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EDITORIAL REVIEW SUMMARY

Manuscript: The Wild Heir
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Manuscript Summary

The Wild Heir follows Faela, a self-taught builder from the crumbling village of Brindle, who sets out alone down a forbidden forest path to find help for her people and instead stumbles into royal intrigue. Taken in by the royal family of Wester, she learns that her mother Elen was Shivon, a refugee from the Echelon empire across the sea, which makes Faela the granddaughter of Echelon's ruling queen and a valuable piece in Queen Mereth's plans. She loses her companion Toadcat, then her mother, who is executed at Mereth's order in front of the court. Mereth takes her toward Echelon, but an Echelon invasion fleet strikes the northern port first. Faela is reunited with Nolan, now a conscripted Echelon soldier, and the manuscript ends with Faela, Mereth and Nolan prisoners aboard an Echelon ship, Faela resolved to hold onto her own will.

Suggested Back Cover Copy

Faela has spent her whole life building things that last: wagons, bridges, a village slowly falling apart around her. When no one else will save Brindle, she sets out alone down a path every elder has warned her never to take.

What she finds on the other side is a forest full of secrets, a creature out of forgotten stories, and a boy drawn to the sea that took his father. What finds her is a royal family with plans for a girl from nowhere.

Because Faela is not only a builder's daughter. Her mother carried a secret across the sea, and a queen who rules through fear knows exactly what it is worth.

A kingdom means to use her. Faela means to be the one who builds.

Editorial Overview

This is an ambitious fantasy built around a well-planted central mystery, Faela's hidden Echelon bloodline, which opens up in Chapters 15 through 17 and returns in Chapter 31. The strongest material is specific and earned: Faela's habit of teaching through objects rather than words, the river stone she gives Bertha, the seed shell she keeps at the very end, do more character work than pages of description could, and they are worth protecting as you revise.

The most important findings are story facts that disagree with each other, and they come before anything mechanical. The most serious is in Chapter 30, which is written against a different family history: Tomas becomes Elen's son and Elen becomes Shane's daughter, where Chapters 15 to 17 make her his sister and Tomas her husband. Sylas's age is contradictory: Chapter 9 describes him as perhaps in his early teens, Chapter 11 has him say he began guarding the queen at 16, and he is called a boy in Chapter 24, the chapter where he is in a sexual scene with Faela. Lyra says in Chapter 11 that her father died last winter, but the king is alive in Chapter 15 and Chapter 30 and the book never explains why his children believed otherwise. Chapter 16 calls Shane and Shivon the last of House Chairon, while Chapter 23 and Chapter 31 give Faela a living grandmother who rules Echelon. And the time of day in Chapter 28 moves between night and late afternoon without a marker. Each has its own CONTINUITY comment.

Your brief names two concerns. Unclear speakers: 3 comments flag lines where a reader cannot tell who is talking. Given your note that this is a recurring habit, treat them as examples and check every scene with three or more people against it, because this review cannot be assumed to have caught every instance. Passive language at the action level: 1 comment flags it, which means this pass did not find it widespread, but the concern deserves a targeted read of the action scenes before submission.

The remaining comments are mechanical: 52 of 75 in all, covering tense slips mid-paragraph, quotation marks that open and never close, dialogue lines that begin lowercase, and a stray en dash standing in for the manuscript's em dash in about ten spots. Two small ones (tense in Chapter 2, further versus farther) are judgment calls rather than errors and are marked that way.

On structure, the draft ends mid-journey with the war just beginning, so there is no resolution to weigh; please confirm this is meant as book one of a series. The Prologue's queen, fleeing princess and Sir Efron and Sir Spears do not return, which is worth either connecting or marking as a deliberate hook. The pace at the start of Chapter 4 cools: it opens with a long stretch of Nolan's backstory right after the sharpest cliffhanger so far.

Order of work: the continuity contradictions first, since they change what a reader believes; the speaker-clarity read second; the mechanical fixes last, since they are quick.

Developmental Assessment

Where to start

Resolve the five continuity contradictions first, starting with the family history in Chapter 30 because it changes who the central characters are to each other, then Sylas's age because of the sexual scene. Next read every multi-person scene for speaker clarity, then the action scenes for passive construction, then the mechanical fixes. Decide the Prologue threads and the series question last. This is a targeted assessment, not a full developmental edit.

Continuity

Five contradictions were verified against the text, and the first is the most serious. (1) Chapter 30 is written against a different family history: Chapters 15 to 17 make Shane and Shivon (Elen) brother and sister and Tomas her husband and Faela's father, but in Chapter 30 Tomas is Elen's son, Shane refers to her as his daughter, her letter is dated by Tomas's tenth birthday, and her mother is dead although Maribel is alive in Chapters 21, 23 and 31. Chapter 21 also calls Alaric Elen's cousin. The author must settle one family history and rewrite whichever scenes disagree. (2) Sylas's age conflicts with itself: Chapter 9 says perhaps in his early teens, Chapter 11 has him turn 16 before taking up his post, Chapter 24 calls him a boy and puts him in a sexual scene; fix a current age, make it clearly adult, and align the early description. (3) The children say their father died of a fever last winter (Chapter 11), yet King Alaric is alive in Chapters 15 and 30; if the children were deceived on purpose, the page must show it and Faela must notice. (4) Shane and Shivon are called the last of House Chairon in Chapter 16, while Queen Maribel, a living Chairon and Faela's grandmother, rules Echelon (Chapters 23 and 31). (5) The time of day in Chapter 28 shifts between night and late afternoon without a marker. Each has a CONTINUITY comment at the later passage.

