

Silversheen: Strengthening the Characters

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MWF 7:45-8:45

To: Chris Patterson
From: Hailey Taylor, Sam Ellsworth, Meagan Hill, John Larsen
Date: July 17, 2009
Subject: Recommendation Report for *Silversheen*

Chris Patterson:

Thank you very much for submitting your manuscript to us for editing. We know it takes a great deal of humility for an author to submit his personal work to a room full of critics. We're confident our report will help you improve your manuscript.

We think there are a couple things that were wonderful in your manuscript. Take, for instance, your close attention to surroundings. The descriptions of scenery are beautiful and very easy to visualize. The entire chase of Desek's was very easy to see. The moving of bushes, trees, and boulders was a particular favorite. Desek's human frailty was great, too. No one's interested in a story where the main character's invulnerable and has all the powers of a god; they want a little reality in there. Desek's susceptibility to cold and frailty under the influence of the Magics make him a believable character.

The major problem we noticed was character. We divided it into four sub-categories. Those categories are Which Point of View, What is Each Character's Motivation, Who is the Main Character, and What is the Main Conflict.

If you have any questions, you can reach us at the following:

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Sincerely,

Hailey Taylor, Sam Ellsworth, Meagan Hill, John Larsen

Abstract

In this recommendation report, you will find that we focus on improving your characters by taking a close look at four different areas: Which Point of View, Do Characters Drive the Plot, Who is the Main Character, and What is the Main Conflict.

- ④ **Which Point of View:** Focuses on putting everything into Desek's point of view and keeping everything in first person. Doing so will strengthen the readers relationship with the characters.
- ④ **Do Characters Drive the Plot:** Focuses on ways you can make the plot/characters in your book more believable. Doing so will make readers want to believe even more that what they are reading is true.
- ④ **Who is the Main Character:** Addresses the problem of having more than one main character in the book. We suggest having Desek be the main character because readers connect and interact with him the most.
- ④ **What is the Main Conflict:** Discusses the problem of having too many conflicts within your manuscript. We suggest you narrow it down to one conflict involving Desek and Erith.

Focusing on these main points will greatly help the characters in your book come alive in fun and exciting ways.

Table of Contents

Authors.....	4
Introduction.....	6
Which Point of View.....	7
What is Each Character’s Motivation.....	10
Who is the Main Character.....	14
What is the Main Conflict.....	20
Conclusion.....	25
Works Cited.....	29

Authors

Walter Mosley has written more than 20 books in a variety of categories, including non-mystery fiction, afrofuturist science fiction and non-fiction politics. His work has been translated into 21 languages. Mosley's fame increased in 1992 when then-presidential candidate Bill Clinton, a fan of murder mysteries, named Mosley as one of his favorite authors.

Two of his books have been made into films or television specials. His first published book, *Devil in a Blue Dress*, was the basis of a 1995 movie starring Denzel Washington.

Mosley is on the Board of Trustees for Goddard College. He has served on the board of directors of the National Book Awards.

Janet Burroway is the author of eight novel, one textbook, and two children's books. Her book of poetry, *Material Goods*, was published by University Presses of Florida, 1981, and a collection of essays, *Embalming Mom*, by University of Iowa Press in Spring 2002. In 2005 Grove press brought out an edition of Robert Olen Butlers lectures, edited by Burroway, *From Where You Dream*.

Her poems, stories, and essays have appeared in *Atlantic Monthly*, *Mademoiselle*, *New Statesman*, *The Guardian*, *MS*, *Story Quarterly*, *New Virginia Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Prague Review*, *Five Points*, *St. Petersburg Times*, *Ninth Letter*, and *New Letters*, and in *Pushcart Prizes XXVII*. She has reviewed for *New Statesman*, *The World and I*, and *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, *The Chicago Tribune*, and *The New York Times Book Review*.

Her poems, plays and stories have been broadcast by numerous Television and radio stations. Her play for television *Hoddinott Veiling* went to the Monaco Festival as British ITV's entry. She has collaborated since 1995 with choreographer Lynda Davis on pieces for the stage, *Dadadata*, *Text\tile*, *The Empty Dress*, and *Quiltings*. An adaptation for radio of her novel *Opening Nights* (with Charles Olsen) was broadcast on WFSU radio in 1998. A play, *Medea With Child*, was produced by the Bloomington Playwrights Project as recipient of the Reva Shiner Award, and another, *Sweepstakes*, was given staged readings at the Playwrights Centre of San Francisco, the Theatre of Yale Drama Alumni, and at the National Theatre Studio, London; and was produced by the Actors Repertory Theatre of Tallahassee. Her one-act, *Division of Property*, was chosen by Lanford Wilson as winner of the 2002 *Arts & Letters Award* and produced by The Imago Festival at the Stella Adler Theatre in Los Angeles. A new play, *Parts of Speech*, was given its initial reading with Jane Alexander in a staging by Edwin Sherin, and was featured at Womens Playwright Initiative in Orlando in January 2007.

