

## MANUSCRIPT DEVELOPMENTAL EDIT NOTES (SAMPLE)

TITLE: The Indifferente	PAGES: 454
TIME PERIOD: mostly present day	GENRE: romance / fantasy

### LOGLINE:

A teenaged girl with the gift of healing animals learns she has angelic blood, and that there are fallen angels who want her dead, as she is believed to be the protector of humankind when the Apocalypse comes.

### OVERALL NOTES:

Amazing mythology, history and imagination blend with stunning imagery in this well-researched novel. The plot is in dire need of a strong goal for Rowan to pursue, however. Let the drama grow naturally from what you've already written, and focus on Rowan's flaws and how she and Eamon would struggle against trying to reach a specific goal. Also, work needs to be done to clarify the rules of this story world, but overall, this is a fast, fun read.

	POOR	FAIR	GOOD	EXCELLENT
CONCEPT			X	
PLOT/STRUCTURE		X		
PACING		X		
WRITING SKILLS			X	
CHARACTERS			X	
DIALOGUE			X	
OVERALL			X	

## **BLURB**

18-year-old Rowan is not your typical teenager on the brink of graduating from high school; all her life, she has had the magical ability to heal wounded animals. Recognizing this gift, her uncle gives her two special keys, which open doors to new worlds, filled with new adventures allowing her to make the most of her powers. However, the more Rowan delves into these new worlds, the more she realizes: there are powerful beings who see her power as a threat, and they will do anything they can to neutralize it.

## **FULL SYNOPSIS**

18-year-old high school senior Rowan has a secret: she has always had a special healing power that enabled her to cure wounded animals. She has kept this a secret from her Aunt Clare, who has been her guardian ever since Rowan's parents died in a fire when she was a baby. The only person who knows her secret is "Uncle Frank" (aka Saint Francis), who comes to Rowan when she calls, needing his help in mending a wounded sparrow. Sometimes, Uncle Frank must take animals to other worlds using the set of keys he always keeps on him, ritually unlocking and locking doors to other locations on Earth, and even some not of this world.

Today is different, though. Uncle Frank gives Rowan 2 keys: one with a birdwing topper, the Assisi key, which he tells her will burn hot when he needs her to use it; the other, topped with a crystal, is the Anakim key, and it will always lead her to a safe place. He warns her that he may not be around to help her for a while. Rowan goes off to school, where she learns from her best friend Becky that a new science teacher is planning on dissecting frogs – something Rowan and Becky worked doggedly to outlaw in their school. Rowan slips away to heal and release the frogs, but is caught by the new teacher, Miss Enoch, a gorgeous woman with a frightening temper. Rowan steals away and releases the frogs with the help of Becky and their school principal. She then heads to her after-school volunteer job at the animal shelter, where she nurses a gigantic Great Dane named Goliath back to health and takes him home with her. Goliath seems oddly interested in Rowan's keys, and refuses to leave her side.

Back home, Rowan goes to her hideaway, an old bomb shelter, and tries out the keys Uncle Frank gave her. The Anakim key leads her into a strange man's bedroom in the middle of the night! Rowan finds herself kissing the man passionately, and before she knows what's happening, he's yelling at her and she quickly returns through the cupboard from which she came, locking the door behind her. Rowan is sick in bed for days, but uses the time to read the book of saints Uncle Frank gave to her, reminding her that she can always call on any of the saints for help. Then, she hears Miss Enoch's voice downstairs! Using the Anakim key once again, Rowan finds herself at the University of

Glasgow – right in the middle of a lecture by the man whose bed she fell into: Eamon Greer, a professor of religious studies although he looks very young. He takes Rowan to his office and questions her, but he's no longer angry with her; in fact, he is obviously taken by her, which makes her shy because he is so unbelievably handsome. In his books, she finds a photo dated 1898 showing both Eamon and Miss Enoch – looking no older than they are today! She returns home, worried that Eamon might be dangerous.

One day, while checking on humane traps by the side of the road, Rowan witnesses Miss Enoch run over a cat and come back for Rowan, demanding that she heal the cat in front of her. How could she know? Miss Enoch threatens Rowan's life, but suddenly, Eamon shows up, and Rowan overhears them call her "the harbinger" and that they are not human, but have been banished to these human bodies. Enoch realizes Rowan is the girl from Eamon's dreams. Eamon scares Enoch off and returns Rowan home.