Character and agency

Faela moves from observer to actor over the book: she fights off her attackers with her own blade in Chapter 19, bargains to speak for herself in Chapter 23, and uses Sylas's attention as a deliberate tactic in Chapter 24. She is also acted on heavily: she is traded, imprisoned, and then captured. The ending gives her resolve rather than a decision, so the agency the book builds toward has not yet been spent on the page.

Relationships

The Faela and Sylas thread carries the most risk: it moves from warmth (Chapters 9 to 11) to a scene where she seduces him for leverage (Chapter 24), after he has killed Toadcat and carried out her mother's execution on the queen's order. Whether the book intends this as calculation, complicity or something he will answer for is not signaled. Nolan's thread is cleaner: lost at the docks and reported alive in Chapter 22, found as a conscripted Echelon soldier in Chapter 29, imprisoned alongside Faela in Chapter 31. Tala's arc turns from betrayer to schemer with Sylas in Chapter 28.

Pacing and structure

The opening of Chapter 4 cools after the sharpest hook so far because it spends a long stretch on

Nolan's backstory. The two flashback chapters (16 and 17) arrive back to back at the midpoint. Chapter 16 dramatizes Shane and Shivon's arrival and the ambush; Chapter 17 then tells Alaric's rise largely in summary, so two consecutive flashbacks interrupt forward momentum just as the present-day stakes peak. The Prologue's queen, princess and the two knights never return.

Resolution and series setup

The draft ends mid-journey, with Faela, Mereth and Nolan aboard an Echelon ship. Open threads include the iron gate, the lights in the sky, the veiled woman's warning, the Prologue's queen and princess, and the fate of Brindle. Confirm this is book one of a series; if it is, the ending and the back cover should signal that.

Genre and positioning

Epic fantasy with a coming-of-age protagonist and royal intrigue. The content advisories (the Chapter 19 and Chapter 24 passages) are rated above the publisher's Flame 3 limit and should be settled with the publisher before submission.

Back cover copy check

The earlier copy stated that Faela is the last blood of a vanished empire, which the text contradicts (her grandmother rules Echelon and her uncle is alive), and it gave away the invasion and her capture. The revised copy keeps the set-up and the stakes and drops both.

Positioning

Genre: YA/crossover epic fantasy with political intrigue and a slow-burn romance subplot

Audience: Readers of YA fantasy who enjoy court intrigue and morally complicated royals (in the vein of Red Queen or Six of Crows), skewing toward the older end of YA given the violence and romantic content in the back third; not a fit for a younger middle-grade audience despite the fairy-tale opening.

Themes: Hidden royal heritage · Found family vs. blood family · Power and complicity · What you owe the people who raised you · Building something that lasts

Chapter Guide

- **Prologue** An unnamed queen orders her harbor sealed to stop a princess from escaping by sea. When veteran guard Sir Efron refuses to turn on his own men, the queen replaces him with the loyalist Sir Spears, who puts down Efron's soldiers on the spot. Efron escapes through a window rather than strike the queen, and Spears locks down the harbor to hunt the fleeing princess.
- **Chapter 1** Faela, a self-taught builder from the small village of Brindle, leaves home at night to find help for her crumbling village, carrying mementos of her and her brother Orin's unfinished building plans. She finds a hidden path that leads to a massive, ancient iron gate no one in her world should be able to build, and is adopted along the way by a strange creature called a Toadcat.
- **Chapter 2** Back in Brindle, Orin and Tala cover for Faela's disappearance when their parents, Tomas and Elen, come home. Pressed, Elen reveals she always expected Faela to leave, and that the family has spent years deliberately hiding Faela to keep her from being seen, refusing to let Tomas go after her.
- **Chapter 3** Faela eats poisonous berries and falls deathly ill; Toadcat nurses her through the fever, during which she has a hallucinatory vision of a veiled woman who warns her that someone is watching for her and tells her not to be seen. Recovered, Faela and Toadcat climb into the hills and witness shooting stars that bend into unnatural, deliberate shapes before the chapter ends on an unknown voice ordering her not to move.
- **Chapter 4** The chapter shifts to Nolan, a young mapmaker and builder whose father drowned at sea when Nolan was fourteen, now traveling toward the fork in the road to find work at a coastal encampment. He is the voice that confronted Faela and Toadcat at the end of Chapter Three; the two size each other up warily, introduce themselves, and agree to travel together. They find a strange, fire-scarred tree with a deliberately carved opening and a patch of ash where there should be none, and Faela secretly pockets a fragment of wood from it.
- **Chapter 5** Faela and Nolan grow closer on the road to the fork, sharing family history and Faela's blueprints for her village. That night they watch lights in the sky that Nolan says are not stars, something his aunt called watchers, and the lights pull into a deliberate grid formation before vanishing. The next day they reach the fork in the road together, and as dusk falls, two figures appear out of the fog ahead of them.
- **Chapter 6** Faela and Nolan meet an old traveling couple fleeing the coast, who describe the sea and sky behaving wrongly and warn that something unseen is now watching back. The couple mistakes them for a pair, which the two awkwardly deny while clearly growing closer. They reach the encampment at the fork at dusk, and Faela meets three siblings, Bertha, Eura, and Teigan, whose father has been missing at sea for months.
- **Chapter 7** At the encampment's night of music and drinking, Faela gives Bertha the smooth river stone she has carried since childhood, telling her it was waiting for someone like her. An old storyteller named Crispo spins a chilling tale of a sailor who survived a wreck only to be stalked and broken by unseen watching creatures. Alone that night, Faela relives the night she left home, including her siblings' fear and her own promise to come back.

