

Gina Denny

Editing Services
gdenny.com/editing

Developmental Edit – [REDACTED]
August 26, 2023

Hello, [REDACTED]

Thank you so much for letting me read your work [REDACTED]

I left comments in the margins, mostly with questions and suggestions; your grammar, syntax, and mechanical work is nearly flawless and didn't need much attention. Every single suggestion is just that: a suggestion. You know your story best, and you know what is coming in the rest of the series, so you have the best vision for your world and your characters. My feedback centers on basically three things: Structure, The Lie She Tells Herself, and Sensory Details.

Structure

Romance stories follow a three-act structure. Act I: establish normal, meet cute, something small and external keeps them apart. Act II: "fun and games" (i.e. – all the banter, cute dates, almost kisses and near misses), one character falls harder, the other pulls away but for an *internal* reason now, instead of the external. At the end of Act II, we think they'll never find a way to be together, the differences are too great. Act III: a shift in priorities, followed by a Grand Gesture, and then the Happy Ever After.

You have all these pieces, but they're in a bit of a peculiar order right now. I've included a beat sheet that I use for plotting and planning, and I've plugged in a *suggested* order for your scenes. It'll take some work to smooth it all out once it's in the right order, but I really think you're cutting your legs out from under yourself right now. Your scenes are good, and the story has so much potential, but it feels a little uneven and bumpy right now.

Of course, I could be interpreting your themes incorrectly, and in that case, you'll want to adjust the motives of your characters to be a little more clear on the page. But I believe your theme centers around the idea that God puts people in our lives for a reason, and we cannot force an outcome; we have to rely on Him and trust in Him and He will lead us to happiness in a way we couldn't have predicted. There's a slightly better way to put all that in order and make that thematic throughline more clear and more impactful.

The Lie She Tells Herself

This is at the core of every romance novel, no matter the heat level: The Lie She Tells Herself. The characters are going to fall in love, we know that from the start. But they will be kept apart by some lie that the main character is telling herself. My career is too busy right now, I don't want to live in this small town on a farm, he's too handsome to be anything but a player, it would

be weird to date my best friend's brother, etc. It's a lie, but it's the lie she has to keep telling herself in order to believe all the other little things that might keep them apart.

█ doesn't have The Lie, though. She tells herself dozens of these lies and flips between them even within a single scene: he's moving to Italy, he'll cheat on her with models, she's not good enough, she's too busy, she has too many responsibilities, she can't trust him, she's untrustworthy herself, he's not interested in commitment. Choose the one that resonates the most with the Grand Gesture at the end, and weave it into everything, rather than bouncing from one to another and back again.

For █, I think it's an overall lack of confidence, which is why her very bold choice to fly to Italy works as a Grand Gesture. But you'll need to rearrange some scenes to make this as impactful as possible, rather than feeling like something █ is forcing on her.

Sensory Details

Once you have everything in the right order, and you have smoothed out █'s internal motivations, I'd really like to see you incorporate more sensory details into the story. These are the bits that really ground a reader in the story. How the sunshine feels on her face, what the fabric of the couch feels like against her legs, the sounds of traffic passing her by, the scent of fried potatoes in a diner.

When you remember to include these details, you do it *really* well. You know how to do this, and the few times you included them, they're in the perfect places. I'd just like to see more of them. A few in each scene, just quick lines that demonstrate how the character sees and feels about the world, grounding us as readers in the moment.

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Thank you again for letting me read your work. It really is an honor, even more so than the first time. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Gina Denny