During a final exam, Rowan's Assisi key begins glowing red hot, and she's forced to find a doorway in school, which opens to a pig farm in the midst of a flood. She works doggedly, freeing the pigs from their inhumane pens, asking their permission to send them to another world (free will, at Uncle Frank's insistence), and saving them. One last pig is too far for her to reach, so she calls upon Saint Christopher. The pigs all make it safely through the doorway into another world, which Rowan realizes isn't Earth; for here, pigs can fly! Rowan tries to return home, but ends up back at school. Seeing as though she's a mess, she uses the Anakim key again, and again it takes her to Eamon. She freshens up, and he prepares a vegan meal for her, already somehow knowing her dietary restrictions. All the while, she can hardly fight the urge to touch and kiss him.

Eamon begins to tell Rowan the tale of how Lucifer fell from Heaven – a story far different than in the Bible. God dispatched a group of angels to Earth to protect humans from Lucifer. A group of those angels who loved humans as much as God did were called The Watchers or the Grigori. They began to give humans too many heavenly secrets, and then began to marry and procreate with the humans – so God punished them to stay on Earth forever and killed the Nephilim, the ½ human, ½ angel children – but some lived, and both Heaven and Lucifer's "Rebels" continued to search for those with angelic blood, as well as Watchers who consorted with humans. However, a new theory that God had wanted some of the Nephilim to survive all along arose; they would secure human life beyond the end times. And Rowan is a descendent of the Grigori.

Rowan's bird-wing key begins to glow hot, and Eamon insists on accompanying her; they find themselves in a yard where an old dog is near death from the horrible conditions he's been left in. Just as Rowan is about to carry him to safety, another portal opens and 2 men come after her – Jagers, or fallen angels who have become demonic in their hatred of humans, whom they believe are keeping them from returning to Heaven and make it a point to kill and torture humans and those with angelic blood. Rowan, Eamon and the dog

escape back to Eamon's castle, which he explains was left to him centuries ago by a woman who was part of the Gregor Clan of Scotland. And that woman was Rowan.

Long ago, the Jagers discovered that the MacGregors were descendent of angels, so the family had to escape – and Rowan had to leave Eamon behind, promising she would return someday. Since then, he has dreamt of her. Furthermore, she told Eamon that when she returned for him, he would finally get to go to Heaven. But he doubts that now, because he cannot deny her, and angels cannot consort with humans – and he himself is a fallen angel, an “Indifferente” – because he refused to take sides against God or Lucifer. Indifferente must report any Nephilim, although clearly, Eamon won't be giving Rowan away. Rowan and Eamon give into their desires and begin to get intimate, but Eamon controls himself and stops himself; he asks her help in staying abstinent so he can get back into Heaven.

While in the pantry in Eamon's castle, Rowan realizes it is exactly like her pantry at home, including the trap door. In it is an old, seemingly normal key. But when Eamon tries to use the key, it won't work; it must be a Master key that only responds to the touch of someone with MacGregor blood, and indeed, Rowan realizes the teeth resemble an “M”. Realizing that there is no cupboard in Eamon's bedroom from which she thought she came through that first night, she uses the Master key, which reveals a series of steps that jut out from the wall and lead up to a small door. Rowan, Eamon, and the dog walk down a very long stone corridor, finally ending at a door that leads to a place that is beyond gorgeous – but Eamon cannot enter, he insists; this feels like a different world, and he is banished to Earth.

Eamon wants to test a theory with Rowan's Anakim key, which is always supposed to bring her to a safe place – yet always seems to bring her to Eamon. Twice, he goes ahead of her to somewhat dangerous locales, and twice the key brings her to him. This troubles him, because sometimes he will be in dangerous situations he doesn't want her to get in the middle of. He tries once more, and when Rowan comes through the door, she doesn't see Eamon in the long hallway and is supposed to turn around – but she hears his voice. She wanders down the hall and finds a baby in a cradle, left alone. Suddenly, Eamon is there, pushing Rowan hurriedly back through the door; he regrets even trying to bring her there, to the Hall of Angelus, where the Indifferente are born time and again, never being reunited with God but instead stuck in the same body, lifetime after lifetime. If she'd been spotted there, it could have been the end.

On the day of Rowan's graduation, her Assisi key begins to grow warm. She rushes out to find a door, but is cornered by Miss Enoch, who yanks the keys from around Rowan's neck and throws them through a door into a mysterious place called Adamah that seems to force debilitating, negative thoughts. Saint Christopher helps Rowan find her keys and follows her where the Assisi key leads: a research lab, where they heal animals set for

termination, and set them free. She returns just in time to give her graduation speech and get her diploma.

Rowan figures out that the places Eamon took her during the “tests” were back in time, not in the present, and asks if he’ll take her to the day her parents died in the fire. Reluctantly, he agrees, and they get a handful of surprises: first, they witness Rowan’s parents escape safely through a trap door rather than dying in the fire. Then, Aunt Clare takes baby Rowan and disappears – flying like an angel! As the Jagers approach, Rowan calls on Saint Theresa, who hides them in a rose bush – and there, hidden from view and masking Eamon’s pheromones, they make love.

