

Ooligan Press Editorial Department

June 1, 2021

Kristin Burchell

Court of Venom

Heavy Copyedit Editorial Note

Dear Kristin:

Before we dive in to this editorial note, we just wanted to thank you for sharing this incredible manuscript with us and our team of editors. We are so passionate about this project, and it has been an absolute pleasure getting to work with you on this manuscript!

Our main goal for this round of edits was to not only tie up any loose ends that were leftover from the developmental edit, but also fine-tune the language and the plot points so that our next round of edits can focus largely on grammar, spelling, syntax, etc. With that being said, we just want to forewarn you that the manuscript looks like it went through substantial edits, but it's really just fine-tuning language and syntax. Our team of editors went through the book with a fine-tooth comb looking for inconsistencies, places with ambiguity, and areas where clarity could be improved. We worked diligently to make decisions that were right for your story and its readers.

The goals of this note are to highlight some of the recurring themes/issues that we found within the manuscript so you know the things to look for when you revise; we have also provided comments throughout the edited manuscript that offer specific examples and pinpoint issues directly. For this edit, our primary resources were:

Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary for common spelling and hyphenation choices.

Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS) seventeenth edition for style choices and punctuation.

Several of our editors have experience working with fantasy novels, so we also used their insight to help guide some of our stylistic choices.

Formatting

While there were no significant changes to the formatting or layout of this manuscript aside from the addition of page numbers to help with the editing process, we did want to draw your attention to our addition of three centered asterisks to indicate a section break. These are primarily used as a visual cue for the interior designer to know where to format section breaks. While you are revising, please take note of these section breaks; if we missed any, please feel free to use the comment feature to let us know, and if you don't agree with an established section break, please let us know as well.

As a general rule of thumb for this step in the process, the first paragraph after a new chapter or section break (including the "THEN" sections) should not be indented, and there should be a line space after the chapter tag. Don't worry about flagging any inconsistencies on this yet, we are still very early in this process and it will be polished and standardized soon.

Magic

The type of magic that you have created for *Court of Venomis* is unique and one-of-a-kind, but also very simple and straightforward, which makes it easy for readers to be drawn in to your world. There are magical elements woven into several key plot points, including the story of how Aran was created, the magic of the water that Aran thrives on, and Diya's own magical abilities. With this in mind, it's incredibly important that there is no confusion or any inconsistencies regarding how this magic works.

The Legend of How Aran Came to Be

Throughout the book, there are several different myths regarding how Aran was created and how it came to be. As readers, we are fine with a little ambiguity and mystery regarding the exact details, but given the tie-in with the Witch/Lost Princess at the end of the story, we want there to be a little less ambiguity. What is the real story of how Aran was created? Is it the myth with the First King and the gold mining? Or the one about the lost travelers who found the muddy stream and made a bargain with the Witch? On that note, we also need more detail about the bargain made by the First King and how the Lost Princess became a Witch. As we edited the document we highlighted specific areas where these questions came up, sections where you could add more detail, and areas with plot inconsistencies. While we are past the stage of adding any substantial content, we have marked areas/paragraphs where a sentence or two could be added.

The Magic Water of Aran

The magical water found in Aran is crucial to the plot as a whole, but our editors were left with some questions about it after finishing the book. There seemed to be some confusion about whether the water level is declining or if the magical qualities of the water are depleting. Whichever origin story you chose for Aran (from the previous section), make sure that the details of the magic water support that story. Honing in on a specific origin story will help the details of this naturally come out. We have noted several areas in the manuscript where the magic of the water is brought into question, so those flags will serve as areas to add detail and clarify.

Badriya's Magic

Perhaps the biggest magical issue that still remains in the manuscript is the question of how Diya's magic works. In the book, Diya uses the basics of natural medicine to create her potions, but it seems as if they are made more potent/lethal with her blood; is that correct? Are Diya and Narisa magic because of their blood, or are there other factors? If Najma does not possess magic blood, how is she able to poison others? We have marked areas in the book where these questions arise.

Writing

You have done a fantastic job incorporating the feedback from your developmental edit, especially in regards to specific details and the roles of characters. Everyone is highly impressed with the changes that you made from the developmental edit to this revision. With that being said, there are a few areas that we feel could benefit from more description, as well as some scenes that need smoother transitions from scene to scene.

Physical and Textile Descriptions

One of the things our editors commented on the most was the lack of physical descriptions for the characters. Each of them have one or two features that they are identified by (Petra has dark eyes, Safiya has curly hair, Badriya has coarse, wavy hair), but we aren't given a comprehensive look at what they look like in terms of height, stature, weight, hair color, complexion, etc. While it is too late in the process for any substantial additions, there are ways to subtly add these details and still have a lasting impression on the readers. We have pointed out areas where these small descriptions could be added.