Jim C. Hines (born 1974) is an American fantasy writer. He was a first-place winner of the L. Ron Hubbard Writers of the Future Award in 1998 with his story "Blade of the Bunny". He is the author of the Goblin Quest fantasy trilogy, comprising *Goblin Quest*, *Goblin Hero* and *Goblin War*. He also edited the anthology *Heroes in Training* with Martin H. Greenberg. He is published by DAW Books and represented by JABberwocky.

He was a volunteer crisis counselor in East Lansing for a while and is the author of one non-fantasy novel, *Goldfish Dreams*, described on the author's website as a "mainstream rape-awareness novel".

In 2008, he donated his archive to the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America (SFWA) Collection in the department of Rare Books and Special Collections at Northern Illinois University.

Introduction

Before we start our report, we wanted to let you know how much we appreciated the opportunity to edit *Silversheen*. We enjoyed your manuscript and we believe it was very creative. It was fun to read and we hope our suggestions will help you in your endeavors to make your manuscript even better.

We were impressed by your attention to detail and imagery. The setting was unique and original. Although we make a lot of suggestions for change, we believe your overall idea was a strong one and we don't want to take away from the personality of your story but we do want to make it even more interesting for your readers.

In reading the manuscript *Silversheen*, a few weaknesses in the writing became apparent to us. We realize we are limited in space and time to speak of all these difficulties, so we have decided to speak of the problem we believe is the most pressing. In the case of your manuscript, we feel the characters need more work than any other portion at this time. Within the discussion of character, we believe there are smaller categories it can be divided into. They are as follows:

- Ⓢ Which Point of View
- Ⓢ What is Each Character's Motivation
- Ⓢ Who is the Main Character
- Ⓢ What is the Main Conflict

In lacking clear character definition in these areas, we believe readers will become confused and have difficulty following the story line. Within each section, the problem will be addressed and strategies for strengthening the problem will be given.

We hope our report does not make you feel overwhelmed. If it does, please continue reading and remember, we are only making suggestions. We're on the side of bettering your manuscript.



Which Point of View

As we outlined above, the first issue that we want to talk about in this report is the point of view in your manuscript. It is important to remember that:

Point of view is the most complex element of fiction. Although it may be labeled and analyzed, it is finally a question of relationship among writer, characters, and reader. We can define person, omniscience, narrative voice, tone, authorial distance, and reliability; but none of these concepts will even pigeonhole a work in such a way that any other work may be placed in the exact same pigeonhole (Burroway 254).

“The voice that tells the story is the first thing the reader encounters. It carries us from the first page to the last. We, the readers, must believe in this narrative voice, or at least, we must feel strongly for that voice and have a definite and consistent opinion about it.” – Walter Mosley.

Because point of view is such an important element of fiction and is one of the keys that will strengthen the readers relationship to your manuscript, we are concerned that you will lose readers as you shift from first- to third-person. For instance in the first two chapters of your manuscript, where it is crucial to grab your reader’s full attention and keep them interested, you confuse readers. The last paragraph of chapter one says:

The journey was going to take a lot longer than he wanted, but the prize was worth the effort. He had to cross the rest of the desert to the foot hills of the Broken Blades before he could start searching for the cave that led to the Earthibian lair.

Here you are speaking about Erith in the third-person, and then you jump to the first paragraph of chapter two:

The autumn air bit my nose as the sun breached the far off mountains. I had taken a ferry down the river the evening before, hoping to reach the small fishing village, Ruiksa, by daybreak. Pulling myself up to my feet and bracing myself on my staff, I looked down river to watch the fall colored leaves float gently down.

The tree branches were almost bare and a few leaves still clung to a summer that had come and gone. The pine trees still held their green, but I could tell that they too, were ready to sleep. I set my staff against the hull of the ship, leaned over, and splashed my face with the crisp river water. The shock stirred all the sleep out of my eyes and gave me a great morning chill. As the surface of the water stilled, I could see how much of a mess I was.

The sudden shift in point of view will confuse many readers. You have just familiarized your readers to Erith and then they are lost as you shift the point of view to Desek speaking in the first-person. As an author it is important to remember, “The voice that tells the story is the first thing the reader encounters. It carries us from the first page to the last. We, the readers, must believe in this narrative voice, or at least, we must feel strongly for that voice and have a definite and consistent opinion about it” (Mosley 17). Also, as the author you need to remember, “In establishing the story’s point of view, you make your own rules, but having made them, you must stick to them . . . Beginning writers of prose fiction are often tempted to shift viewpoint when it is both unnecessary and disturbing” (Burroway 255). We recommend you choose one character and one point of view to stick with for the duration of the story.

We suggest you write the entire book in first-person from Desek’s point of view because we believe he is a more developed character and the audience will connect more to the book through Desek’s point of view. If you write the book in just first-person we believe:

- ② You will lose less readers due to confusion
- ② The main character will gain more sympathy (It will also create an actual main character)
- ② You will give readers a constant set of eyes to see the book through and it will become more interesting

“The first-person narrative can know only what the speaker knows. This tale is limited by the mind and senses, the situation and sophistication, the gender and education, of the narrator.” – Walter Mosley

We are not suggesting that writing first-person is easier than writing in third-person:

The first-person narrative is a powerful but also very difficult narrative form. It is powerful because you are intimate with the emotions and internal processes of the very real human being retelling you the story; it is difficult because the rendering

of that character has to be pitch-perfect for the reader to believe in him. There is also the difficulty of making sure that the first-person narrator is interesting enough to want to listen to for hundreds of pages (Mosley 21).