Rowan, who hasn’t been able to find Uncle Frank since he gave her the keys, finally figures out that by heating the Assisi key herself, she is brought to him – and she finds him, beaten, tied up and tortured, in a chamber with no doors and only a boarded-up window. They are trapped as the Jagers close in, having used Uncle Frank to get to Rowan – but, remembering his words that she herself is a key, she is able to open the stained-glass window depicting Christ, and escapes with Uncle Frank. When she wakes, her mother is there. She reminds Rowan that she has a mission – but it is not to save all of the Indifferente. Just one. Rowan wakes again at home, thinking it was a dream.

Eamon asks Rowan to be his date to a formal faculty function and gives her an exquisite gown to wear. Rowan is delivered a note asking her to meet in the courtyard, signed in Uncle Frank’s manner – but when she goes, she finds not Uncle Frank, but Miss Enoch, who has been sent to kill Rowan and ensure the Indifferente’s place back in Heaven. A black cougar, the Beast of Exmoor, comes to Rowan’s defense, and she rushes back to warn Eamon that the Indifferente are coming for him for consorting with Rowan – but she’s too late. She follows the 3 fallen angels who escort Eamon home and spies on them, waiting until just the right moment to pull Eamon to safety through a doorway back to Rowan’s home, locking it behind them. Just then, 20 Jagers arrive, surrounding them – until Goliath bounds out of the house. Then, Saint Dominic arrives, along with his “army” of monks. He has come to claim his dog – Goliath – but offers their services in return. They each turn into dogs similar to Goliath and chase the Jagers away. Miss Enoch arrives alone and stabs Eamon, who lies bleeding in Rowan’s arms. Rowan calls on Uncle Frank. She wants him to heal Eamon, but Uncle Frank cannot. Rowan says the prayer of the Guardian Angel, and suddenly Aunt Clare is there; she is not an Indifferente, but Rowan’s Guardian Angel, and she reminds Rowan that she has the healing bloodline of the Rapha in her. She can save Eamon. The group uses the Anakim key to get to a safe place.

Saint Dominic and Goliath return, followed by Rowan’s parents – they all give her the strength to continue healing Eamon. As she does, memories from her past lives flood back – the Grigori did tell the Indifferente the secret to salvation: to enjoy the gift God

gave them and live as humans on Earth. But they wouldn't accept this answer. Throughout her lives, she finds Eamon and wants to help save him, but he believes dying is the only way to get to God. She had asked her mother to make her forget about Eamon.

Rowan heals Eamon, but now her mother tells her she must follow her into this other world, away from Earth, to stay safe from the Indifferente. But this time, Eamon can come with them if he chooses to – if it is by his own free will. He isn't sure he will be allowed to; he thinks Rowan was sent here to save the Indifferente. But she was only sent to save him. Eamon takes Rowan's hand.

### **SPECIFIC COMMENTS:**

#### **CONCEPT/MARKETABILITY:**

There is so much heart and imagination in this story, at once reminiscent of favorites Madeline L'Engle and Neil Gaiman, which it is impossible not to like. The imagery is a strong suit, bringing to life amazing settings around this world and others. A story about fate, about family secrets, love, and destiny will always be interesting, and you've put a fantastic new spin on these tried-and-true themes that make your story unique.

Despite how likable this story is, there are several problems that need to be addressed – but by addressing these notes, I believe you will have a solid manuscript on your hands.

In terms of marketing, it's difficult to imagine whom this story is written for. First, in terms of age group; much of the story seems to be written for a YA audience, yet the sex scenes are so graphic that I cannot imagine this could be aimed at young teens and even pre-teens who frequently read YA novels. Up until those intimate scenes, it even seemed that this was a story focused toward YA, but with a broader appeal, like *Harry Potter* holds with both younger and older audiences. Truth be told, the explicit scenes were such that it suddenly made the book seem like it was destined to be a Harlequin novel, or nothing at all.

There is of course nothing wrong with wanting to write a Harlequin romance novel, but then, the majority of this story does not seem like it would appeal to the typical Harlequin reader – in that, there is now not *enough* sexual themes, not to mention that the protagonist is just graduating high school and is with a man in his 20s, despite how many lives they have lived.

Your best bet, it seems, is to keep YA readers in mind while remaining conscious of the fact that this can also appeal to older readers – but that means toning down the sex scenes. You can still have intimate scenes if far more subtext is employed during the scene in the rose bush.

