



Reliability, Timeliness, and Quality.

SAMPLE: Developmental Edit (Fiction)

This editing sample is of one chapter from a 26,000-word fiction novella. The sample highlights a particular chapter within the novella that needed more developmental attention than other chapters. In this editing sample, you will find that suggestions relate to removing large chunks of text, developing important themes, and identifying important characters. Developmental suggestions are often aimed at improving the storytelling aspect of a manuscript, they do not target mechanical issues in a text such as punctuation and spelling.

In the document, you'll see that all suggestions are marked with a "Q:" for query. During a developmental edit, suggestions will not be inserted directly into the text, rather, they will be communicated in the margin of the document with a comment. The reason for this is because, often times, developmental suggestions could require substantial insertions of text, deletions of text, or discussion of themes, characters, plot, etc. before an author and editor are ready to move forward. An editor inserting developmental suggestions directly into the text could be very time and cost consuming, and the author still might feel inclined to reject the proposed suggestions.

Typically, authors may be interested in developmental editing if their manuscript lacks or is inconsistent with plot, voice, character development, overarching themes, or reaching the target audience. Developmental editing is a much more collaborative process between editor and author, and will often require in-depth conversations related to the story and the author's intentions for writing the story.

PART 7: REFLECTION IN THE EYES OF A STRANGER

At some point in life, waters overflow their banks. The rains exhaust the city to blur the boundaries that we carefully guard. We possess such unwavering certainty within us that we dare to erect dwellings upon the shores and carve new courses for rivers, but the forces of nature disregard our structures. Nature arrives and establishes its own order. Whether we resist or surrender entirely becomes inconsequential. And inevitably, as the passage of time unfolds, tides breach the confines of their shores.

On a certain day, meticulously planning a journey to the quaint fishing town of Búzios to celebrate the New Year, she purchased tickets. However, in her haste, she acquired them for the wrong date. Seemingly a trivial matter, yet this oversight set in motion a chain of events beyond reason. 'A butterfly fluttering its wings in Iowa can trigger a cascade of effects, reaching its climax during Indonesia's rainy season.' And so it unfolded for our heroine.

With tickets for the wrong date in hand, she made her way to the station to exchange them for the 30th, just a day before the New Year. Although the departure was scheduled for a little past 3 o'clock, the bus encountered a delay. Moments before setting off, she discovered that the hotel she had booked turned out to be non-existent. (be careful when booking something through Airbnb without any reviews, as there is a risk of encountering scammers or dishonest hosts).

Faced with these circumstances, on the brink of departure, she pondered whether it was wise to venture to the city. Yet, her friend, who had arrived earlier, found a solution: rebooking the hotel and securing a refund for the non-existent one. Undeterred, she intended on coming. Wonderful! Let the celebration be.

Commented [TM1]: Q: In this introductory metaphor, waters overflow their confines and take control over structures that we have created. In the end, our efforts are powerless and nature will have its way with us.

I believe that this metaphor is in reference to the character, Ana, and how she is subject to the will of fate, which leads her to important events where she learns about herself. Am I correct?

If so, I believe this introductory paragraph is a bit out of place. This chapter's introduction is "Fata Morgana", which refers to an illusion experienced by someone looking over the water. I see how this term applies to the chapter, as Ana discovers that we often perceive illusions of ourselves. Strangers are able to see past these illusions (as Anna sees past Gabriel's) and ultimately teach us about ourselves.

I think the current metaphor would be much more effective if it were in reference to illusions rather than overflowing water. This introductory paragraph as it stands, I believe, could potentially serve in another chapter. What do you think?

Gathering her belongings, she arrived at the station, only to find her seat numbered 13, but two tickets had been sold for the very same place. Another intriguing incident. Following a brief investigation, the bus station staff uncovered the mistake. The old ticket had been reserved for seat 13, while the new one was assigned to seat 7! With a sigh of relief, she settled into her rightful place.

Engaging in conversation with a delightful young woman, she scarcely noticed the passing of seven hours, far exceeding the anticipated travel time of three. Well, let's see what lies ahead.