Writing the book in first-person will be a difficult and rewarding change to your manuscript, but one thing you have to remember when rewriting the manuscript in first-person from Desek's point of view is that "The first-person narrative can know only what the speaker knows. This tale is limited by the mind and senses, the situation and sophistication, the gender and education, of the narrator" (Mosley 29).

This will also give you the opportunity to show more and tell less. You have a responsibility as the author to "As often as possible . . . shows us events and active characters, vivid images and real dialogue, rather than telling us about the inner workings of someone's mind or the *reality* of a situation" (Mosley 31). As you write the book in first-person through Desek's eyes, you will find the following to be true:

It is often better if you use images and physical descriptions rather than mere informative language to present people, places, things, and events in your novel. To be told that someone is violent or seems to be violent is too general; the reader is left to come up with their own notions of Piggott based upon their personal experience with violence. But to describe a man who, at every moment is about to explode helps the reader have a specific sense of that character (Mosley 31-32).

How to Put This Into Action

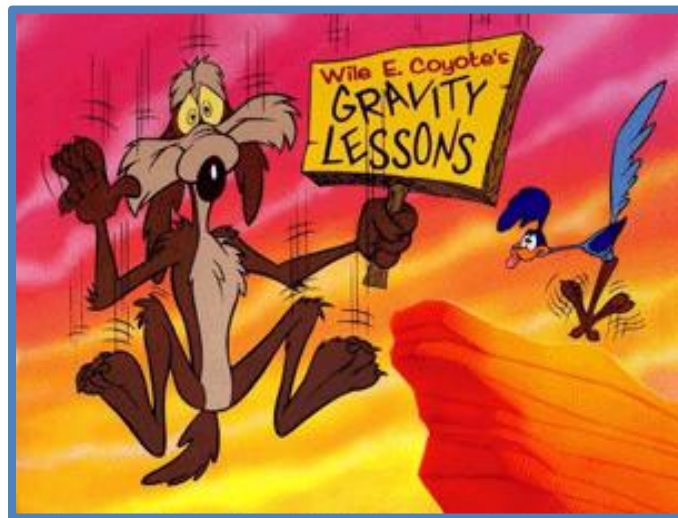
- ⓐ List – Write out everything Desek knows or that he could/should know
- ⓐ Rewrite – Pull out the chapters that aren't in Desek's point of view and rewrite them so they are (See "Who is the Main Character")
 - ⓐ If you come to a scene you feel is really important and can't seem to put it in Desek's point of view, ask yourself what your story would be missing without it. We encourage you to challenge yourself to see how you can include it from Desek's perspective.



What is Each Character's Motivation

Books are about conflict. The conflict can be with another character or with the way things are or with something inside the character, like needs or feelings. For every conflict there needs to be a reason for the tension. This is where the actions or the reasons why the conflict exist must be earned. Linda Adams says, “Readers won’t believe if a villain kills 100 people, tries to kill the hero five times, and blows up a bridge during rush hour—and all he wants is money.”

It may seem silly at first, but an easy way to think about action being earned is to remember Newton’s famous law of physics: “For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction force.” If a villain is going to kill everyone in his path, the reader needs to know he’s doing it for a reason greater or equal to the value of their genocide. We also need to know if he’s going to kill all these people, someone or something is going to be coming after him to justify his actions. If the reasons don’t seem to be of equal or greater value for the action, it becomes unbelievable.



For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction force

In creative writing, when writing fiction, it isn’t that what you say is “true.” Rather, it must be credible. It follows that, because truth is stranger than fiction, you could tell a story that is completely accurate and true and your listener or reader could well turn to you and say “I don’t believe it.” No amount of protest can fix that. Sometime things happen in life that are truly “unbelievable,” or at least would not make a good story.

What makes a story, in the conventional sense of that word, a good story is that it is sufficiently believable, or rather empathetic, that a reader can understand and even indentify with the places, characters, action, that they don’t just follow along, they can live in the story (Axelrod).

When writing fiction, we need to remember that, even though its fiction, we need to make it believable. We do that by adding explanations of anything that might seem out of the ordinary, giving people flaws and weaknesses and giving the characters human traits. If a character is overdone, or in other words, to good to be true, he is left unbelievable.

We can find an example of this in the first chapter of your manuscript. The reader is introduced to Erith, an evil wizard who can burn anything including stone. We read that he destroys an entire city and the only thing he takes with him is a bowl from a statue. The reader is left to believe he slaughtered the entire city out of pure fun and then gets away with it without a single consequence or repercussion from anyone or thing. The likely hood that someone would merely get away with something of this magnitude just seems illogical.

Good fiction is believable.