Secondly, a good deal of the script does feel inherently “preachy” in regards to religion, and yet religious-leaning readers would probably feel some of the content of the plot is somewhat blasphemous. Because the concept of the story is grounded in tweaking the mythology of how Lucifer and other angels fell, because a great deal of the plot and Rowan’s fate rely on accepting that the Bible didn’t quite “get it right,” your story should try to shy away from “preachy.” It can still have religious undertones, of course; that is to be expected with a story of this nature. However, Eamon and even Rowan often slip into what basically amount to sermons, expounding their beliefs in such a straightforward manner that it feels as though the author is pushing certain beliefs on the reader.

It is entirely possible for your characters to be religious without making the religious beliefs too overt. For your story, it seems the best course of action is to allow for the main characters to doubt. To see that struggle more. We will go over this more in the next section on Character, but in essence, for such dramatic events to happen in your story, there is actually very little real *drama*. There isn’t enough real, touching struggle within the characters, nor between the characters. By allowing a character like Eamon, a fallen angel whose prayers have seemingly been unanswered for *thousands of years*, to doubt whether he will ever be saved or if God has given up on him, you can keep the religious themes without it seeming as though you are just expounding on your own views of religion.

Likewise, watch out for those moments when Rowan’s own thoughts on God become quite overt – like on pages 125-126, when Rowan talks about her ideas on rainbows and God. The following conversation between the two of them is another example of being preachy; I love that Rowan takes a stance on something – that she feels it is biased to say only humans have souls – but then Eamon comes in like he’s giving a sermon, so much so that it’s hard to believe even an angel would be this steadfast after thousands of years. I felt he was merely regurgitating information and not really stating what his character would truly believe, and it makes him seem distant and one-sided.

Another overall issue with the concept of the story is the way in which you lay out the rules of this story world – or rather, the way in which you sometimes do not lay out those rules. “Story world” simply refers to the world as it exists in your novel – to the world in which Rowan lives. It is like our world, but has its own set of rules, involving keys, fallen angels, prophecies, and so on. Any story world, regardless of the genre you are writing, must adhere to its own set of rules. These rules might be almost exactly like the world we know, but in fantasy and science fiction novels especially, the reader relies on the author to set forth the rules in a clear and succinct way and to more or less stick to those rules, with sufficient explanation when the rules are not followed.

In many ways, the rules of your story world are not always clear. It took quite a while to fully grasp even just the uses of the 2 different keys Rowan receives at the beginning of

the story. After having read the full manuscript, I understand them, but I can't help but think that Uncle Frank's explanation of the keys to Rowan could have been much clearer and more concise and to the point. The crystal-topped key is the Anakim key and takes you to safety. The Assisi key with the bird's wing design heats up when you need to use it. In order to protect yourself, always lock the door behind you once you pass through, and think of home whenever you want the key to take you home.

The problem is, we have a lot of seemingly extraneous information, and while it seems interesting to have all of these many explanations, it can become too much. For instance, there is the idea of Peter leaving gateways open and the fact that there are not only doors, there are mirrors, and also invisible gateways, and also doors that can be made with just a loose doorknob (which is only used in one scene in the entire novel) – and I'm not sure how much all of these ideas truly service your story.

Likewise, we focus on a story about fallen angels and humans who are descendants of the Grigori, and thus have angelic blood. This should be the focus of the story. However, you also call some of the Jagers "vampires" (again, appearing only once in the story, somewhat unnecessarily), and you also have monks who can turn into canines. You also have the Beast of Exmoor that comes out of nowhere among the slew of protective animals throughout the story. Again, I love that you have this amazing imagination, and I absolutely understand how one would think that adding in all of these elements help to make this fantasy story more fantastical.

However, the key to a great fantasy story is that it has to be grounded in many ways. If this is a world as we readers know it, but there are also fallen angels in hiding and magic keys that open portals, that's enough. That's a great idea to base your story on. But when you begin to throw ALL of these other elements into the story, it begins to seem as though practically anything can happen, that this world is not at all like one we can relate to, that information suddenly pops up only as you need it rather than being set up.

Another rule you might lessen the focus on, or lose entirely: as interesting as the idea is, I'm not sure that Eamon showing up in Adamah, with all of the time travel and new rules required to explain this, is worth the trouble. First of all, it seems that some of the mechanics of how exactly this works are never fully explained; though Eamon finds the book Rowan points him toward, he never even reads it, so how is that supposed to explain to him how he will travel back in time and know how to enter Adamah to have Rowan write the letter? Furthermore, what is the point of his showing up if the only really helpful action he takes is giving her the doorknob; couldn't this be an ingenious idea the intelligent Rowan should come up with on her own? It is Saint Christopher who truly helps Rowan out of this predicament.



