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When Time Falls Still

Full Editorial Assessment by Lizette

I know it sounds cliché, but I was so sad to finish this book.

I grew so attached to Charlotte and Justice, feeling their emotions, their fears and hopes, experiencing all of their good and bad moments through both of their points of view. I felt such joy for Charlotte nailing her York interview and getting the job, while also feeling sorrow for Justice as he considered the likelihood of her leaving him. I felt so delighted for Justice when he reached his epiphany about his constant search for a family, while feeling proud of Charlotte when she overcame her anxieties about starting a family. And whenever I find myself yelling at characters, it's a good sign. I wanted to scream at Justice for the way he rejected Charlotte's advances, but also wanted to yell at her for thinking he was actually rejecting her outright (actually, there were many times where I'd yell "Charlotte! Girl, come on!" at my screen). I even felt Chaucer's exasperation when Max couldn't feed him spaghetti at the dinner table! It's hard to finish a book that makes you *feel*, which is what *When Time Falls Still* totally achieves.

So most of this assessment will echo the points I made in my sample assessment. Surprisingly, I don't have much more to add, so I'll reiterate some of my earlier points, keeping the whole story in mind.

STRUCTURAL ASSESSMENT

Your pacing is excellent! I previously mentioned how easy it was to get to know the characters internally while the more external plots slowly develop on the backburner, such as the attacks on women happening on campus, as well as Charlotte's career aspirations and Justice's relationship with Tiffani.

The McMorris subplot unfolds superbly, with just enough hints given along the way to make its outcome plausible without being overly predictable. All the right seeds are planted along the way, including the empty duplex next to Charlotte's. Looking back, McMorris was always the first on the scene following an attack or he was the one calling it in, and once he starts making creepy comments later on, the reader isn't sure if he's just an insensitive tool or an actual threat. The only thing I'm not sure about is the moment he recounts to Charlotte after he's kidnapped her, about her once giving him the brush-off. I can't recall whether the reader actually sees that incident. It seems an important thing to add, but doing so without calling too much attention to McMorris' creepiness may be tricky. I'm really interested in your thoughts on that.

There are a few other seeds that may need planting, and because you've done remarkable work with it in other areas, I don't think you'll have any trouble figuring out how or where to insert them. One example is when Charlotte tells Justice about her infertility. He remarks that he's seen her take pills in the morning, and she tells him they were for hormone therapy, and not birth control pills. Does the reader actually ever see Charlotte take the pills, or see Justice's observation of her taking them?

Finally, the admin assistant Natasha is only mentioned for the first time when Charlotte asks her to make flight arrangements. Later, when she tells Justice that Charlotte's already en route to Toronto for her interview, he's already familiar with her, but this was the first time the reader was meeting her. She's a very minor character, but you've done a fabulous job of fleshing out the minor university characters—Nielson, Elizabeth, Madeiline, Parvat, etc. My suggestion would be to maybe include Natasha in one of Charlotte's scenes prior to all that. Perhaps you can even kill two birds with one stone by having this be the moment where Charlotte unwittingly gives McMorris the cold shoulder.

Finally, regarding my note from the sample assessment about Justice's POV not going as deeply as Charlotte's, you actually do improve upon it as the book progresses. There are only a few other moments where I wanted you to dig even further into Justice's head and heart, though overall I honestly can't say I got to know him less than I did Charlotte. You did such a tremendous job throughout the story of showing the reader who these characters are and making us care deeply for them. Simply outstanding writing throughout, with such a satisfying, well-earned ending. You should be proud!!

STYLE & MECHANICS

Now for the boring, nitpicky stuff. As mentioned before, lots of the dialogue needed attribution, not only for clarity, but also to lend some stylistic variety. If you have an aversion to using "said," that's fine, but take a look at some of the changes I made to see whether they actually disrupt your story's flow or not.

When possible, do a search for the words "scrubbed" and "quirked." Truth be told, I think scrub is an excellent, underused verb (ie "He scrubbed Chaucer's ears"—that's *exactly* what one does to a dog's ears, but I've never ever thought of it that way). So while I find that word's use brilliant in most cases, it did appear quite a bit, even beyond Chaucer's ears. 😊