

(Title Redacted)

Chapter 4

Reviewer: Doug

Date: 2/24/2021

**** Highlighted issues **must** be addressed. Non-highlighted comments are suggestions.****

Reviewer's Notes

Ambitious as ever, this chapter came together rather nicely, and the trimming you did between the first draft and this draft helped considerably.

For how complex and long this chapter is on the ink side, the heart of it is rather straightforward. At ~10,800 words and a significant amount of branching, I doubt this chapter will run too long, but keep in mind that still is a possibility once we start testing it in the game engine. There is a chance we could ask for additional trimming of scenes and lines if it feels too long, but I really doubt that will be the case.

On a process note, you really seem to be hitting your stride when it comes to the structure, the style, and the appropriate amount of branching for your stories. These structure reviews are becoming less necessary with your work as time goes on, which is exactly where we want each writer to be. Excellent work and effort on that front.

Even though we have discussed some high-level structure issues earlier, this official review found items that need to be addressed before moving on to polish.

There are some branches you can take during the duel that break the flow and end the progression in an error:

1. Normal Outfit – (name removed) – Right Moves – Win Duel (+2 Influence) **Works**
2. Normal Outfit – (name removed) – Wrong Moves – Draw Option – Win Duel (+2 Influence)
 - a. Parry, (name removed) (wrong, wrong) – **Line 577 crash**
 - b. Parry, (name removed) (wrong, right) – **Line 577 crash**
 - c. Charge, (name removed) (wrong, wrong) – **Line 577 crash**
 - d. Charge, (name removed) (wrong, right) – **Line 577 crash**
3. Premium Outfit – (name removed) – Wrong Moves – Draw Option – Draw Duel (+2 Influence) – Erwin Friendship – (name removed) convo
 - a. Parry, (name removed) (wrong, wrong) – **Works**
 - b. Parry, (name removed) (wrong, right) – **Works**
 - c. Charge, (name removed) (wrong, wrong) – **Works**
 - d. Charge, (name removed) (wrong, right) – **Works**
4. Premium Outfit – (name removed) – Right Moves – Draw Option – Win Duel (+2 Influence) **Works**
5. Premium Outfit – (name removed) – Right Moves – Draw Option – Draw Duel (+2 Influence) – Erwin Friendship – (name removed) convo **Works**
6. Premium Outfit – (name removed) – Wrong Moves – Draw Option – Win Duel (+2 Influence)