In the end, it doesn't seem like the Law of Returning plays into the story in a satisfying way. You could drop everything involving Eamon finding his way to Adamah, researching how he did it, and trying to explain it fully in the end; it's enough for him to take a leap of faith in the last few pages without involving Eamon in this episode. The leap of faith for Eamon is not just in entering a world he, for some reason, is adamant he cannot enter; it should be his faith that Rowan will save him this time, that he can follow her and still be reunited with God.

I know it can be very difficult to hear that some of your ideas, which are all very interesting, need to be reigned in, but I only make these suggestions because it would be in service to the main concepts of your story to focus the lens of your fantasy world a bit more. You have such amazing ideas here that I don't want them to lose their impact on a reader. Concentrate on setting up the rules in such a way that the audience grasps them early on. Then, stick to those rules.

### **PLOT/STRUCTURE:**

The main issue with the plot is that there is no specific goal for the story. While this is largely a love story, Rowan does not have to do too much to secure Eamon as her love. A goal or "desire line" in a story provides the protagonist with a clear and specific aim; that goal requires your protagonist to take several actions, driving the story toward that goal and toward a climactic ending that your reader will be hungrily racing toward.

Without a specific goal set up fairly early in the book, some of the plot meanders. Rowan has plenty to do, but we do not know to what end until pretty late in the story.

Once I had finished the manuscript, it became clear to me that at the end, her goal is to save Eamon. You need only work backwards now to set this up as her desire line from very early on – no later than the second or third time that she meets Eamon. Of course, she has no idea how to go about doing this, but she must try. And, many the scenes you already have, like learning the stories from Eamon, work toward that goal already; she would need to know the history if she is to help.

Note – I love it when we learn that the key to saving Eamon is for Eamon to learn to love the gift of being a human, which God has given him. It works very well and is a fully satisfying revelation. However, don't hint at it so soon, on page 180, when Eamon tells Rowan what Jesus said to the Indifferent. It seems so clear to the reader that Eamon seems uncharacteristically dumb not to decipher the words.

It would also help if she was more concerned with finding Uncle Frank. She goes quite a long time without trying to do anything about his mysterious absence. (Note: it would help if Uncle Frank explained that his impending absence, as he seems to be aware of its

approach, is the impetus for him finally handing over the keys to her; otherwise, we are left wondering ‘Why now?’ for so long.)

When she does find and save Uncle Frank, it was difficult for me to believe that she thought it was a dream. The separate scene with her mother was dreamlike, and that is acceptable – but even if she truly did think saving Uncle Frank was a dream, which I doubt, she would at least try to look for him when she woke thinking he could be in such danger. It’s easiest just to cut the bit about Rowan thinking that saving Uncle Frank was part of a dream.

Finally, the climactic ending with the face-off against the Jagers is anti-climactic. Every time Rowan is in any danger, either Eamon or a protective animal or animals show up to chase off the Jagers. It’s too simple. I do like Miss Enoch’s appearance and her attempt to kill Eamon; from there on, the ending is quite good. But as we have been waiting for this climactic face-off against the Jagers for the entire book, we need to see a worthy battle. (Also, Rowan makes some excellent points on pages 414-415. She should get the chance to say some of this out loud!) In fact, there should even be a greater reason for Miss Enoch holding off on killing Rowan; otherwise, it seems she has so many missed opportunities and is a weak opponent. Perhaps there is a prophecy outlining a specific date on which the Jagers are to kill the Harbinger that has something to do with the alignment of Orion.

## **PACING:**

Without a goal driving your protagonist’s actions toward a climactic ending, heightening suspense as we reach the end of the story, the story does sometimes fall into patterns that create pacing problems. For instance, for a few chapters, we seem to repeatedly see Rowan return home for a brief spell, then go to see Eamon, who unloads a great deal of information on Rowan, who doesn’t really have to do much at all but listen.

Without an understanding of what Rowan is working toward, we don’t really know why we’re spending a chapter on testing out the Anakim key; for what purpose? How does this help her attain a goal? By the end, we understand why he did it, but even so, it seems neither here nor there. Finding that goal to help drive each scene toward a specific climax at the end of the story should help alleviate any major pacing problems.

## **CHARACTERS:**

### **Rowan:**

Rowan is a good protagonist for a number of reasons. Not only is she intelligent and a model humanitarian, with such strong convictions that it’s impossible not to love her – she also works in the capacity that she is new to all of this information and acts as the

perfect “in” for the reader to learn and experience things as Rowan does, much like Harry Potter learning about Hogwarts and the wizarding world from a fresh perspective.