Another part where a character's actions aren't earned is the rivalry between Erith and Desek. We know by example of your first chapter that Erith obtains these great powers to destroy anything. Desek on the other hand isn't shown using any powerful magic at all other than making some tea. Try not to make any character stand out too far above his or her counterparts. If you want to endow such a character with extraordinary abilities, the source of those abilities needs to be clearly revealed. An example of this would be a character like Superman. His powers far exceed everyone around him, but his powers are explained by his alien status. With Erith or Desek, we really have no clue as to where they gained their magical powers. However it appears that Desek is an amateur wizard and Erith is this great and powerful Lord of Magic. Let's remember Newton's law. If Erith is this great powerful wizard, we need to see Desek be as equal or become as equal to Erith.

A good example of this is in the book *Ender's Game* by Orson Scott Card. We the readers are taken on a journey throughout the whole book with Ender. From the very start we know Ender is very smart and see a glimpse of his abilities. We also get some background and a little history on the enemy. Then, throughout the rest of the book, we go along with Ender as he faces challenge after challenge and learns more and more about his enemy. By the time you get to the end of the book you feel like you (the reader) are ready to face the enemy.

Let's suppose your heroine needs to know judo for the action scene at the end of the story and maybe even one particular judo move that saves her life. That means that, throughout the story, her judo skills need to be brought up again and again. Particularly pay attention to anything that will ultimately be critical for the reader to "get," and keep bringing it back in where appropriate (Adams).

Another area where motivation is unclear is within the detail that is given throughout your book. There is lots of great detail throughout your book that makes the reader feel as if they are there. However, when giving details we need to make sure that there is a reason for that detail. Janet Burrow says, “If those who have studied the art of writing are in accord on any one point, it’s specific, definite and concrete. The greatest writers . . . are effective largely because they deal in particulars and report the details that matter.”

In the first chapter of your book you give us this great detail about a desert city:

The path led past the heated stone huts and into the center of city where the fountain was. Just like all the desert cities, their life revolved around water and the water was in the center of the city. The outer buildings had thick allowing more people to live in a tighter area. It was a simple peace and respect for each other’s safety that kept the desert dwellers calm and content.

All roads led to the water and from a bird’s point of view, the city may have herbs, medicine, dried produce and meat, and bread. The shops all circled the water fountain and the stone woman; in the second later optometrists, metal workers and smiths, and fabric stores. The third layer more healthy families live towards the edge. The wall roads that lead from the outer rim of the city towards the fountain and five roads that circled the each of the five layers. They were mainly they are just the spaces in-between the buildings (pg 4-5).

Here we see so much detail given about this city, but then, one paragraph later, we read, “He felt no shame letting the small city burn as he set his fire to the stones.” Giving so much detail about a place will leave readers confused and questioning why so much detail was given to a city that was just going to burn five minutes later. Although many readers like to get to nitty-gritty details, they also expect there to be a reason for that detail.

How to Put This Into Action

Throughout your manuscript, you need to ask yourself “Does the character have a reasonable motivation in this scene?” If it isn’t, you need to find a way to make it. For example, when Erith burns the city in chapter one you could have a mob of townsfolk coming after him. His powers could be drained causing him to hide in the desert once again. Or anything that clearly shows us that there is some kind of consequence that will come from what he’s done.

With Erith, you might consider making him not so powerful or setting limitations on his power. As of right now, he’s by far the most powerful character in the story. In fact, he’s so powerful, he

almost seems Godlike which makes us question why he would be seeking after more power if he's already king of the mountain. Making him weaker will also make him more believable and give another reason as to why he wants more power.

Next, try to make Desek appear to have magical powers that equal Eriths. We need to either see Desek grow as a magician throughout the story or have an explanation/history telling us why he doesn't use the full extent of his powers. Somewhere however, we need at least a glimpse of his full capability. An idea would be to have the dragons be his mentors and teach him how to use the full extent of his powers. Maybe while teaching Desek, something happens that reveals he is more powerful than anyone could comprehend.

Finally, make sure then when you include extensive details about anything within the story that there is some importance or relevance for such detail. Go through your manuscript and look closely at your details. You may ask yourself, "Why is this here and does it have any real importance to the story?"

Principles to Remember

- 🕒 **Newton's Law "For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction force."**
- 🕒 **Good fiction is believable.**
- 🕒 **Try not to make any character stand out too far above his or her counterparts.**
- 🕒 **The greatest writers . . . are effective largely because they deal in particulars and report the details that matter.**

Who is the Main Character

In examining the text, it is difficult to decide who the main character is. Jennifer Reed, author of Becoming a Children's Author, says, "This might sound obvious, but often when writers are just starting out, they will have more than one main character. Actually, the problem is that not one character stands out as being more important." We believe the following characters are competing for the position of main character in your manuscript:

- ④ Desek – From his perspective, changes the most
- ④ Draconas – Changes in course of plot, helps conflict reach climax
- ④ Erith – Starts with him, drives much of plot

Desek

In discussing this problem, we have come to the conclusion Desek should be the main character. In reading the manuscript, we become attached to Desek and his point of view. By telling the story through first person, we gain a certain bond with the character. Elsa Neal, author of *Breaking Point*, explains the following about writing in first person:

[It is] usually the easiest to keep the point of view from jumping between characters. These stories are told by a character..., which means that they are not able to know what the thoughts, feelings, or experiences of the other characters are. They can, however, speculate based on the body language and words the other characters use. They may or may not be right about what they read into other characters' signals, and many authors use this possibility to good effect in fiction.



