

READER REPORT

Author	XXXXXXXXXX
Title	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
Genre	YA Sci-Fi / Speculative Fiction
Initial Review	<p>Hi XXXX,</p> <p>Thank you for sharing your opening pagers with me. There's a lot of rich backstory here and many lovely setting descriptions.</p> <p>I think you have several opportunities to show what day-to-day life is like for Sasha, more about the world she lives in, and the people around her.</p> <p>Below are some of my suggestions to go with the comments included in your report. Goal and motivations are clear, and you have a rich MC that's worth reading about!</p> <p>As always, any comments or questions are welcome!</p> <p>~Kim V.</p>
Format	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Your length for chapters is good, and your spacing works.• Here are some format guidelines for submissions:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Double-spaced○ Times New Roman○ 12-point font○ 1-inch margins○ Left alignment, not justified○ First line indented for each new paragraph○ Include Last Name, Title, and Page Number in all caps in upper-right hand header (ex. XXXXXXXXXXXXX)○ Here's an article on how to format your manuscript for submission



- I've reformatted for critique purposes.

Opening Line

“Your puppet’s ready.”

- This line creates intrigue, but it was hard to gauge its significance for Hector Lynch from the beginning.
- Your second line for Chapter 1, on the other hand (“It’s my first day of adulthood. And my last day on Earth.”) really stands out as an attention grabber. It sums up the significance of this day, and why, for Sasha, it won’t be like any other.
- As you’ll see below, I think starting at Chapter 1 could be a stronger hook for your manuscript.

Plot / Structure

- You have an interesting prologue here with the dialogue between Hector Lynch and President Abbot. From page 1, you’re revealing the danger Sasha is in, and giving a behind-the-scenes view of who Hector is (with a hint at his motive).
- While this prologue was intriguing and showed a hint of how Lynch feels (along with his interest in robots), I’m not sure it’s the best scene to open the story with. It’s written in close third person, which jars with Sasha’s 1st person narrative in Chapter 1, and it gives away a major plot twist (that Lynch isn’t on Sasha’s side after all).
- Sasha’s perspective in Chapter 1 reads well. We get to focus on learning who she is, a little about the world around her, and the people in it.
- I think the most interesting part about this section was Sasha’s thoughts about her sister, and wondering whether Joanna was alive or dead. The flashback/dream on this created intrigue.
- I think the biggest note I have for your opening pages is to Show, not Tell. We don’t want to hear about how Greta hates Sasha, we want to see it. We don’t want Sasha to tell us how in love she is with Jack, we want to see how her heart races whenever she’s around him.
- You’ve setup some dynamic scenes for Sasha that we only hear about and never get to actually “see”. This is essential if you want to immerse your reader in the story and keep them turning pages.
- For each scene, you want to setup a goal for Sasha—a purpose for the scene being there—and a complication to her achieving that goal. This should always tie into Sasha’s overall goal: Going to Mars to find her sister. If she’s getting ready to go to Mars, what is she doing to prepare for the trip? Is she simply going for a walk when she nearly runs into Jack? Or is she going to buy something for the trip? Interspersed with some of the beautiful scene description and interiority you already have, this will make your scenes that much more dynamic.
- [Here’s a vid on writing more “dramatically”.](#)

Characterization

- **Hector Lynch:** *Head of Security at Australian Space Agency, nervous, compliant, loves robots*
 - It’s interesting that you chose to open the book from the antagonist’s perspective. This gave quite a bit about his agenda away and sort of removes tension from the narrative.
 - As mentioned above, I would move, or even delete, this scene to create a stronger reveal when he betrays Sasha.
 - I don’t believe his physical characteristics are addressed.
- **Joseph Abbot:** *Second President of Australia, Hector’s boss*
 - We didn’t get to see Abbot much, but his physical characteristics are described in a very blunt manner.
 - As I’ve mentioned in my comments, try to incorporate some of these details more organically, as you do later in the narrative.
- **Dr. Seth Black:** *Mars Chief, Hector’s superior*
 - We don’t get much interaction with Seth, but we’re made aware that Hector doesn’t like him because he’s always on Hector’s back about work.
 - This is another personality/relationship dynamic that can be shown instead of told about.
- **Sasha:** *MC, a troubled 18-year-old with her heart set on going to Mars*
 - For obvious reasons, Sasha is the most developed of all the characters introduced. It’s clear how she feels about her brother, her grandma, her missing sister. It’s also clear what she wants and why.
 - I like the way you paint her as an unreliable narrator with the imaginary dog. It drives suspense. Is Joanna alive, or is it all in Sasha’s imagination?