Rowan is perhaps too likable, however. You do a good job in setting her up with both a personal flaw (she gets too worked up when around animals in pain), as well as a moral flaw (she has a hard time grasping Uncle Frank’s insistence that she must always give the animals free will, asking them before she moves them to another world). You make a couple of references to these flaws throughout the story, too – like on page 383, when Rowan’s mother says “Dear, Rowan. Even when you get what you want, it makes you angry.”

The problem is that we don’t actually see much evidence of these flaws; they are set up, but Rowan often comes off as flawless, never doing wrong, and even a little too “vanilla”.

These are very dramatic situations you are putting a teenaged girl in. Let there be drama! Let Rowan’s temper flare when anybody is thoughtless and cruel toward animals. Allow her to continue questioning why she shouldn’t just move the animals to a safe place as quickly as possible; why is Uncle Frank so insistent on asking their permission first? And, when the lone dog in the research lab doesn’t want to go yet, Saint Christopher should have to talk some sense into Rowan, who wants to just bring the dog to safety against his will, thinking that she knows best. It should not be until the very end of the story, when she must accept Eamon’s free will and leave the choice up to him whether to follow her into this other world.

Allow her to get angry when she realizes that she has been lied to her whole life – about her parents, about who and what Aunt Clare really is, and about her destiny. She knows she isn’t “normal” but to suddenly find out that you have angelic blood and it is believed that you will save the whole of the Indifferente, surely, this would cause some confusion, rebellion, worry, and many other emotions – we need to see more emotion from Rowan. Following the myth story form, it would be typical of Rowan to even denounce that this is true, that she has any predetermined destiny, that she is anything but an ordinary teenager who happens to heal small animals. It is a lot of pressure for a young girl!

## **Eamon**

As discussed under Concept, it seems only natural for Eamon to struggle more in his beliefs. He has clearly devoted thousands of years to trying to reach God, and still, he hasn’t gotten any answers in all that time. Of course he is an angel, but at some point, doubt has to enter his mind. Maybe he’s becoming jaded, which shows in his stories to Rowan and in his class lectures. This gives his character more dimensions if we see him fighting to stay true to his beliefs when logic is telling him to give up, to give in, to be with Rowan and forget about being reunited with God.

## **Rowan + Eamon**

For a romance story, there is a surprising lack of drama between these two – almost none. Yet there are so many places for drama to grow naturally. First of all, if you set up early on that Eamon is expecting Rowan to save all of the Indifferente, and she has no clue what he’s talking about, this should cause some drama. His expectations are sky high, and she must feel like it is impossible to meet those expectations. She might question whether he truly loves her, or is just waiting to “use” her to leave Earth and go back to Heaven.

When they do sleep together, there should likewise be more drama. We don’t want Eamon to regret that this happened, or blame her, but surely he must feel like he has just sealed his fate and will never be reunited with God again. This post-coitus drama between the two could even serve as a low point in the story, especially if you clarify early on that Rowan believes she is somehow supposed to save Eamon and the rest of the fallen angels, and now she might have just ruined his chances by acting selfishly (or so she would think).

## **WRITING SKILLS:**

### **Format**

I love that you consistently chose excellent quotes to head up each and every chapter. On page 107 – I’d pick one quote to go with, because you have only a single quote heading each of the other chapters, and this heading is considerably longer than the rest. Also, the quote that begins Chapter 16 appears to be a larger font than the rest of the quotes.

And, on page 409, it seems odd that you give C S Lewis the title “British writer” when I don’t think you explained any of the other quote authors; besides, most people know the name. Stay consistent; only give his title and the date of the quote if you do so for all quotes throughout the book.

### **Narrative**

The strong suit of your narrative is your descriptions; it is often fairly easy to imagine a place I’ve never seen before, and even places that do not really exist.

One minor weakness, which perhaps has a lot to do with clarifying the rules of Rowan’s world, is how much you tend to repeat yourself to drive a point home. Granted, until the rules are clarified a bit more, some of this repetition is necessary, but the point is that the rules should be so solid when we first hear them that repeating the information is not needed much, if at all.

Pg 39 – 40: You’ve already made it quite clear that the bomb-shelter has always been Rowan’s hideaway and the place where she and Uncle Frank would go to heal animals; this information is now becoming redundant.

Pg 83 redundant “I am thinking of the sparrow Uncle Frank had to help me with just weeks ago.” The reader will be aware that this is what she’s thinking of.

Pg 175, you’re repeating information I thought we already knew about the Jagers, and you’re repeating that God may have consciously saved the Grigori, possibly planning to use them to save mankind.

--Minor note: Pg 154, “So I immerse myself in Eamon’s world when I google for ‘Grigori.’” – I think the term would just be, “I Google ‘Grigori.’”