Your writing style follows this very well when the story is told from Desek's point of view. Desek has the potential of being a very intuitive character with more development as displayed on page 15 of the manuscript which reads, "The thing that got my attention the most was his eyes. They had a silver back shine... It reminded me of when the light hits water just right to show something hidden beneath its surface, like a secret." By expanding more on Desek's observant nature, his character will become stronger and readers will feel more involved in the novel by experiencing everything as Desek does.

In order to help strengthen Desek's abilities as the main character, we suggest limiting the perspective to him. By switching the point of view among him, Erith, the wolf and others, the

audience may lose focus. The object of having a single main character is to gain a better understanding and build a connection with the character.

We recommend leaving Desek's point of view as the only point of view in the manuscript. We suggest you take the sections in which we observe Erith and combine them with Desek's. You have already claimed the two have a sort of mental bond in which they struggle against each other. We suggest you spread that bond to encompass more. We believe that by doing this you will strengthen Desek as a hero and still be able to discuss Erith and his motivations and actions. Desek is also one of the only two round characters which, according to writer Ginny Wiehardt, is "a major character in a work of fiction who encounters conflict and is changed by it. Round characters tend to be more fully developed and described." The only other character that has this potential is Draconas but his development is very short and only within the second half of the book. In order to strengthen Desek's changes, we suggest you explore his emotions more. By doing this, his change will be deeper and easier to see. Readers will understand his changing personality and observe it to a greater depth.

A round character is "a major character in a work of fiction who encounters conflict and is changed by it. Round characters tend to be more fully developed and described" – Ginny Wiehardt

Draconas

Draconas could be a possible main character but we believe he is not strong enough for the role. He gives Desek a reason to ultimately confront Erith, but such a role is one more suited to a supporting character. He helps Erith's purpose as well, which also suggests the part of an inexperienced character, but due to their relationship ("brothers"), the plot drives him into helping Erith. Erith's use of Draconas does add tension to the plot. We recommend doing away with the relationship between Draconas and Erith. When reading they are brothers, many readers will think of the line from the movie Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back when Darth Vader reveals to Luke Skywalker that they are family: "Luke, I am your father." By eliminating their relationship, the tension will be greater as it will seem Erith has been searching for the one person able to help him accomplish his task. Instead of Draconas feeling the familial attachment to Erith, expand on Draconas's belief Desek is harming his father in his vision in the stone bowl. The tension in this scene alone can give Draconas enough reason to help Erith.



In order to make Draconas more important to the plot and strengthen Desek's role as the main character, we recommend making his role more necessary to the story as follows:

- Ⓢ Instead of having him be a convenient little brother for Erith to use to further his plans for world domination, give Draconas a certain characteristic or quality about him that makes him absolutely necessary to Erith's plans
- Ⓢ Make him pivotal in the fight scene between Erith and Desek.

By giving Draconas these opportunities or others of similar importance, readers will feel a deeper bond with him. Also, his role will help strengthen Desek's role as the main character.

Erith

Erith is the final character we felt might be able to be a main character. However, you focus more on Desek and we feel Erith should remain as a more obscure villain. Author Jim C. Hines gives the following advice in his article "Secrets of a Good Villain." He says, "'Everyone is the hero of their own story.' Nobody thinks of him/herself as a villain. Characters need believable motivations, and that includes the villains as well as the heroes." Erith's motivations may seem sound to him, but to the audience, his motivations are unclear. In order to strengthen his position as a good villain, we suggest exploring his influence on the world in greater depth. As he faces Desek through their magic, allow Desek to see Erith's purpose in his actions and possibly his thoughts.

Erith could be an amazing villain. At the stage he is at now, though, he doesn't have the potential. He has no inner struggles, no inner demons to overcome. Jim C. Hines makes the following statement about a villain's motivation:

Perhaps one of the best examples would be Darth Vader... In *A New Hope*, Darth Vader was 100% Evil., and we loved him. He crushed throats from across the room, sliced Obi Wan in half, and no doubt tortured kittens in his special chamber on the Death Star. But over the next two movies, Vader changed. He went from a one-dimensional villain to a wonderfully tormented character struggling between a generation of evil and his love for his children. By the end of that trilogy, Vader went from being one of my favorite villains to one of my favorite *characters*.



As Erith stands now, he's as pure evil as Darth Vader was in *A New Hope*. Most of all, Erith doesn't *change*. We suggest giving Erith a reason to be evil. Author Ruth D. Kerce gives sound

advice in this when she says, “Don't Overdo it – This doesn't mean to pull back in your writing; however, don't get ‘villain-happy;’ make your villains as evil as they need to be for the storyline, but no more than that; otherwise, they will either ring untrue or they will take over the story, distracting from the hero, heroine, and original plot.”

