

SAMPLE: Personal Letter to Author

Hello [Author],

Thank you so much for this opportunity! I really appreciate you choosing me as your beta reader for [Book Title]. I had a lovely time reading your novel, and it blew me away. I'd really love to know if you plan on writing a series and would love to get my hands on a hard copy of this when it's published. Please let me know!

I loved quite a few things about your novel, specifically your use of imagery and detail. The character development of Jake was intense, and I liked how you gave him depth and complexity with how he deceived and treated Drew during their friendship. Jake, for me, is a very relatable character. It's so refreshing to have an engaging urban supernatural novel with a bisexual protagonist (bisexual, right?).

Immediately, you hooked me with the first chapter. I found some parts where the tone seemed to fluctuate, and the pacing sped up a bit too fast here and there. I was pleased to see that your endings for Chapters 1 through 5 ended with hooks that made me want to keep reading, and by then, I was invested in the story and had to find out what would happen next.

On a side note, I loved how your novel reminded me of the Hellblazer comics and Supernatural. There were moments, especially when they were drawing chalk circles and details about the sigils on the doorways, that really reminded me of this, for instance, on page 161.

Overall, it was an amazing experience and I really really like your novel. Please keep me posted on updates, I'd love to read book 2!

Have an excellent rest of your day!

Best,

Alina

SAMPLE: Answers to Author's Questions & General Feedback

As Requested, Here Are My Thoughts On:

Pacing:

Overall, I feel the pacing is consistent, but I found myself disoriented with Chapter 12. At the end of Chapter 11, I wasn't sure what to expect, but when I began reading the next chapter, I had to double back and reread it. The rapid successions of flashbacks were intense, and I felt they were maybe a tad too fast. I understand that they need to be short and quick to mimic how the flashbacks flow in my mind, but I was taken aback by the speed.

The start of Chapter 14 felt a little staccato, "The chilled mildew funk of entombment. A heartbeat hammering in his ears." I naturally expected a bit more padded before diving into "Jake floated above his corpse."

On page 145, I felt that the pacing sped up a bit too fast with, "Crouching in the wreckage, at the epicenter of the combat waging in the mausoleum, was a woman with a mane of red hair, a Monroe piercing, and a black domino mask fitted to her face."

For me, Chapter 23 didn't feel as fleshed out. The pacing is too quick. The development between Sly and Jake's relationship takes leaps in this chapter and feels rushed.

Chapter 25 felt way too short, and I was confused by the length compared to the previous chapters.

Writing style:

Your style is unique, and I love the details you provide. For instance, on page 17, "Every nerve screamed. Pain receptors shot off like rockets in his dead brain. Scorching fire licked his skin. An unbearable heat burst through his body, boiling his blood and cooking his innards as if he were roasting on a spit. If he were not blind, Jake thought he could look down at his own ghostly body and witness the fire swallowing his soul."

Your style is concise and vibrant and stands out among other writer's styles I've encountered. What I find distinctive is how you blend facts with the story's supernatural elements in your way.

I enjoyed all the technical terms and medical information. I knew nothing about these topics and learned so much that I felt like I wasn't being taught but absorbing information as a bystander.

I love this part on pg. 30, "He was involved in a motorcycle accident on Route 18 and arrived in police custody instead of an ambulance because he assaulted an officer at the scene. No charges have been filed as his identity is unknown. Despite his aggression with police, John Doe became incapacitated once inside the hospital. He is not unconscious. He is simply unresponsive. He appears to be in a great deal of pain even though his injuries are not so severe."

It is such matters of fact, and the information is relayed in a particular tone; I've heard this used before with medics and emergency personnel. Amazing. Parts like this bring the story to life because I know it's drawing on reality.

Consistency of Story Tone:

I found that the tone slightly fluctuated in certain spots, and it occurred more frequently after about a third of the novel. There's a distance that the narration creates throughout the story, and the distance changes in certain spots.

Pg. 82, "Jake was sure he would have heard the actual click in his head as his eyes widened with realization." I felt this tone changed slightly for this particular moment, and I also thought that he would've made the connection a lot sooner.

I feel that the tone changes at the beginning of Chapter 19: "Somehow, he had once again been transported into this place and was wearing the clothes he died in, complete with his bloodied anchor-stitched shirt and lab coat." I'd say this beginning can also tie into an analysis of the pacing.