Another area where editors wanted more detail was in the description of the clothes, fabrics, and textiles found in Aran. Readers want specific details about the texture, feel,

material, quality, patterns, etc., for the clothes characters wear, their blankets, coverings, tapestries, etc. Adding in these details will really help round out the world that you've created and will help draw readers even further in. We have marked a variety of areas in the book where a sentence or two of detail could be really beneficial.

Transitions

I want to reiterate that you did an amazing job on your revisions! With all of the great material that you added and changed, there are a few areas where the new material doesn't flow as smoothly as it could with the original. The editorial team documented where these rough transitions are, and fixing them should just be a matter of adding a transition phrase or time stamp, or adding a line or two of description.

Aran

You have created a wonderful setting for your fantasy novel in the city of Aran. As you are reading you are swept away into this magical desert oasis filled with mystery and scandal. I can't imagine any other location for your story to take place. By adding in a few small details about the orientation of the city, its role in the region, and its currency, your story will have a firm foundation that readers will gravitate toward.

Details of the City

From the descriptions of the city, all we know is that Aran is small kingdom with areas for the Favorites, the Lesser, the Dining Hall, a courtyard, gardens, and a Gambling Hall. But in a kingdom like the one described in the manuscript, there would be other things as well. What else is inside the city? Is there a bank? A market? What is the scope/distance of Aran? How far away is it from the Dining Hall to the Rooms of the Favorites? Are there open pastures for the horses and the goats?

With how much pacing, touring, and walking back and forth the characters do, readers need a better sense of the size and scope of the city, and it needs to feel bigger than what it currently does. We have commented on areas of the book where we believe some additional details could be added. We would also like to note that we would be interested in having you create some kind of map/sketch of Aran as bonus material/front matter for the book if you would be interested in doing so!

Aran's Place in the World

There were quite a few questions about the role Aran plays in a more global capacity in the book. Where is it located in comparison to Tanera? To Mera? To Dorros? How far away are the Ash Mountains? Where is the Eastern Sea? Having a basic understanding of the spatial locations for some of the cities and landmarks mentioned in the book would be a huge benefit to readers. Similarly to having a map of the city of Aran, we are also interested in the possibility of including a map of the entire world you've created to supplement as well. Even having a general sketch of this nearby might help as you clear up some of the inconsistencies.

Currency

One of the final questions that remains to be answered is about the money/currency in Aran. It seems like the preferred currency is a form of silver, but there are some inconsistencies and questions that arose during our editorial meeting. Currency in Aran is referred to loosely as "silver(s)" but there is a lot of back and forth later in the manuscript about whether "silver" has a monetary value in the book, or if it just refers to coins/objects that are made of silver metal.

We think that the easiest solution would be to come up with a formal name for the currency for Aran, similar to how Tanera has Moons. If we incorporate this new currency into the story, we could then establish its monetary value. For example, if in the story a new gown costs five nummums, then we know that the Witch asking for one hundred nummums is a huge task. We think that adding more structure and formalizing the currency will have a great impact on the readers and the story.

Revision Process

When reviewing the corresponding manuscript document ("Court of Venom Full MS – Heavy CE Compiled.docx") you'll want to switch between "All Markup" which allows you to view all the in-line edits and comments, and "Simple Markup" which hides the line-level edits so that you can see a clean version of the manuscript. Depending on what version of Microsoft Word you are using (assuming you are using Word), the way you access these settings may change. Typically they are accessed by locating the "Review" tab at the top, finding the tracking group, and clicking "Show Markup" or "All Markup." We recommend navigating to "Markup Options" and scrolling down to the "Balloons" tab to select the option "Show Only Comments and Formatting in Balloons." This will make reading in-line suggestions much easier.

For each edit that you see in the document, you will need to either “Accept” or “Reject” the change by right-clicking. For each query in the manuscript, if you would like to respond back to us you can right-click and select “Reply”; if you have addressed the query and don’t need to tell us anything, you can right-click “Delete.”

After you have finished accepting/rejecting our edits, making edits of your own, and commenting on the document, please send the file back to us.

Thank you again for sharing your book with Ooligan Press. *Court of Venomis* an amazing manuscript and we are thoroughly enjoying getting to work on it!

If you have any questions or concerns as you start revising, please don’t hesitate to reach out.

Thank you!

Rachel Howe
Incoming Copy Chief
Ooligan Press