We recommend exploring Erith’s purpose more through his interactions with Desek. If you want the audience to sympathize at all with the villain, he needs more motivation than a desire for power. Give Erith a reason to be as evil as he is.

“We have Lord Voldemort from the early Harry Potter books. Eventually, Voldemort develops slight depth – like going from boxboard cardboard to corrugated cardboard – but in the beginning, he’s pure, moustache-twirling evil.

“...As readers, we cheer when the bad guys finally get what’s coming to them. These confrontations are very black and white, but it’s comforting to know that good will triumph over evil, and to cheer for those fighters on the side of justice.” – Jim C. Hines

How to Put This Into Action

Where Desek is your strongest character, we recommend you work on changing the chapters so they follow his point of view. With the chapters revolving around Erith, Draconas, and the wolf, we suggest you rewrite them so they fit Desek’s point of view. We realize information given in the other chapters is important. We suggest the following as ways in order to incorporate that information into Desek’s point of view:

- Ⓢ Prophetic dreams
- Ⓢ Mind connections
- Ⓢ Scrying spells

These three methods will help allow you to write the chapters in Desek’s point of view.

Prophetic Dreams

As Desek is a wizard, he is entitled to prophetic dreams in which he sees what may be happening around the world. The first chapter told in third person can be managed most easily by making it

Desek's dream. Keep it as the first chapter, but introduce the second chapter as Desek wakes from this dream or contemplates upon the dream he had the night before or recently.

Mind Connections

By mind connections, we mean experiences in which Desek may share a mental link with Erith in which he is able to observe his actions and possibly test the strength of his unknown foe. We suggest this method for the beginning of chapter five where you say from Erith's point of view:

Erith continued to press his power to his limits, and as it stood in his mind, his limits knew no bounds. He wondered through peoples minds, their power, their secrets, and he fed off what he thought was their most precious gift. His mind crossed the desert, until he reached a mind that fed his lust. All of the other minds and souls that he had consumed were appetizers, but this new entity was the main course and desert. It lacked the wisdom that he had gained along with his years of experiences, yet held the challenge he sought for (p. 45).

In this case, we suggest you start with Desek's point of view and first speak of the moment when Erith reaches Desek's mind. This will allow Desek to learn of his foe and the reader will as well as get to know Desek and how he struggles with Erith and the possibility of a great power threatening his way of life. It will give Desek more motivation to seek out what is threatening him and his home as well.

Scrying Spells

In chapter twenty-two, when Draconas goes to Erith, a scrying spell can be used instead of switching the character the story is told from. Desek can use a scrying spell in his search for his young friend. This will also allow Desek to be allowed to make decisions for himself. For example, in chapter sixteen, Desek meditates to know learn where Draconas has been taken. You tell us:

I meditated on my surroundings, just as I had earlier. I saw the frog men again, and more amphibious looking creatures. But before I could make any observations, I was violently pulled to places I had never seen before. My mind was traveling at such high speed, all I knew was direction. It took me over The Broken Blades, through a field and stream, and to a dark cave. The Magics then let me stop for a while, allowing me to observe, with much criticism, the details of the cave, the color, and the surroundings (p. 133).

In this section, we suggest, instead of having Desek allow something to pull him along, let him search for Draconas on purpose. Desek will have the freedom to observe the goings-on of Draconas and Erith without having to change the story but will allow Desek to remain as the key character that drives the plot.

This device has been used by other authors and is very effective. Numerous tools can be used to scry, such as bowls of water, mirrors, silver, etc. In Tamora Pierce's book *Trickster's Choice*, she allows one of the characters to scry for a missing daughter in a mirror and later in the blade of a sword she keeps as shiny and reflective as any mirror. This allows the characters to work for themselves in order to solidify their positions as important characters.

What is the Main Conflict

It is difficult to determine a main conflict. There are multiple conflicts that may end up confusing the reader. Even though it seems clear to you, it is difficult for the reader to determine. They need to feel like they have a problem to follow throughout the book, and the easiest solution is to take one of your existing conflicts and expand it. We've made a list of the different conflicts your reader sees:

- Ⓢ Desek vs. Erith
- Ⓢ Desek vs. Wolf
- Ⓢ Draconas vs. Erith

We recommend you use the conflict between Desek and Erith and develop it through the entire manuscript. Doing this will bring clarity to your reader. It will be helpful to keep the following quote in mind:

Sometimes it is necessary to introduce several or many people in the same scene, and this needn't present a problem, because the principle is pretty much the same in every case, and is the same as in film: pan, then close-up. In other words, give us a sense of the larger scene first, then a few details to characterize individuals. If you begin by concentrating too long on one character only, we will tend to see that person as being alone (Burroway).

It takes a while for Desek to become a real character to the reader. We don't know his name until chapter four and aren't aware of the conflict with Erith until the end of chapter five. Don't let these points bring you down; you have a fine conflict and fine characters. Try beginning your book with Desek as the main character, and then introduce Erith later when they interact mentally. That way, Desek is introduced and real and Erith's introduction will be in an understandable context.

The readers need to feel like they have a problem to follow throughout the book, and the easiest solution is to take on of your existing conflicts and expand it.