- **Chapter 8** The next morning, raiders ransack the encampment's tents. Nolan draws the guards off and tells Faela to run and hide. Fleeing, she collides with a girl who turns out to be Princess Lyra, who pulls her to safety and, charmed by her, insists on bringing her to meet the queen.
- **Chapter 9** Lyra brings Faela before the royal procession and Queen Mereth, a severe, magnetic ruler of Wester. The queen's reaction to Faela is probing rather than welcoming, and Faela is placed under her protection. Lyra then introduces Faela to her brothers: the dutiful, striking Prince Eryon, and the playful youngest, Prince Sylas, who draws Faela out with easy charm.
- **Chapter 10** Left to wander, Faela finds a royal library and loses herself in it until Sylas finds her and they're summoned to the evening feast. At dinner, Queen Mereth interrogates Faela pointedly about Easter's lack of a crown, testing her in front of the court and raising the legend of the vanished Echelon Empire and its lost queen. Lyra deflects some of the pressure, and the queen announces that Faela will travel with the royal family.
- **Chapter 11** Lyra leads Faela, Eryon, and Sylas to a waterfall the family visited as children, where they open up about their late father (dead of a fever the previous winter) and their different roles: Eryon dutiful and resigned to guarding Lyra's claim, Sylas lighthearted and assigned to guard the queen, Lyra set to inherit a throne she says she doesn't want for its own sake. Alone with Sylas afterward, Faela feels a spark of attraction, and learns Lyra is excluded from the council strictly because she is a woman.
- **Chapter 12** Alone in her luxurious royal tent, Faela aches over being separated from Nolan. She discovers someone has secretly added a harbor and sea to her and Orin's old blueprint scroll, signed with an unfamiliar sigil, and realizes Nolan must have found and altered it. The next morning, as the royal procession sets out, an ambush kills Toadcat with a stake and a rolled boulder; Sylas appears holding a bow, his expression cold.
- **Chapter 13** The procession arrives at Wester's palace, and Faela is overwhelmed by its beauty in contrast to Easter's hardship, even as she grieves Toadcat. She meets palace staff Mara, Lin, and Renna, and is introduced to Stellan (the queen's advisor) and Prescott (a young steward), settling uneasily into palace life over the following days.
- **Chapter 14** Over several days, Faela gets a few hours alone in Wester's market town and sketches what she sees. On the eve of a royal ball, Lyra dresses her and their closeness tips into a romantic gesture that Sylas interrupts, confirming he killed Toadcat and showing no remorse. Eryon quietly digs Toadcat's grave and speaks with Faela about permanence and architecture before the ball begins.
- **Chapter 15** Faela is summoned to the reclusive King's hidden tower workshop. He reveals that he lost his sister Shivon during their escape from the fallen Echelon Empire decades ago, that Shivon is Faela's mother Elen, and that he is therefore Faela's uncle. He warns her she is in danger and must leave Wester, and that only Lyra among his children seems to suspect the truth. Returning to the ball shaken, Faela is pulled aside again, this time on the queen's order, and moved to a new, cell-like room.

