agony for her. If she didn't receive her treatment right on schedule, she would shake and reel with dizziness. The one time she waited three days too long, she was horrified when she looked in the mirror and saw her carefully preserved youth quickly

Editor 12/15/2014 4:12 PM

Comment [8]: Interesting. I thought Loia was a computer program at first, but she's actually a flesh-and-blood person. Did you intend for this ambiguity? Perhaps we should add some clearer anthropomorphisms earlier.

Editor 12/15/2014 4:12 PM

Comment [9]: In the next paragraph, it seems like Loia is also experiencing a hint of withdrawal symptoms—it feels reminiscent of the spice in *Dune*. Is this your intention?

Editor 12/8/2014 1:52 PM

Comment [10]: Loia's motivation in all of this hasn't been clearly defined.

Editor 12/15/2014 4:13 PM

Comment [11]: Rather than just call this a "wand," how about using the specific name of the wand carried by Hermes? In Greek mythology, they say if it was applied to the dying their death was gentle, and if applied to the dead they returned to life, which seems to work very well with the themes of the story.

Editor 12/15/2014 4:24 PM

Comment [12]: We changed this to the American spelling since you are releasing the book in the United States and the rest of the manuscript's spelling is in American English.

deteriorating. Had the aches and pains that coursed through her not been excruciating, she might have cared to see how gaunt and deathly she looked. Now, for the first time during a treatment itself, Phiniaie was aware of the damage she was doing to herself, the price she was paying for her perceived perfection. There was no way to keep this dependency under control, and every month she was now a slave to the treatments that she once thought would grant her the fame and fortune she had longed for. Wretchedly, Phiniaie now wondered how long would it be until the agony of withdrawal arrived within a week's time, within a single day. Even while soaring in ecstasy of her treatment, Phiniaie suddenly felt she was looking directly in the eye of her own demise.

--End of sample--