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- a. Parry, (name removed) (wrong, wrong) – **Works**
 - b. Parry, (name removed) (wrong, right) - **Works**
 - c. Charge, (name removed) (wrong, wrong) - **Works**
 - d. Charge, (name removed) (wrong, right) - **Works**
 7. Premium Outfit – (name removed) – Wrong Moves – Draw Option – Draw Duel (+2 Influence) – Erwin Friendship – (name removed) convo **Works**
 - a. Parry, (name removed) (wrong, wrong) – **Works**
 - b. Parry, (name removed) (wrong, right) - **Works**
 - c. Charge, (name removed) (wrong, wrong) - **Works**
 - d. Charge, (name removed) (wrong, right) - **Works**
 8. Normal Outfit – (name removed)– Right Moves – Win Duel (+2 Influence) **Line 762 crash**
 9. Normal Outfit – (name removed) – Wrong Moves – Draw Option – Win Duel (+2 Influence)
 - a. Parry, (name removed) (wrong, wrong) – **Line 762 crash**
 - b. Parry, (name removed) (wrong, right) – **Line 762 crash**
 - c. Charge, (name removed) (wrong, wrong) – **Line 762 crash**
 - d. Charge, (name removed) (wrong, right) – **Line 762 crash**
 10. Normal Outfit – (name removed) – Wrong Moves – Draw Option – Draw Duel (+2 Influence) – (name removed) Friendship – (name removed) convo
 - a. Parry, (name removed) (wrong, wrong) – **Line 762 crash**
 - b. Parry, (name removed) (wrong, right) – **Line 762 crash**
 - c. Charge, (name removed) (wrong, wrong) – **Line 762 crash**
 - d. Charge, (name removed) (wrong, right) – **Line 762 crash**
 11. Premium Outfit – (named removed) – Wrong Moves – Draw Option – Draw Duel (+2 Influence) – (named removed) Friendship – (named removed) convo
 - a. Parry, (named removed) (wrong, wrong) – **Works**
 - b. Parry, (named removed) (wrong, right) - **Works**
 - c. Charge, (named removed) (wrong, wrong) - **Works**
 - d. Charge, (named removed) (wrong, right) – **Works**
 12. Premium Outfit – (named removed) – Wrong Moves – Draw Option – Win Duel (+2 Influence)
 - a. Parry, (named removed) (wrong, wrong) – **Works**
 - b. Parry, (named removed) (wrong, right) - **Works**
 - c. Charge, (named removed) (wrong, wrong) - **Works**
 - d. Charge, (named removed) (wrong, right) - **Works**
 13. Premium Outfit – (named removed) – Right Moves – Draw Option – Win Duel (+2 Influence) **Works**
 14. Premium Outfit – (named removed) – Right Moves – Draw Option – Draw Duel (+2 Influence) – (named removed) Friendship – (named removed) convo **Works**
 15. Normal Outfit – (named removed) – Right Moves – Draw (+1 Influence) **Works**
 16. Normal Outfit – (named removed) – Wrong Moves – Lose Duel (No influence)
 - a. Parry, (named removed) (wrong, wrong) – **Works**
 - b. Parry, (named removed) (wrong, right) - **Works**
 - c. Charge, (named removed) (wrong, wrong) - **Works**
 - d. Charge, (named removed) (wrong, right) - **Works**
 17. Premium Outfit – (named removed) – Right Moves – Draw Option – Win Duel (+1 Influence) **Works**
 18. Premium Outfit – (named removed) – Right Moves – Draw Option – Draw Duel (+1 Influence) – (named removed) Friendship – (named removed) convo **Works**
 19. Premium Outfit – (named removed) – Wrong Moves – Draw Option – Win Duel (+1 Influence)
 - a. Parry, (named removed) (wrong, wrong) – **Works**
 - b. Parry, (named removed) (wrong, right) - **Works**
 - c. Charge, (named removed) (wrong, wrong) - **Works**
 - d. Charge, (named removed) (wrong, right) - **Works**
 20. Premium Outfit – (named removed) – Wrong Moves – Draw Option – Draw Duel (+1 Influence) – (named removed) Friendship – (named removed) convo
 - a. Parry, (named removed) (wrong, wrong) – **Works**

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- b. Parry, (named removed) (wrong, right) - **Works**
 - c. Charge, (named removed) (wrong, wrong) - **Works**
 - d. Charge, (named removed) (wrong, right) - **Works**

I didn't dig into exactly what is causing the crash. If you get stuck trying to fix it or would like us (me, (name removed), or (name removed)) to figure it out for you, please let us know.

Opening

Does the chapter begin with a strong/compelling hook?

Yes, resolving conflict with (named removed) showing up and looking for the MC and (named removed) is a great hook to start the chapter.

If present, does the previous chapter cliffhanger resolve in a satisfying way?

Yes, it continues fluidly into this chapter and even takes the story in an unexpected direction, which is a good thing.

Conflict

Is the chapter conflict clear and relatable?

The conflict is presented in a noticeably clear manner. The MC and (named removed) avoiding detection from (named removed) in order to stay on their larger mission, protect (named removed) and her gang from retribution from the guards, all the while trying to hide (named removed) so the MC can heal her all feel clear and relatable.

Length

Do any scenes/sequences feel too long?

No.

Do any scenes/sequences feel too short?

No.

Engagement

Are any scenes/sequences confusing, contrived, or off-putting?

Numerous times, the location comments claim you are outside in the camp, but the narration places you inside a tent. We likely need to come up with a solution so that the narration does not conflict with the background visuals. Can we have a tent interior and still make each of these scenes flow as planned? If we have the tent interior, do we need a closer version of the characters (not seeing their full body) because the tent would be so short, they cannot stand up inside it? Things to consider.

The rules of the duel, as defined, feel like something (name removed) would never agree to and the MC looks sort of foolish or very overconfident to conceive in the first place. The only line that seems to define

the rules is when (name removed) says: **“Two of us against two of you. Unless either side decides to yield, the last man standing will be the winner.”** “Last man standing” implies that people could die in this duel. Why would (name removed) accept a duel in which the MC or his father might kill one another? (Name removed) and the MC’s acceptance that this was an acceptable idea kept pulling me out of the story. They are agreeing to do something that would be extremely risky in real life, and it feels like they go down this route knowing they will not be killed because they are main characters.