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We see a visual of her from Hector’s perspective, but I’m wondering if there are a few more subtle ways to describe her looks from her own perspective. ○ You have some great moments of interiority here. We just need to see Sasha interacting with a few more people to get an idea of her personality and mannerisms. ○ Right now, she comes across as a little on the harsh side with Freddie. I’d be careful with this. It’s fine for her to be morally gray (if that’s your goal), but you don’t want your reader to hate her. ● Freddie: <i>Sasha’s little brother, the baby, the “cause” of their mother’s death</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Based on Sasha’s reflection, Freddie comes across as innocent, but whiny. I actually found myself feeling sorry for him, based on Sasha’s harshness toward him.
Dialogue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The dialogue in the prologue was interesting but could have much more impact if used to give some natural-sounding exposition. ● Having the president and Hector or Hector and Dr. Seth Black discuss why they’re going after this family, as Hector describes what he sees in the photo, could make for a more dynamic scene. ● Sasha, on the other hand, doesn’t have much dialogue in Chapter 1. And when she speaks with Freddie, we don’t get much explanation on her responses. Why does she say he’s being “ridiculous?” ● The dialogue between Sasha and Joanna is intriguing, however. It definitely has me wondering if this truly happened and whether Sasha can be trusted as a narrator or not.
Pacing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Due to the high level of reflection, the pacing was a little on the slow side in the opening pages. ● As mentioned above, I suggest breaking up the reflection with interaction and dialogue to help things appear to move more quickly.
Voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sasha has a strong voice that’s relatable and easy to follow. ● Her voice will be even more captivating when we see her interacting with the people she loves (and hates) in her life.
Tone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The overall tone was reflective in both the prologue and opening chapter. Though the prologue had a bit more dialogue, we got more emotion out of the first chapter. ● Hector came across as surprisingly more nervous than expected. If you want him to come across as more threatening, I would remove this perspective as well as Sasha’s suspicion of him. We want it to be more of a surprise that he betrays her later. ● Sasha appears to have a very strong mix of emotions throughout the narrative. I was surprised by the level of anger she expressed toward Freddie, despite being concerned for his welfare. I would try to make this more consistent throughout the chapter.
Craft	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We surprisingly don’t see much of the world building in these opening pages. Based on your synopsis and query, I expected more setup there. Not that we want to overdo it in the opening pages, but working to incorporate some of those elements early on will make the narrative that much more engaging. ● You have a unique style of writing. A lot of short sentences that can add a rich dynamic to your narrative. Make sure you add some varied sentence structure when you can to avoid repetition. ● You use some really beautiful descriptions in Chapter 1. Interspersed with a bit more action and dialogue, your manuscript will really shine.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● An interesting cliffhanger that encourages readers to keep turning pages!



Conclusion

Final Thoughts

Strong Points:

- Strong backstory
- Unique characters
- Beautiful setting description

Next Steps:

- Consider removing the prologue and opening with Sasha's perspective to avoid giving the Lynch twist away
- Show interactions between Sasha and others, rather than summarizing them
- Make Sasha a little "nicer" toward Freddie
- Make Sasha's tone consistent
- Add a little world building, as you have in your query and synopsis

You've got an interesting story here, that just needs a little revision to really make it sing. Picture your story visually, like a movie, and you'll have readers turning pages to the very end.

I hope this was helpful. If you have any questions or concerns, as always, I'm available.

Best of luck on your publishing journey!

~Kim V.