The bus came to a halt on the road, requiring a 7-minute walk to the hotel. But a dreadful downpour enveloped the streets, time was growing late, and the journey itself felt weary. She decided to light a cigarette before heading towards the hotel. The rain showed no signs of abating. She took out the cigarette, recorded a few heartfelt messages for her social media, messages that she never ended up sharing, and with curiosity, she noticed that the rain had finally ceased.

Astonishingly, it ceased just in the nick of time.

Upon arriving at the hotel, she gleefully shed her clothes and indulged in a refreshing shower. Tired and famished, she beseeched her friend to find something to eat. As a vegetarian, this task presented a challenge, especially since the only nearby option was McDonald's. Nonetheless, her friend triumphed, acquiring French fries and a delectable vegetarian pizza. How splendid! An invitation had emerged to spend the evening in the company of a charming gentleman from the capital city, Brasília; he had also journeyed to Búzios to celebrate the New Year. The sophisticated, charming, and remarkably considerate man proposed a leisurely

Commented [TM2]: Q: This narrative introduction, in my opinion, gives the reader a sense of fate taking hold of the protagonist. There seem to be many small (and I'm afraid to say, quite trivial) coincidences that occur as Ana makes her way to Búzios.

To be honest, I feel that the pacing is quite irregular, and there are also a number of contradictory explanations that make it difficult to follow the narrative.

I'm proposing that we remove a large portion of this text for a couple reasons:

1. Although coincidence is certainly a theme throughout the book, as characters seem to have consistent random encounters, I don't think coincidence is the focus of this chapter, and some of these coincidental details are quite insignificant in my opinion (changing seats on the bus).

2. The chapter is already significantly longer than the other chapters at nine pages, and removing what would nearly be an entire page might actually be better for the overall chapter structure. We would also save a lot of time discussing the edits for this narrative which is a bit confusing at the moment.

Overall, I think removing this would save us time and ultimately benefit the chapter. I do think a quick introduction to how Ana came to Búzios might be necessary, but it could be brief.

What do you think?

Commented [TM3]: Q: I suggest removing this because I don't think these details are relevant to the chapter's narrative. What do you think?

escapade to the city center for a snack, a drink, and a stroll. Shortly after her shower, her friend arrived, beaming with excitement at the proposition from the curious stranger. The girls embraced the opportunity for a leisurely promenade and without much hesitation, it was decided—a walk it would be! Our heroine donned a resplendent rose-colored top in Jacqmeus's exquisite palette and an elegant mid-length skirt, tastefully adorned with a thigh-high slit. The gentleman arrived to escort the ladies, and the three ventured into the vibrant city center. The ocean breeze intoxicated their senses and the luxurious restaurants and bars enticed them. After careful consideration of their destination, they settled upon a charming terrace bar. The heroine's friend entered the bar to fetch refreshments, while her escort patiently awaited outside.

Inside, our heroine noticed a young man in a stylish cowboy hat. His back was to her as he leaned with an elbow on the countertop of the bar. He was engrossed in his phone, seemingly unconcerned with his surroundings. "Turn around, turn around," she whispered to herself, feeling an irresistible draw towards him. He briefly lifted his gaze and turned. Inevitably, their eyes met. She offered a quick, radiant smile, then diverted her attention back to the gentleman from the capital city who was seated beside her. After a quick drink, the three friends decided to seek another venue, but before they took their leave, our heroine couldn't resist paying a compliment to the young man in the cowboy hat.

"You have a cool hat," she remarked flirtatiously.

"Thank you!" he responded. "What's your name?"

"Anastasia," she replied with a playful smile. "But everyone calls me Ana."

"Is that a Greek name?"

"Yes, it means *resurrected*. But I'm not Greek," she teased him with, sparkling eyes.

Commented [TM4]: Q: I think establishing the main character of the book is another aspect we should keep an eye on across chapters. As the narrator refers to "our heroine", it might sound as if this woman is the same character who has been introduced in other chapters.

I'm wondering if we could just introduce the character as Ana, here? Or potentially leave her name out of the chapter entirely as done in other chapters.

Commented [TM5]: Q: I suggest removing this. I don't think it follows the narrative development of the character's physical locations.

Commented [TM6]: Q: Can this just be Ana or she? I think the narrator's voice sounds a little awkward here.