- **Chapter 16** A flashback: young Shane and his sister Shivon, the last of Echelon's House Chairon, flee to Wester's shore as refugees and are caught in an ambush between Wester and Eastern-rebel forces; Shivon is dragged away and Shane believes he has lost her. Shivon, unknown to Shane, is taken in and healed by Tomas in Easter, and the two fall in love, marry, and raise Faela, Orin, and Tala, with Shivon never telling them the full truth of where she came from.
- **Chapter 17** A second flashback fills in Shane's side: taken in by a farmer named Carlos, he hides his Echelon origins, is noticed by King Haran, and rises from stable hand to trusted advisor, eventually inheriting the throne as King Alaric after Haran's death. His marriage to Mereth follows the suspicious deaths of the rest of the royal line at their wedding reception, after which Mereth consolidates power around herself. Alaric learns of Faela's existence only after Mereth, suspicious of him, intercepts a letter revealing that Elen (Shivon) is alive.
- **Chapter 18** A memory of home interleaves with Faela's new reality: she is now a prisoner in the palace dungeon. Eryon secretly visits her cell and the two share a near-kiss, interrupted by Sylas, who reveals that Lyra orchestrated the ambush at the encampment fork that delivered Faela to the royal family in the first place, and that Eryon knew.
- **Chapter 19** Faela spirals in isolation in her cell, replaying memories of Lyra's apparent friendship, Nolan, and the choices that brought her here, and loses hope of escape. Days later, guards bring her a dress to prepare her to see the queen; she finds her own blade planted on the cell floor. When two guards return and begin assaulting her, she fights them off with the blade and flees into the palace's lower corridors.
- **Chapter 20** Faela bursts into Lyra's chambers and confronts her. Lyra admits she orchestrated Faela's capture and defends it as a queen's necessary choice, revealing she wants to rule the whole island and save villages like Brindle on her own terms. Sylas arrives, subdues Faela, and escorts her and Lyra toward the throne room for the queen.
- **Chapter 21** Faela is marched before the court with her family, where Queen Mereth reveals Tala helped her orchestrate everything and publicly condemns King Alaric's hidden Echelon blood as treachery. Rather than punish Alaric, Mereth has Sylas execute Elen in front of the entire court as 'his punishment,' then has Faela dragged away to a new, finer chamber.
- **Chapter 22** In her new gilded suite, Faela is visited by Eura, now a palace servant, who reveals Nolan survived and searched for her before being taken to the docks. Eura urges Faela to manipulate Sylas's interest in her to survive, which Faela refuses, though grief hardens into a resolve to survive and eventually fight back. Sylas visits twice, needling and threatening her before escorting her to dinner.
- **Chapter 23** At a tense formal dinner, Queen Mereth frames Elen's execution as a necessary tragedy and declares a 'fresh start' for the family. Over dessert, she announces she will take Faela to Echelon to present her to her grandmother, Queen Maribel, as a bridge to peace; Faela agrees but negotiates to speak for herself. Mereth then names Lyra her heir, announces Lyra will marry Orin, and declares Faela will take a Westerian husband once she rules Echelon, leaving Tala with no role at all.
- **Chapter 24** Sylas visits Faela's chamber at night and, in a rare unguarded moment, admits real feelings for her. Faela uses the opening to seduce him as a calculated play for leverage, and the two begin to have sex before Sir Stellan interrupts, summoning Sylas to the war room. Sylas later sends guards bringing Tomas to see her, confirming her tactic worked enough to earn her father a visit.

- **Chapter 25** At dawn, Faela says goodbye to her family at the palace gates before departing with Queen Mereth for Echelon. Sir Stellan menaces her alone on the road until Eryon intercepts, sends him off, and extracts a promise from her that he'll protect her family. Three days into the journey, Faela realizes the strange lights in the sky are something Mereth and Stellan already know about and aren't telling her.
- **Chapter 26** Back at the palace, Lyra and Orin's wedding doubles as Lyra's coronation as Regent Queen; she has no intention of giving Orin real power. Sylas and Orin clash over border policy, and Eryon pulls Orin aside afterward to offer a quiet, conditional alliance for Faela's sake. Later, Eryon confronts Tala in the courtyard over her role in Faela's betrayal, and though he holds her accountable, leaves her with a path to redemption if she's willing to fight for it.
- **Chapter 27** On the road to the coast, Mereth tries to shape Faela into accepting the throne of Echelon as destiny. They pass through the fork encampment, now emptied by Mereth's order, and Faela confronts her about it. That night, Mereth admits she too carries ghosts, and the two reach an uneasy, almost human understanding before the carriage reaches the northern port.
- **Chapter 28** Back at the palace, Lyra is formally proclaimed Regent with Orin as a powerless King Consort, and Eryon privately tells Tala she caused Faela's ruin. Unseen, Lyra realizes she can use that guilt. Sylas then approaches Tala directly, and the two form a secret alliance to eventually seize power from Lyra, agreeing to play repentant and loyal in public while building support behind the scenes.
- **Chapter 29** At the docks, Faela frees a seedling from its shell and reflects on outgrowing the things that once protected her. An Echelon invasion fleet suddenly attacks the port; in the chaos she's separated from Mereth and reunited with Nolan, now a conscripted Echelon soldier who reveals Teigan is dead. Echelon soldiers capture Mereth in chains, and Faela realizes she herself is the real target of the invasion.
- **Chapter 30** King Shane/Alaric summons Tomas to ask about Elen's life and why she never came back. The scene gives Tomas as Elen's son, which contradicts the family history in Chapters 15 to 17 (flagged in the margin comments). Tomas says only that leaving was necessary and that she stayed away to protect Shane too. Afterward, Tomas asks Eryon to deliver a pouch of Faela's childhood keepsakes to her, which Eryon promises to do himself.
- **Chapter 31** Faela, Mereth, and Nolan are marched aboard an Echelon prison ship bound across the sea. Sir Stellan, revealed to have been helped to safety years ago by Echelon's own rebel prince and princess (Shane and Shivon), explains Olliday's hidden history as an Echelon refugee colony and warns that killing the Echelon heir has provoked open war. The manuscript ends with the ship preparing to depart and Faela resolving to hold onto her own will.