A book belongs to someone—to a character. We recommend using Desek since he serves as the major protagonist in your manuscript.

Conflict 1: Desek vs. Erith

Desek and Erith haven't met each other until the end of the book. That makes it difficult for them to develop with respect to the other (e.g., Desek understands who Erith is and begins preparing to face him). It would be very difficult to make that approach successful because the character and conflict development would be so complex. The following recommendations might be some simple, direct ways for you to avoid that confusion and improve the overall quality of your novel:

- Ⓢ Generally, a book belongs to someone—to a character. We recommend using Desek as that character, since he serves as the major protagonist in your manuscript. By doing so you'll be able to develop Desek much more easily, and you will be able to develop Erith as he interacts with him
- Ⓢ One tactic employed by fiction writers is having some sort of a deadline (e.g., Erith must obtain omnipotence before Desek can arrive and interfere, etc). According to Burroway:

Whenever possible, use a “ticking time bomb” to create a deadline that will be devastating to the hero. It can be the real thing – a bomb ticking away – or some other deadline, as long as something terrible will happen if the heroine is too late. Imagine your hero trying to reach the heroine before the rope breaks and she falls to her doom – and he has to cross a field of bad guys who are determined to stop him. Suddenly the scene the stakes on new dimensions as the reader grips the arms of her chair wondering what's going to happen next.

- Ⓢ There is some simple structure that can be incorporated into your story. Janet Burroway said, “Four imperatives for the writing of the “war” story: 1. Get your fighters fighting. 2. Have something—the stake—worth fighting over. 3. Have the fight dive into a series of battles with the last battle in the series the biggest and most dangerous of all. 4. Have a walking away from the battle.”
- Ⓢ It is difficult for us to understand what Erith's real motivation is. It is clear that he wants total power, but it isn't clear why that is. “Villains have a reason for how they act. As the writer, it is essential you know the villain's motivation (even if the reader doesn't); only this way will you be able to keep his/her words and actions consistent; he/she acts

evil for a reason; even if that reason is ‘crazy’ in the eyes of society, the villain believes the reasoning is logical and performs accordingly” (Kerce).

By knowing *exactly* what Erith’s motivation is, you’ll make his actions more consistent, and that consistency will add a particular richness both to Erith and to the book.

How to Put This into Action

Conflict 1

- ④ Introduce Desek in the first chapter of your manuscript.
 - ④ Describe Desek’s lifestyle. Make sure the reader has a clear idea of just what it is by the end of the chapter. Show the reader what some of his habits are, for instance, his mountain-berry tea.
 - ④ Give the reader a taste of his personality. You gave us the impression that he’s a quiet, shy kind of guy. Having him live in a cave was a good move. Stick with it. Another thing you might try that would convey that image is his reaction to stolen food (i.e., his food being stolen). He didn’t get very upset and kept to himself.
- ④ Introduce Erith shortly after introducing Desek (within the next two chapters).
 - ④ Erith was defined by his drive. He was driven by or for something—you don’t need to state explicitly what that something is—and it will be very important to convey that when you introduce him. Think of the first scene with Erith where he destroys a desert city. We didn’t understand why he destroyed the whole city and took the bowl. You might try telling the reader it’s very important to Erith, and then giving Erith constant barriers to it. His persistence through barrier after barrier will show his drive to your reader. Showing your readers Erith has a purpose will make him a much more engaging and intimidating figure.
- ④ Make sure you know specifically what’s motivating Erith.
 - ④ Think about the desert city scene again. We didn’t know why Erith wanted the bowl so it confused us when he destroyed the entire city to get it. If you make it clear that the bowl was necessary for him to achieve his overarching plan, readers will be able to put it in context. Again, whether or not you state explicitly what his ultimate motivation is, is your choice, but you need to know what it is. It will unconsciously make his character more fluid and consistent.
- ④ Stick with the mental interaction. It’s a fine way to bring Erith and Desek together.

By knowing exactly what Erith's motivation is, you'll make his actions more consistent. That consistency will make him much more easy and enjoyable for the reader to follow.

Conflict 2: Desek vs. Wolf

The wolf seems to play a minor role. Readers are more prone to think of him as Erith's henchman. Since they view him that way, they are much less likely to perceive any conflict he is involved in as being very important or as being the main conflict.

Another problem we noticed is there is only one encounter between Desek and the Wolf. That wouldn't be a problem if they became aware of each other some other way. An easy way to solve the problem is by including more interaction between the two.

To bring the conflict to its highest potential, bring about some change in the Wolf's character to make him dynamic, and provide more interaction between him and Desek. Doing so will make the conflict more important and much more interesting to your audience.

How to Put This into Action

Conflict 2

- ④ Give the Wolf a more prominent role in the storyline.
 - ④ A perfect time to give the Wolf a prominent role in the story is when he meets Erith. He was strong but lost and ultimately became Erith's henchman. But what if we took that same scene and had the Wolf give Erith a run for his money? Suddenly, he would become a powerful character whose actions were dictated purely by his own will. If we let the Wolf beat Erith in that first fight and move on, he would be a good opponent for Desek. And he would be more dangerous. He would've chosen Desek on his own and would be all the more relentless.
- ④ Make him a dynamic character (e.g., have him change his thinking, moral code, etc., during the course of the story).
 - ④ Think of the scene when the Wolf has just been made humanoid (and, incidentally, more powerful) by Erith. He decided to continue serving Erith. We could take that scene and make him decide, because he was more powerful and because he would not expect it, to ambush Erith and seriously wound him. That scene would become pivotal, and the Wolf would take a completely new course.

