

Dear REDACTED

Thank you for sharing REDACTED with me. As always, your work shows tremendous promise —particularly in the lyricism of your language and your sensitivity to interior emotional landscapes. There's a lush, atmospheric quality to your prose that lingers, especially in moments where you lean into sensory detail and metaphor. That poetic instinct is your greatest strength, and it's worth emphasizing as you move into revisions.

One area I'd encourage you to spend more time with is the transition between flashbacks and the present-day narrative. Currently, these shifts can feel abrupt or unclear, and they risk pulling the reader out of the immersive flow you've worked so hard to establish. Anchoring these transitions more deliberately —perhaps through recurring images, physical sensations, or a shift in cadence —could help smooth the seams. Given your main character's Lexapro use, there's even an opportunity here to lean into more intense dream sequences. Rather than treating them as flashbacks or memory fragments, these dreams could serve as a liminal space where past and present blur in a heightened, surreal register. It's a space where your lyricism could shine and allow for more fluid, intuitive movement between timelines.

Additionally, I'd suggest revisiting the chapter order. A few chapters feel either out of sync with the emotional pacing or reveal key information too soon. Rearranging these could help tighten the structure and better support the arc you're building. Alongside that, some of the exposition —particularly background details or character histories —lands a bit heavy in its current form. Consider trimming the chunkier sections and weaving those elements into the narrative more organically. When in doubt, ask: what am I showing? What can I trust the reader to feel without stating outright? That classic "iceberg" principle —allowing depth to exist just beneath the surface —is one I think will serve this manuscript beautifully.

A final note on the ending: it felt a bit rushed, especially after the careful buildup throughout the novel. I'd encourage you to take your time with those last few chapters —let the tension unfurl naturally. You've constructed a rich emotional and erotic terrain; allow that climax (pun very much intended) to unfold with the same attention and care you've given earlier moments. Think in terms of sensual pacing: rising tension, deferral, and release. That's where your writing truly shines, and readers will want to linger in that space with you.

You're very close. With some structural tightening and a deeper trust in your poetic instincts, this novel can really come into its full, powerful form.

Warmly,
Caitlin Annette Johnson
Editor