Review at a Glance

75 margin comments were placed in the manuscript: 51 identify issues to correct, and 20 offer considerations left to the author's judgment.

Area	Comments
MECHANICS	52
CONTINUITY	7
FLOW	4
PACING	3
CLARITY	3
PRAISE	2
OVERVIEW	2
PASSIVE VOICE	1
STRUCTURE	1

Margin Comments

Every comment placed in the manuscript, grouped by chapter. FIX marks something that needs to change; CONSIDER leaves the call to the author; PRAISE calls out something working well.

Prologue

FIX

> *the need to supply more men to the queen's ambitions has increased since the recent defections across their allied nations.*

MECHANICS: The verb tense slips here. Everything around this sentence is past tense (pulled, volunteered, knew), but "has increased" jumps to present perfect. Make it "had increased" to match the rest of the paragraph. Catch this one before it goes further.

FIX

> *the greatest army the world has seen.*

MECHANICS: Same tense slip as a few lines up. The scene is past tense, so "has seen" needs to be "had ever seen." Worth fixing before you send this anywhere.

FIX

> *What he got neither.*

MECHANICS: This sentence doesn't parse. I think the idea is that he got none of what he was hoping for, recognition, explanation, anything, but "What he got neither" isn't a complete thought as written. This one needs a fix, not just a look.

CONSIDER

“My queen.” Spears' melodic cadence stiffened the surrounding men.

FLOW: “Melodic” and “stiffened” are pulling in opposite directions here, a pleasant-sounding voice isn't usually what makes a room go rigid with fear. Something more clipped or measured would land the tension better. Your call, just flagging it.

PROLOGUE

OVERVIEW: This manuscript's strongest moments are its quietest ones. The objects Faela chooses to give away or keep say more about her than any description could, and that instinct is worth protecting through revision. The first things to settle are story facts that currently disagree with each other: Sylas's unclear age, the king who is dead in Chapter 11 and alive in Chapter 15, the claim in Chapter 16 that Shane and Shivon are the last of House Chairon, and the time of day in Chapter 28. After that come speaker clarity in crowded scenes, and the many small mechanical fixes, each flagged at its exact spot. The companion reference document has the fuller picture: a summary, suggested back cover copy, the complete cast and glossary, and a developmental assessment.

CONSIDER

She will not make it

STRUCTURE: The Prologue sets up an unnamed queen, a fleeing princess, and Sir Efron and Sir Spears, and none of them appears again after the Prologue. If the queen and princess are meant to connect to Mereth, Maribel or Echelon, the book never says how, so a reader will carry the question for thirty chapters. If this is a deliberate series hook, a light touch of recognition later would show it was planned. Your call.

Chapter 1

CONSIDER

The architecture is so sharp. Too deliberate.

MECHANICS: This line reads as Faela's present-tense thought inside a scene that is otherwise past tense. If it is meant as interior thought, the present tense can stay, ideally set off in italics so the reader reads it as a thought. If not, “was” would match the paragraphs around it. Your call.

CONSIDER

It was not closer, and it was not further.

MECHANICS: “Farther” is the traditional choice for physical distance and “further” for degree, but plenty of editors no longer enforce the split and either reads fine here. Only change it if your house style draws the line. Not insisting.

CONSIDER

There was a stone worn smooth by the river, its curved surface reminding her of the archways she hoped to build one day.

PACING: This catalog of treasures is a nice piece of characterization, but it runs long before the reader has any forward motion to hold onto, we're still in the village, nothing has happened yet. Trimming it to two or three standout items and letting the rest surface later through action would keep the opening moving. Worth a look, but the book works either way.

Chapter 2

CONSIDER

Elen stepped closer to the table. That was all it took for Tala to lose what little resolve she had. "She will be back," she said.

CLARITY: Both Elen and Tala get action beats in the sentence right before this line, so "she said" could belong to either one. Worth pinning down which of them actually says it, since the scene turns on who's holding steady and who's cracking. Not insisting on this, just noting it.

CONSIDER

"What does that even mean?" she said. "You are not making any sense."

CLARITY: The last named speaker before this line is Elen, but the confusion in these words doesn't read like something Elen would say about her own answer. If this is Tala, she needs a name or an action beat here so the reader isn't left guessing. Worth a look, but this is a style choice, not an error.

Chapter 3

CONSIDER

offering the toadcat a small smile. Toadcat darted ahead

MECHANICS: "Toadcat" is capitalized as a name in one place and "the toadcat" is lowercase as a species in the same sentence. Both can be right, but pick a single treatment and keep it consistent from here on. Your call on which.

Chapter 4

CONSIDER

The man who had shown him the rhythms of the tides and the beauty of the deep had been swallowed up by the same waters.

PASSIVE VOICE: Letting the water itself do the swallowing, instead of being swallowed by it, would hit harder here, especially since this whole passage is building the sea into something that takes things from him. Your call, just flagging it.

CONSIDER

It was as if the ocean spoke directly to him, and Nolan had always felt an unspoken bond with his father through that shared silence.