- ④ Let him and Desek have more encounters.
- ④ Desek really only ran into the Wolf at the end of the book. He had been mighty close to the Wolf before (in the Broken Blades), but they never had an encounter until the end. Your battles aren't bad; we'll just need more of them between Desek and the Wolf if this is to be the main conflict.

Conflict 3: Draconas vs. Erith

The conflict is sprung on the reader rather suddenly. There isn't anything to make the reader expect something prior to its sudden introduction. This may be a difficult problem to include because it has been designed to take place rather suddenly. The familial tie between Draconas and Erith comes across too strongly. We recommend omitting this conflict.

Conclusion

As we mentioned in the introduction, this is a strong manuscript. We believe our recommendations will strengthen your manuscript and not only make you a better author but your book more successful.

We believe our suggestions and recommended changes will make your book more believable and more enjoyable for your readers. Although these changes may seem daunting right now, the efforts you make in following these recommendations will benefit you significantly.

How to Put Everything Into Action

- ④ List – Write out everything Desek knows or that he could/should know
- ④ Rewrite – Pull out the chapters that aren't in Desek's point of view and rewrite them so they are (See "Who is the Main Character")
 - ④ If you come to a scene that you feel is really important and can't seem to put it in Desek's point of view, ask yourself what your story would be missing without it. We encourage you to challenge yourself to see how you can include it from Desek's perspective.

Throughout your paper you need to ask yourself "Is the action earned in this scene?" If it isn't you need to find a way to make it. For example, when Erith burns the city in chapter one you could have a mob of towns folk coming after him. His powers could be drained causing him to hide in the desert once again. Or anything that clearly show us that there is some kind of consequence that will come from what he's done.

With Erith you might consider making him not so powerful or setting limitations on his power. As of right now he's by far the most powerful character in the story. In fact he's so powerful he almost seems Godlike. Which makes us question why he would be seeking after more power if he's already king of the mountain. Making him weaker will also make him more believable and give another reasons as to why he wants more power.

To make Desek appear to have magical powers that equal Eriths. We need to either see Desek grow as a magician throughout the story or have an explanation / history telling us why he doesn't use the full extent of his powers. Somewhere however, we need at least a glimpse of his full capability. An idea maybe would to have the dragons be his mentors and teach him how to use the full extent of his powers. Maybe while teaching Desek, something happens that reveals he is more powerful than anyone could comprehend.

Finally, make sure when including extensive details about anything within the story that there is some importance or relevance for such detail. Go through your manuscript and look closely at your details. You may ask yourself “Why is this here and does it have any real importance to the story?”

Where Desek is your strongest character, we recommend you work on changing the chapters so they follow his point of view. With the chapters revolving around Erith, Draconas, and the wolf, we suggest you rewrite them so they fit Desek’s point of view. We realize information given in the other chapters is important. We suggest the following as ways in order to incorporate that information into Desek’s point of view:

- ④ Prophetic dreams
- ④ Mind connections
- ④ Scrying spells

These three methods will help allow you to write the chapters in Desek’s point of view.

Prophetic Dreams

As Desek is a wizard, he is entitled to prophetic dreams in which he sees what may be happening around the world. The first chapter told in third person can be managed most easily by making it Desek’s dream. Keep it as the first chapter, but introduce the second chapter as Desek wakes from this dream or contemplates upon the dream he had the night before or recently.

Mind Connections

By mind connections, we mean experiences in which Desek may share a mental link with Erith in which he is able to observe his actions and possibly test the strength of his unknown foe. We suggest this method for the beginning of chapter five where you say from Erith’s point of view:

Erith continued to press his power to his limits, and as it stood in his mind, his limits knew no bounds. He wondered through peoples minds, their power, their secrets, and he fed off what he thought was their most precious gift. His mind crossed the desert, until he reached a mind that fed his lust. All of the other minds and souls that he had consumed were appetizers, but this new entity was the main course and desert. It lacked the wisdom that he had gained along with his years of experiences, yet held the challenge he sought for (p. 45).

In this case, we suggest you start with Desek’s point of view and first speak of the moment when Erith reaches Desek’s mind. This will allow Desek to learn of his foe and the reader will as well

as get to know Desek and how he struggles with Erith and the possibility of a great power threatening his way of life. It will give Desek more motivation to seek out what is threatening him and his home as well.

Scrying Spells

In chapter twenty-two, when Draconas goes to Erith, a scrying spell can be used instead of switching the character the story is told from. Desek can use a scrying spell in his search for his young friend. This will also allow Desek to be allowed to make decisions for himself. For example, in chapter sixteen, Desek meditates to know learn where Draconas has been taken. You tell us:

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