At the beginning of Chapter 22, the tone felt off to me with "Silent seconds passed. Jake blinked. His gaze was trained on the skylights above."

On page 143, I felt like the tone shifted again with, "and yet the juvenile thick black-rimmed glasses fitted to his face did not appear out of place. Wendell did not, however, have his glasses-framed eyes on Jake or Sly."

At the beginning of Chapter 24, there is a moment when the voice fluctuates, and the distance between the narrator and me grows, "Jake had opted to root through Drew's laundry to obtain sweatpants for her."

The voice felt very different at the beginning of Chapter 27 and Chapter 28.

Plot:

This plot captivated me from the first chapter. I love how you got right to it and kept things running to move the story along. There weren't any plot points or sections that I found to be too long or drawn out. The twists in the end with Roderick gripped me; I was so invested in finding out if you'd kill everyone off or how they'd get all those children out of there.

It felt very natural that Jake became Maggie's apprentice in Chapter 33. I was secretly hoping this is where it was going and that his life as a pharmacist would either be obliterated or synthesized with an apprenticeship.

On a side note that can tie into pacing and plot, I thought it was odd that Jake called the police in Chapter 34.

I love that the finale happens at the Asbury Park Casino and Carousel House; what a spooky and fitting place!

The twist at the end of page 254 was excellent.

And it was tragically funny when Jake used the telekinetic toddler to break Maggie from the box on page 265.

On page 274, I was shocked they shot Maggie! This really got to me.

Esther going through Jake's mind on page 282 was intense. I could imagine those feelings, the pain and struggle of Jake, and the final push to kick Esther out. Felt very real to me.

From Chapter 40 on, I felt like the pacing of the plot clicked perfectly. I could sense it was beginning to wrap up precisely and enjoyed the tension and struggles of Jake getting them out and then, surprisingly, he making it out.

The time-lapse during his recovery felt natural, and I loved how you wrapped it up quite neatly with Dot. How Jake's life wasn't over at all, and he wasn't going to be a fugitive on the run. I love how he will move into part-time work and how he and Sly talk about creating their supernatural investigation unit. You've got me hooked with this, and I want to read book 2! This is exactly the type of stuff I love to read.

Characters:

Jake is the most captivating protagonist I've come across in a while. He's complex and fully formed. The transformation that he undergoes, life and body, is incredible. It's fascinating to be plunged into his psyche and go along with him as he struggles to deal with the changes he's undergoing that are entirely out of his control. At the end, when his kneecap was torn out, his lobe bit off, and he was burned, I could imagine what he would look like, and it's devastating. On top of the changes happening to him inwardly, the constant changes to his body (dying and being resurrected) created a perfect parallel. Fascinating. Also, I liked Jake's thoughts; I could sense his youth and the anxiety that overwhelms him. When he's upfront in the dialogue, it's delightful. For instance, on pg. 54, "Just...could you take it down a notch? Don't get me wrong, I'm enjoying swinging between panic, anxiety, sexual insecurity—"

I like his complexity and how his religion pops up here and there, it gives some nice juxtaposition and is like a "world's more bizarre than just the same old God and the Devil" thing. On page 98, "Jake's mind swam with this stunning information. Are angels real? No, there's no way. He reflected on that thought and shook his head. Wow, I am a crap Catholic."

Sly is an interesting character. He's been through the wringer, and he's still around. The parts that got me were when you described how he feels others' emotions. It was vivid and felt genuine. I also enjoyed Sly's sense of humor, and how he copes with everything that's out of his control. His personality is vibrant, and he is a fully formed character to me.

I also love his observations about Jake, for instance, on pg. 52, "Guessing Catholic," John Doe continued, ignoring Jake. The handcuffs clanged as he tied the waistband of the pants. "Explains the uptight anxiety."

Drew is probably the most "normal" character in your story. He's down to earth, utterly human, and planning for his future. Even though Jake feels so guilty over being a shitty friend, I don't like Drew. He's not very relatable and doesn't seem to care, but you got me with the end where he had the picture of him and Jake as kids. That was a touching moment and the only time I felt terrible for Drew.

On a side note about Drew, I had a hard time believing this line of his on page 198, "Jiminy Christmas, I knew you were crazy, but—"

Magnus is interesting, but I felt that she could use more development. I didn't get as many details about/from her as the others, and since she was responsible for what happened to Jake, I naturally disliked her. When she provided information about her master, that interested me, but overall, I didn't feel as much of a connection with her.