FLOW: “Unspoken” shows up twice in close range here, once for his connection to the sea and once for his bond with his father. Worth swapping one out so the echo doesn't dull either use. Not insisting on this, just noting it.

FIX

Normally, those west of the fork never ventured toward the east, there was no need.

MECHANICS: Comma splice, two complete sentences joined with just a comma. Split it into two. This one needs a fix, not just a look.

FIX

In her mind he was sure she did, but the threat echoed with cold steel.

MECHANICS: This sentence loses track of whose head we're in, it starts in her mind, then “he was sure,” then back to the threat she's imagining. Tightening it to just her side of it would clear this right up. Catch this one before it goes further.

CONSIDER

The sea was calling again. Nolan felt it like a drumbeat in his chest

PACING: Chapter Three ends on “Do. Not. Move.”, about as sharp a hook as this book throws, and this chapter opens with roughly ten paragraphs of Nolan's history before we get back to that moment. Moving some of this backstory later, once the reader has the payoff of what that voice actually was, would keep the hook from going cold. Worth a look, but this is a style choice, not an error.

Chapter 5

FIX

“I suppose this is a would be a good place to rest for the night.”

MECHANICS: “This is a would be” has an extra piece caught in it from an edit. This one needs fixing before it goes further.

CONSIDER

For the history of time, my people have gone off into the sea

CLARITY: “For the history of time” trips up the ear, it's not quite an idiom English actually uses. “For as long as anyone can remember” would say the same thing and read clean. Worth a look, but the book works either way.

Chapter 7

FIX

He remained silent - his face shadowed in a way she could not read.

MECHANICS: This dash is a shorter en dash, not the em dash used everywhere else in the manuscript. Small thing, but worth making consistent. Catch this one before it goes further.

FIX

“If we even a quarter of the right tools, half the men called for…” he muttered

MECHANICS: There's a verb missing here, “if we even a quarter of the right tools” needs a “had” in it to actually be a sentence. This will need fixing before it goes further.

PRAISE

"It was not always like this," Faela continued. "Once it had sharp edges. The river carried it over and over, through storms and floods, against larger stones. It was struck thousands of times."

PRAISE: Giving Bertha the river stone instead of saying something comforting is the best kind of character writing, it trusts the object to do the emotional work instead of spelling it out. And it pays off everything we already know about Faela from the opening chapters, that she collects things that taught her something and passes them on once she understands the lesson. This is the manuscript at its best.

Chapter 8

FIX

Remind me what exactly a Princess does.

MECHANICS: “Princess” gets capitalized here as a plain common noun, not a title attached to a name. Elsewhere in the manuscript it stays lowercase this way. Worth fixing before you submit anywhere.

CONSIDER

It was only much later that she realized what she had felt that night, beside the fire, was not just relief. It was something deeper. But by then, it was already too late.

PACING: Right in the middle of Nolan shoving her toward safety and the guards closing in, this sentence steps outside the scene to tell us how she'll feel about it later. It's a good tease, but it costs the chase some of its urgency landing exactly here. Moving it to right after she's safe would let the danger breathe. Worth a look, but this is a style choice, not an error.

Chapter 9

CONSIDER

Each movement was deliberate, measured, a ripple through still water.

FLOW: Six paragraphs back, her steps were “measured, deliberate.” Here it's the same two words, just flipped. Worth picking a fresh image for one of them so the queen's introduction does not start repeating itself. Not insisting on this, just noting it.

FIX

The prince stood, arms crossed, with his gaze tilter opposite Faela's directions.

MECHANICS: "Tilter" is not a word, this needs to be "tilted." This one needs fixing before it goes further.

FIX

East enough to be considered Easter.

MECHANICS: This answers Sylas's question directly, so it reads as her spoken line, but it's missing the quotation marks every other line of dialogue on this page has. Catch this one before it goes further.

Chapter 10

FIX

just enough to feel the chill of its history leap of the page.

MECHANICS: Should be "leap off the page." Worth fixing before you send this anywhere.

Chapter 11

FIX

When Eryon turned 16, he began accompanying Sir Stellan on patrols. When I turned 16, Eryon said I was better suited to guard the queen.

MECHANICS: Ages get spelled out everywhere else in the manuscript (fourteen, for instance, back when we learn about Nolan's father), so the digits here stand out. Worth fixing before you submit anywhere.

Chapter 12

FIX

the softness beneath her unlike anything she would ever known.

MECHANICS: "Would ever known" needs to be "had ever known." This one needs a fix, not just a look.

Chapter 13

FIX

Faela had never seen anything come to life quite like the palace of Wester. So gentle. So powerful. Despite the start contrast to Brindle

MECHANICS: "Start contrast" should be "stark contrast." Catch this one before it goes further.

FIX

It was a place so carefully designed, so undeniably beautiful, and yet it was tied to nature in a way that Faela had never quite experienced. A slight breeze rustled the leaves

MECHANICS: This exact sentence already appeared word for word four paragraphs back, describing the same hallway. Looks like a leftover from drafting, worth cutting here so the description does not repeat itself. This one needs a fix, not just a look.

Chapter 14

FIX

“It is not retched, it is my home.”