**SPELLING, GRAMMAR & PUNCTUATION** – The manuscript is clearly proofread thoroughly, with only a couple of noticeable typos. Most of the errors had to do with punctuation – specifically, comma usage. Here is a list of some of the mistakes I found; although it does not cover every error, it should help:

Pg 6 “As a child, I was always respectful of the stone Jesus and Mary, never climbing on them or perching in Mary’s lap (even though, sometimes(,) I wanted to).”

Pg 10 “Although(omit comma) Aunt Clare is human and does not know how to heal, she and Uncle Frank share many teaching themes.”

→ There were several comma issues regarding the word ‘although’. You are correct in thinking that the word “although” is a typical starter word for introductory clauses and phrases, the comma does not always come directly after this word. In the sentence above, the entire introductory clause is, “Although Aunt Clare is human and does not know how to heal,” so the comma comes after the entire clause, not after the introductory word.

Pg 15 “I can’t stop looking at it, almost imaging (imagining) that I can see my face reflected back from its depths”

Pg 16 – 17: “A shelf of canned vegetables moves out of alignment with the other shelves around it(,) providing an opening into the pantry.”

Pg 20 “And, although(omit comma) I am grown up enough now to address them by their proper first names”

Pg 39 “Because it is so private, so safe from prying eyes(,) Uncle Frank and I always gathered in the bomb-shelter”

Pg 69 “If he knows Miss Enoch(,) why wouldn’t he tell me?”

Pg 113 “We are standing in a bathroom(,) but this is not any bathroom.”

Pg 132 “If they weren’t supposed to(,) why would God have given them the ability, the physical attributes necessary?”

Pg 185 “that he needs them here, along with their children to win the war at A(r)mageddon”

Pg 205 “I am dreaming then(,) only it doesn’t seem like a dream.”

Pg 221 “This room(omit comma) itself, though(,) appears ancient, perhaps even older than some of the more updated areas of the house.”

Pg 277 “We do try to hold off the transferal (transfer) of memories for as long as possible.”

Pg 335 “As I lift his fingers, I find below them the flower I gave him, as well(omit comma) as something else.”

Pg 338 “A girl left the class a few moments earlier(,) her face flushed and cheeks bright pink.”

Pg 379 “Suddenly, I hear a no(i)se, wood hitting stone.”

Pg 443 “Please help me save(omit comma) Eamon,”

Lastly, sometimes, you hyphenate “bomb-shelter”, and at other times, you do not. I would say either is correct, but that you need to be consistent; I recommend choosing one way or the other and performing a find and replace function.

## **DIALOGUE:**

**Rowan:** Rowan’s voice is inconsistent. At times, she sounds like what she is: a smart teenager from Ohio, with funny quips “no, I don’t know Latin, only a bit of pig Latin, upid-stay” and interesting musings: Silence falls over us as I contemplate Eamon’s version of “rush hour”—only him at a door, ready to go home. Too bad the rest of the world can’t have that kind of commute—we might never again have to worry about carbon emissions if cars became obsolete. I also love the bit that begins, “Having a date with Eamon is not like having a date with a normal male human.” These elements of Rowan’s voice make her a fun and quirky protagonist who is also true to who and what she is, true to her age and circumstances.

However, she often falls into using an older, somewhat archaic voice when she says things like, “I can think of no place I’d rather be” or “I will not let that occur.” Even seemingly minor word choices like “pretend game” and “rather” stand out as being atypical of an 18-year-old midwestern girl.

This obvious fluctuation in Rowan’s voice is not only distracting, it’s also a bit unbecoming. It almost seems as though she’s putting on airs, trying to sound different around Eamon, whose older-style language makes sense for his character.

I recommend taking a pass through the book to make sure Rowan’s voice not only sounds consistent throughout, but also so that it stays true to her age and persona. She doesn’t have to sound like a typical teenaged girl, because she’s not – but she is only 18, and has lead a pretty sheltered life up until this story begins. She is whip smart, but does not

remember her past lives, so she speak accordingly. A good exercise is to say some of the lines out loud to yourself as you read; hearing the lines can help put the words in a different perspective.

Furthermore, we know that Rowan is wise beyond her years, so be careful not to let your audience get too far ahead of her in figuring things out. When she thinks to herself, on page 88: “And domini canis is Latin for “Hound of the Lord.” How does that relate to Goliath?” – and – “The Book of Enoch is this weird religious text written by Noah’s great-grandfather (yes, Noah of the Ark and Flood fame). It recounts stories of bad angels and bizarre dreams. How does any of that relate to Miss Enoch?”

The answers are already somewhat obvious to the reader, so it’s actually frustrating for Rowan to be so blind when we know she’s intelligent. This tendency also doesn’t help the matter of finding a constant voice for Rowan, because when she asks herself these questions, it makes her sound much younger and more naïve, and less intuitive, than she should be at 18 years old.