Commented [TM7]: Q: Can this just be Ana or she? Heroine also becomes a little repetitive at this point.

"Guys, come on." The man from the capital barged into the conversation. "Just exchange contacts. Ana, just give him your Instagram and let's go, we can't wait for you forever."

"Alright, alright." Ana took out her phone and quickly maneuvered the screen. "Here's my Instagram. Write it down." Her voice was filled with anticipation.

"I'm Gabriel," said the man with a hint of excitement. "I'll text you."

As they bid a rushed farewell, they both knew that their future encounter was inevitable. They couldn't resist the magnetic pull undulating between them. A warm wave of attraction had enveloped their bodies, from head to toe. The air crackled with a gentle, alluring energy, and they yearned to bask in it—indefinitely.

After wandering along the ocean shore for a while, the three friends still couldn't find that perfect spot to linger. Weary from the walk, they settled on an unassuming tavern. They sat at a small wooden table, their knees bumping against one another. Their new friend from the capital ordered a glass of sweet champagne for each of them. After the round of bubbly champagne, Ana checked her phone, hoping to see that Gabriel had written; and indeed, he had.

WHERE ARE YOU?

I'M NOT FAR FROM WHERE WE MET.

I WANT TO BE WITH YOU. LET'S MEET.

I'LL SEND YOU THE LOCATION.

Gabriel came to meet her, and when he arrived, Ana gave a quick goodbye to her friends and told them not to worry; this night with Gabriel was destined. She stepped out of the tavern and made her way down a wooden set of stairs that led her to the soft, white sand of the coastline. He was waiting for her, and when she saw him, everything else ceased to exist.

Everyone vanished, leaving behind solely the trees, the living ocean, the flowers wet with salt-water mist, the dancing sky full of glimmering stars, and a magical sense of unity. And when he kissed her, it felt as though the boundaries of their bodies dissolved. There was no longer him and her; they became something pulsating, magnetic, and abundant. Their kiss endured, seemingly for hours; time drifts indistinctively when one is irresistibly drawn to another. Halting their embrace proved nearly impossible. They were incapable of breaking away from each other's gaze. They desired more than just companionship; they craved unity. It all could have escalated into a fervent romance, but something troubled her. It wasn't the right place, nor the right time. Something felt amiss.

Gabriel captivated her. He was an exceptionally gifted football player who had resided in Greece for an extended period. She perceived in him a childlike zeal and boundless potential. He was around 27 years old, youthful and handsome. She knew that a splendid future, fame, and abundance awaited him.

The next day was New Year's, and a celebration like the one planned for that evening, utterly spontaneous and enchanting, occurs only once in a lifetime. Her friend had been invited to a party by the man from the capital. He and a few of his friends had rented an unbelievably exquisite villa at the edge of town that had private beach access and an entrancing view of the ocean from the terrace. They had hired a DJ, bartenders, waitstaff, and chefs. The evening commenced, and it was magical! Cocktails were consumed effortlessly in the delightful company of newfound friends. Everyone hugged, danced, and congratulated each other on the occasion. How wonderful Brazilians are; you're always a part of the family.

Commented [TM8]: Q: I suggest this be removed. In the end, Gabriel really isn't an essential character. What's essential is the interaction that Ana has with him. The kiss, the invitation to the crack house, and his distant behavior. I think these details about his past become superfluous. What do you think?

As Ana danced, embraced her friends, and laughed, she thought of Gabriel. *Oh, how amazing it would be to be with him right now.* Then, as fate would have it, she received the long-awaited message.

COME TO ME. I'M WITH SOME PEOPLE AT A PARTY AND I WANT TO SEE YOU. I'LL COVER ANY COST. JUST COME! I'M BEGGING YOU! I WANT TO SEE YOU. PLEASE.