MECHANICS: She is pushing back on Lyra calling her home “wretched,” so this should say “wretched” too, not “retched.” Worth fixing before you submit anywhere.

CONSIDER

I am just so interested by you.

MECHANICS: “Interested in you” is the more natural phrasing here. Small thing, your call.

FIX

She had risked everything she knew and left everyone she would ever known.

MECHANICS: Same slip as the one back in Chapter Twelve, “would ever known” should be “had ever known.” Worth a pass to check for this phrase anywhere else in the manuscript. This one needs fixing before it goes further.

FIX

He continued to stare out a high arched window at the palace’s inner terrace, where dozens of columns formed

MECHANICS: This sentence stops short, “where dozens of columns formed” and then nothing. Something got cut off here and needs finishing. Catch this one before it goes further.

Chapter 15

FIX

We all got lost. We all ran. But Shivon was taken.

MECHANICS: This quote opens but never closes, there's no closing quotation mark at the end of the king's line. Catch this one before it goes further.

FIX

“Yes, she was,” the king said matter-of-factly, “but I believe she goes by Elen now.

MECHANICS: Same thing here, the quote is missing its closing mark at the end. This will need fixing before it goes further.

FIX

“I thought she was dead. "I had no idea," the king said as he began to pace again, covering his face with his hands, "but she lived."

MECHANICS: This line switches from curly quotation marks to straight ones partway through, and Faela's opening quote never gets closed before the king's dialogue starts. Worth a careful pass to sort out whose line is whose here. This one needs a fix, not just a look.

FIX

Now he was asking for her.

CONTINUITY: In Chapter 11, Lyra tells Faela their father “died last winter. A fever.” Here the king is alive and asking for Faela, and nothing in the scene acknowledges the contradiction, even though Faela heard Lyra say it herself. Chapter 17 gives the king's history but never explains why his own children believe he is dead. If Mereth hid him, or the children were lied to, the page needs to say so and Faela needs to notice. This needs fixing before it goes further.

Chapter 16

FIX

The last of Echelon’s high-born line.

CONTINUITY: Here Shane and Shivon are “the last blood of House Chairon.” But Chapter 23 gives Faela a living grandmother, Queen Maribel, and in Chapter 31 Stellan confirms Maribel is a Chairon who rules Echelon. Both cannot hold unless “last” means something narrower, such as the last of the rebel branch. Say what it means here. This needs fixing before it goes further.

Chapter 17

FIX

Smoke filled the sky, curling down to choke the world from view. That was the last he saw her.

MECHANICS: This opening recaps the line from the end of Chapter Fifteen almost word for word, but drops the “of,” it should be “the last he saw of her.” Worth fixing before you submit anywhere.

CONSIDER

Even though she was the youngest of the princesses, she considered herself to be the most clever and more prized of her sisters.

MECHANICS: “The most clever and more prized” does not quite match, one side of that pair should probably be “most” too. Your call, just flagging it.

Chapter 18

FIX

Fast forward to a darkened cell as the flicker of torchlight danced over stone walls

FLOW: “Fast forward to” sounds like a screenplay direction, not close third person past tense, which is what the rest of this chapter is written in. It breaks the voice right where the scene is at its most tense. Catch this one before it goes to print.

Chapter 19

CONSIDER

“If I would have known. If I would have known what they were going to do.”

MECHANICS: “If I would have known” is the spoken, informal version of “if I had known.” Might be fine as a grief-stricken, unfiltered line, but it's close kin to the “would ever known” slip flagged earlier, worth a look across the manuscript for this pattern. Your call, just flagging it.

FIX

“you are to make yourself ready,” he added. “do not make us have to do it for you.”

MECHANICS: Both of this guard's lines start with a lowercase letter, “you” and “do.” Dialogue still needs a capital at the start of the sentence. Catch this one before it goes further.

Chapter 20

FIX

She collapsed - the blade snatched from her grip in a flash of motion so swift she barely registered it.

MECHANICS: This is an en dash again rather than the em dash used through the rest of the manuscript. Worth fixing before you submit anywhere.

FIX

She looked at Lyra - the girl she thought she trusted, the one who had led her here under false promises.

MECHANICS: Same en dash versus em dash slip as a few lines up. Catch this one before it goes further.

Chapter 21

FIX

Imagine learning he is not one of us - no, no. It was a bad enough, my father leaving everything to a commoner.

MECHANICS: “It was a bad enough” is missing something, probably just drop the “a”, “it was bad enough.” This one needs a fix, not just a look.

FIX

Would you trust your cousin with your kingdom?

CONTINUITY: Mereth calls someone Elen's “cousin” here, and the context reads as Alaric. In Chapters 15 and 17 he is her brother. If a different man is meant, say who. If it is Alaric, change the word. This needs fixing before it goes further.

Chapter 22

FIX

She did not respond. did not scream.

MECHANICS: The second sentence here starts lowercase, “did not scream” needs a capital D. Catch this one before it goes further.

Chapter 23

FIX

Shadows pooled at the feet of ancient tapestries - their painted monarchs watchful.

MECHANICS: Another en dash where the rest of the manuscript uses an em dash. Worth fixing before you submit anywhere.