→ You never want to let your audience get too far ahead of your protagonist. Granted, if this story is intended for young adults, maybe not every YA reader will be that far ahead. However, you also never want to dumb anything down, and by this point, I think most will have figured out that Eamon and Enoch are both fallen angels because of the conversation we just witnessed between them. Yes, you want to space out your story reveals, but at the same time, it seems like Rowan should be making greater progress if she’s going to be researching. It can be increasingly difficult to root for a protagonist who comes off as being thick.

In fact, though she asked herself those questions on page 88, it isn’t until page 168 that Rowan finally puts it together that Eamon is a fallen angel. Even though you try to save it with her follow-up, “It seems obvious to me now,” it has been obvious to the reader for a while now. Either do not give Rowan enough clues, or have her suspect but not know how to bring up her suspicion with Eamon or confirm her suspicions on her own until now.

On pages 327-328, it is taking her too long to figure out that she is the subject of the paintings; the hint was strong the very first time we saw the works by the Masters, many pages ago.

**Miss Enoch:** Miss Enoch often has such straightforward dialogue, always happy to state her intentions and give away her dastardly plans to Rowan, that she often comes off as a “cardboard villain,” or more of a caricature than a character.

For example, on page 75, she states: “I am going to kill you.” I do like the later line, “At least if you heal it, one of you will live.” – that makes clear her intentions, but uses a bit

more subtext than coming out and stating her intentions, as we so rarely do in real life, and should do even less in literature.

It was smart of you, during Miss Enoch's second-to-last encounter with Rowan toward the end, during the awards ceremony, to point out that Miss Enoch is so egotistical that Rowan's prodding would goad Miss Enoch into talking about her plan. But again, if Enoch has lived for thousands of years, gathering knowledge and wisdom all the while, making it her mission to wipe out those who might ruin her chances of getting back into heaven – surely, she must be much more cunning and underhanded by now! She must have ways of making others trust her and understand where she's coming from, manipulating her prey.

Misc: As with the narrative, much of the dialogue can become repetitive, often reminding the reader of what they are already aware of. Concentrate on simplifying the rules, and you probably won't feel the need to repeat yourself. Likewise, stay away from using too many leading questions to prompt exposition, or including unnecessary information that could complicate a reader's initial understanding of the rules.

For instance, on page 84 – Eamon's explanation of how he caught a glimpse of Pleasant Valley the other day, and why he didn't bring Goliath with him to save Rowan – isn't really necessary and is "information overload". We know he is some kind of magical entity, so it suffices to keep it to "I took a chance." We are told again later (a few times) that he can travel only to places he has seen.

Finally, on page 392 – it seems like the sudden pop culture references to *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Harry Potter* are out of place in this world.

### **CHECKLIST:**

[ ] Deepen the flaws for Rowan so that they create obstacles for her to overcome and make her more relatable.

[ ] Add conflict between Rowan and Eamon so that their relationship has more of a dramatic arc.

[ ] Set up earlier that the goal of saving Eamon is Rowan's end game, and use that goal to propel each plot point forward.

[ ] Remove the hints that are currently placed mid-novel that Eamon must be saved by him learning to love being human so that the reveal later in the novel is more impactful.

[ ] Rewrite the sex scenes to be less explicit and more appropriate to young adults to match the rest of the novel's target audience.



[ ] Review and revise cited instances of overt religious preachiness, and add in some doubt in the characters' (especially Eamon's) beliefs to give their journey more weight and to ensure that their motives are realistic and relatable.

[ ] Hone the rules of your fantasy world so the narrative focuses on explaining the most important ones for driving the story forward up front (eliminating the need for repetitive explanations later), and consider eliminating extraneous ones (e.g. vampires, Beast of Exmoor, Law of Returning, etc.).

[ ] Deepen Miss Enoch's role as a manipulative villain, possibly adding scenes where she believably convinces people to act on her interests, or against their own. Revise dialogue that's too direct.

[ ] Take a pass through the book to make sure Rowan's voice not only sounds consistent throughout, but also so that it stays true to her age and persona.

[ ] Revise the climactic battle with the Jagers to provide a more significant payoff. In particular, find a new way for Rowan to overcome the threat to her that does not involve being helped by a late arriving savior.

## **IN CONCLUSION**

This manuscript has potential written all over it. Just the sheer amount of imagination and imagery make this a fun read. Imagine what you can do by giving Rowan a goal to struggle against, allowing her to have deep flaws, and watching the drama grow naturally. The story could be another fantasy romance novel for the ages with some revisions. Best of luck with your writing!