It is imperative that the rules of a duel are established and agreed upon before the start, so it is excellent that you included that. But I would heavily suggest the rules are that whoever disarms both opponents or is poised to make a killing strike will be deemed the victor. You could even keep the current rules that (name removed) says, but have the MC alter the rules to something less lethal by saying she will always fight with honor but sees no point in dying or killing simply because of the information he wants.

- Even with rules established, the duel concept in general feels like it goes completely against (name removed)’s duty and this isn’t the *only* plan that would work. One possible way to tighten up this logic could be: have the MC propose the duel to (name removed). (Name removed) flat out refuses. MC says, ‘don’t worry, I’ve got a plan’. BUT THEN (name removed) refuses again because he cannot accept you fighting his father -- “there must be another way”. MC says her plan will work, she orders (name removed) to stay and protect (name removed) in the tent, and before (name removed) can object again the MC goes out of the tent and proposes the duel to (name removed). This would force (name removed) to go along with the plan. (Name removed) was already torn up about disobeying his oath to let the MC fight (name removed). It is too difficult to believe he would let the MC duel his father. (Name removed) should be forced into it somehow.

It is unclear why parry and charge are the wrong moves and duck is the correct move at the start of the fight. Is there any information the player has beforehand that could help them figure out the best strategy here?

It is unclear why attacking (name removed) is the wrong move and attacking (name removed) is the correct move during the fight. Is there any information the player has beforehand that could help them figure out the best strategy here?

Was there any foreshadowing that the MC is an extremely skilled archer? I feel it came up once possibly in either chapter 1 or 2... but her skill seems amazing. I think it would be worthwhile to consider either foreshadowing this more, or if you want to keep it as a surprise, give others a much stronger reaction to her success with the bow. The kind of shots she executes are expert level and should be recognized as such.

Wasn’t the venom sucked out of (name removed) in the last chapter??

Is there enough variation in locations?

Yes... it is light on the number/variations of locations but what is there works well with the chapter. The interactions and scenarios really take center stage in this chapter, so it is acceptable that the locations fall more into the background.

Are there enough variations in interactions?

Yes. Definitely. The branching in this is very impressive.

Are the character connections meaningful and evolving?

Yes. I think this chapter is probably the best so far in that regard.

Is the overall experience evolving in a clear, meaningful, or compelling way?

Yes.

Are the choices from earlier in the story noticeably impacting how this chapter unfolds?

Yes.

Choices

Do the choices fit the situations?

It is a little strange that the MC can choose "Let's give them hell!" implying it's okay to be rough and potentially injure your opponents, but when that happens the MC reacts with "Oh no!". It feels like very confusing messaging. Possibly this would work better if the previous choice wasn't 'harm' or 'don't harm' but rather something like 'go easy' or 'be aggressive'. Either way, there should be an understanding that you do not want the men harmed. If you chose 'be aggressive', (name removed) or (name removed) can still be overzealous and injure (name removed) in the heat of the duel. That way the MC will not look hypocritical about her own advice.

Are the choices impactful?

Yes.

If you remove romance options, is the chapter still fun/fulfilling?

Yes.

If you avoid premium choices, is the chapter still fun/fulfilling?

Yes.

Ending

Does the chapter end with a compelling cliffhanger?

Yes, but I would say it is a mild cliffhanger as written. It implies that the bandit's plan to raid the vault is in jeopardy, which is a subplot. The greater implication is that the MC and (name removed) will be discovered and her plan to find out the truth about what is going on in the kingdom will be cut short.

One idea that might help sell this as a stronger cliffhanger would be adding a strong stance from the MC that the vault raid, while it does temporarily help the village, is part of a huge plan to find the truth in the kingdom. Since that has not been emphatically reiterated recently, it could be lost as the main motivation for the MC and therefore could weaken the threat (name removed) poses. This is not a crucial issue... I am exploring options because we want our cliffhangers are strong as possible.

Is the overall experience of this chapter fulfilling?

Yes.