And she desired it too. Ana was irresistibly drawn to this charming Brazilian. In the whirlwind of events, she closed her eyes, rejoicing in the anticipation of meeting him again. Gabriel awaited her. It was such a delightful, alluring feeling, as if her entire body was enveloped in softness. It was akin to plunging into a hot bath on a chilly day when the body instantly relaxes and releases a sweet sigh. But when she arrived at the party, she was confronted with a different reality; the enchantment had dissipated. Gabriel had invited Ana to the place where he resided, which resembled a refuge shelter or a kind of brothel. The walls were weathered, mattresses were scattered and worn-out, and drugs were strewn amidst soiled garments. The floor trembled with the heavy thudding of bass; strangers with rotting teeth cackled and whooped through the hallways. These people were completely different; they were propelled by something primal, primitive, and untamed. They were people who squandered life by plunging into the rabbit hole—not to find themselves, but to lose themselves.

What am I doing here? Ana thought, questioning herself, or perhaps questioning fate. *What is he doing here? Why am I with these people?* She couldn't pretend that nothing odd was happening, especially in contrast to the New Year's party with the city guys at the villa; this environment, these walls, and these glances were foreign to her. Gabriel emerged from a dimly

lit hallway and moved toward her; he appeared completely bewildered. She pulled him aside, ensuring no one would overhear.

"What are you doing, Gabriel? This isn't you; This isn't your energy! Why are you self-destructing? Why are you destroying yourself?" He peered through her. It was unclear if her words had reached him. She clasped his hand. "Gabriel, you are talented, attractive, and young! You can build any future you desire. Why are you tearing it apart?" For a fleeting moment, she reproached herself; after all, it was entirely outside her purview. They had only met the day prior, and yet, here she was with her inquiries. Gabriel looked at her blankly and mumbled something that she couldn't understand. "I'm sorry," she said at last, regaining her composure. "I can't... I'm not..." she sighed. "I'll just go."

"I will write to you later, alright?" he replied distantly.

"Yes, yes, of course. We will talk later."

As she left the party and wandered back into the streets of Búzios, she felt the pain of an utterly unfamiliar man. She felt his urge to self-destruct. She felt his disillusionment and his uncertainty about what lay ahead. She felt it with every fiber of her being. This realization unsettled her: *Why can't he see himself through my eyes? Why doesn't he believe in himself? Why do I perceive his potential so vividly when he cannot? Why does he appear so exquisite in my eyes?* Musing over this on her way home, melancholy settled upon her; everything became clear to her. *It is a lament; it is a shame that he remains unacquainted with his true self.*

There are people who perceive our hearts, who discern those dormant seeds, who recognize the fertile earth within us. They comprehend that we harbor an incredible cosmos

concealed from ourselves. How splendid it would be to witness ourselves through their eyes, and to behold our genuine essence—our profundity.

After that meeting with Gabriel, a series of inevitable events began to unfold, one after another. Ana would later lose her passport and credit cards, only to be aided by a stranger. She would find herself in the house of a distinguished family, meeting the great-grandchildren of one of Argentina's most illustrious presidents. Little did she know, the multitude of consequential encounters that lay ahead on her path would all serve the purpose of piecing together fragments of herself. She would see her reflection everywhere, through the eyes of strangers. After all, that experience in Búzios was not with Gabriel in the slightest; she had simply met herself—the self she had wanted to run away from, the self from which the light had faded.

On her way back to the hotel, she heard a familiar whisper from a raven perched at the entrance of an unassuming tavern. "Wake up," the raven cawed, "Remember, events and encounters that you create are also shaping you. You are not the only one experiencing them; they too are experiencing you. In truth, when you perceive others, you are perceiving a reflection of yourself. After all, it is merely an illusion. Keep moving forward."

Commented [TM9]: Q: I think this quick interlude from the narrator could be more strategically placed. Either at the end of the narrative, before the crow speaks, or after. This may also be a pattern you could follow throughout the book because these types of paragraphs appear regularly. What do you think?

Also, because this chapter seems so vital, and because this paragraph references the name of the novel, I'm wondering if this couldn't be developed a little further, and built into a larger text. What do you think?

Commented [TM10]: Q: Will these events be developed at a later point in the novel? If not, they should be developed here, or mention of them might be irrelevant to the chapter at this point.

Commented [TM11]: Q: I don't understand. What is merely an illusion? Is all the advice he has just given her an illusion? Should she ignore all of it?

I think this needs to be more specific in order for the reader to follow the message of the chapter. I think we could have a quick discussion to improve this last quote from the raven.