Anna is an intriguing character. I like the way you describe her and Dot. The fact that Anna has only eight years left is sad but also creates a good balance with Jake and how he is always running out of time, even at the end when he takes Amy's life force.

Dot is perfect in every way, I love her!

Esther is hands down one of the most terrifying monsters I've read about in a while. She reminds of a truly realistic vampire in some ways, completely animalistic and ready to torture anyone she's fascinated by. In the ending, when she's tearing apart Jake, I love the detail you had, the gory bits, the blood, and the pain you conveyed. It felt too vivid and accurate, and my knee hurt after she tore his kneecap out.

I didn't care much about **Roderick**, but I was intrigued after it was revealed he's Wendell's godson. After Cathy died, how he coped with her death felt very probable to me, given the information I had about him already. But his character added a significant element of plot possibilities that I was really excited about.

I have to say something about **the nurse in her golden years**; she is hilarious! I believe there are nurses like her in every hospital. The moments she pops up and Jake has to impromptu act were fantastic. I loved this dash of humor to release some tension and keep the plot moving.

Anything else you love, hate, or just want to talk about:

I found your word choices invigorating. The dialogue felt very real to me, and there were many moments when I was laughing. Below you'll find some of my favorite lines from your novel.

"Frigid wind smelling of bus diesel and impending snow assailed him in the dark parking lot behind the hospital." (pg.4)

"...his slight Guinness belly protruded over the elastic waistband of his shamrock-patterned boxers." (pg.17)

"...he gathered the courage to prick his index finger with the tip of a Cutco steak knife and watched in morbid fascination as the cut healed, leaving a bubble of congealed blood behind on unbroken skin." (pg.20)

I love the detail you provided on page 82 that laid out the city. Later on, I dove into Google Maps and had a fun time scouting the Elmwood Cemetery and looking around at the street view to get a feel for the place. These details brought the story to life for me, having the setting based on a real place. I really enjoyed it.

"There was a feeling of missing electricity in the air, as though there had just been a mad rush of people and the station was recently vacated." (pg.84), and "The ladder did not appear sturdy, and Jake spied rusty metallic splinters itching to get beneath his skin." (pg.85) and your use of "peaty" and "miry" trail. Just exquisite.

On page 127, "The figure, shrouded in darkness and wearing a flowing jet-black cloak, lifted its gaunt face."

"Chilled tendrils of unease crept down his back." (pg.43)

"Don't dwell on what you have to do. It's not going to change anything. Just get through today and this is all over. You can do this." (pg. 167)

"Liar, liar, dead guy on fire." (pg. 181) I love how this ties in with what happens to Jake in the end.

Alina Happy Hansen Your Favorite Beta Reader: [Book Title] by Carolyn A. Drake

On page 210, "Being a corpse, Jake was hyperaware of the heat emanating from her living skin as she lingered near him. She smelled of jasmine and VapoRub." I love the mix of jasmine and VapoRub; I could imagine the smell.

I love this line at the beginning of Chapter 34, "Jake barricaded the doors of Dot's shop and set up booby traps that he and Drew invented way back when the word booby could send them into hysterics."

I also loved this line on page 249, "...the ornate seafoam-green paint was chipping off of the rusting facade." very poetic.

I love this line on page 284, "Curiosity ghosted along her otherwise expressionless features as she studied him. "I wonder how you taste ."

"The invisible blaze that burned his soul melted into the flames dancing before his eyes as they spread along the cement floor of the carousel house cellar." (pg. 290)

Some lines stood out as slightly awkward phrasing or sounding somewhat unnatural. On page 23, "You seemed in a bad way." I haven't heard this before and found it interesting.

And on page 115, with the use of 'neglect' in "Good. Then I will neglect to inform the school of this incident. I will still give you both zeroes for this assignment, but your grade in this class will reflect that zero and nothing else."

Jake's consistent thoughts about Sly's withdrawals became a little too frequent for me. Like this thought on page 127 didn't feel necessary, "His withdrawal's getting worse. This is why you don't abuse prescription drugs, kids."

In Chapter 24, I had difficulty believing Jake's rapid change of view. I didn't find it believable that Jake would drop all his anger and frustration toward Maggie for murdering him just like that. The line starts with, "Jake was willing to call things even." (pg.156)

The use of 'indicating' on page 171 with, "...indicating they were readying to exit the break room and return to work."