Chapter 24

FIX

Only once she was sure, truly sure, that he was gone, did she let out the breath she had been holding?

MECHANICS: This is not actually a question, just an inverted sentence, so it should end in a period, not a question mark. Catch this one before it goes further.

FIX

Sylas knelt before her.

CONTINUITY: Sylas's age is given two ways that do not agree. Chapter 9 describes him as “perhaps in his early teens” with a boyish face, while in Chapter 11 he says he began guarding the queen when he turned 16, which makes him at least sixteen. A few paragraphs after this scene Faela still sees “the boy controlled by an evil queen.” Yet here he is in a sexual scene with her. With romantic and sexual content, his current age has to be settled on the page and read clearly as adult, and the early description in Chapter 9 should match it. This needs fixing before it goes further.

Chapter 25

CONSIDER

Faela, assured him, “You do not have to worry about me.

MECHANICS: That comma after “Faela” is not doing anything, “Faela assured him” reads cleaner without it. Small thing, your call.

FIX

“I am sorry,” not lifting her head. “I did not know. You have to believe me”

MECHANICS: This line is missing its dialogue tag, “not lifting her head” needs a “she said” in front of it to actually attach to Tala. The last line is also missing its closing period. This one needs a fix, not just a look.

FIX

Each night they camped at the base of hills - royal tents unfurled like silk creatures under the stars.

MECHANICS: En dash again where the manuscript's own convention is an em dash. Worth fixing before you submit anywhere.

Chapter 26

FIX

Orin turned to his queen - his voice low.

MECHANICS: En dash again where the manuscript's convention elsewhere is an em dash. Worth fixing before you submit anywhere.

FIX

They can distract. They can pacify. And they can be offered like coins to beggars, all while the palace hoards the real power, makes the real decisions.

MECHANICS: This quote never closes, there's no closing mark at the end of Eryon's line. Catch this one before it goes further.

Chapter 27

FIX

“On my orders,” she said quietly. “Because if one person reached you, convinced you not to go, then this would all have been for naught.

MECHANICS: This quote opens but never closes. Catch this one before it goes further.

FIX

Memory wove itself across the scene like cobweb silk - delicate, clinging, inescapable.

MECHANICS: Same en dash versus em dash slip. Catch this one before it goes further.

FIX

Queen Mereth stood beside her - expression unreadable beneath the hood of her travel cloak.

MECHANICS: Another en dash standing in for the manuscript's usual em dash. This one needs fixing before it goes further.

Chapter 28

FIX

Behind her, a voice murmured, “you have done it.”

MECHANICS: Dialogue still needs a capital at the start, “you” should be “You.” Worth fixing before you submit anywhere.

CONSIDER

“Of course, I had just been torturing her to get your family’s whereabouts,”

MECHANICS: This line ends on a comma instead of a period before the closing quote, and nothing after it continues the sentence. Small thing, your call.

FIX

“you are aware of the rumors - Lyra’s positioning herself to keep mother’s crown.”

MECHANICS: Same capitalization slip, dialogue opening with a lowercase “you.” Catch this one before it goes further.

FIX

Everything in it belonged to someone else - the rose-colored rug, the embossed mirror, even the gown draped across the foot of her bed.

MECHANICS: One more en dash that should match the em dash used two sentences later in this same paragraph, let alone the rest of the manuscript. Worth fixing before you submit anywhere.

FIX

The day was waning when Prince Sylas arrived at Tala’s quarters

CONTINUITY: The time of day does not hold together in this chapter. Lyra's scene ends in moonlight, the courtyards are torch-lit, and Tala walks dim corridors to her door, so it is night. This scene then opens with the day waning, later calls the light “late afternoon,” and Tala finds it “sunlight she could thrive in,” while Sylas says “tonight, we begin.” Add a clear passage-of-time marker between the night scenes and this one, and make the light agree within the scene. Worth fixing before you submit anywhere.

Chapter 29

FIX

They had simply carried her until she herself were ready.

MECHANICS: “She herself were ready” needs to be “was,” this isn't the kind of sentence that calls for the subjunctive. Worth fixing before you submit anywhere.

FIX

. Standing just over six feet, he has the look of a soldier - broad shoulders, lean with the wiry tension of someone always on alert. Jed's face is tanned and creased from sun and stress, his jaw rough with stubble, and his eyes, gray as ash, seem to miss nothing. From what Faela could tell, what set him apart is not his strength, but his discretion. He knows who she is, and more importantly, he knows what it means. Jed does not grandstand. He watches. He reports. He protects.

MECHANICS: This whole paragraph drops into present tense (has, seems, knows, watches) in a scene that is otherwise past tense, and it opens with a stray period before the first word. Reads like a character note that got pasted into the draft rather than written into the scene. This one needs a fix, not just a look.

PRAISE

Brindle had been her shell. Her family had been her shell. The life she had imagined for herself had been her shell.

PRAISE: Freeing the seedling and then turning it into this is exactly the kind of earned metaphor the rest of the manuscript reaches for but does not always land. It's specific to who Faela is, a builder who thinks in structures and supports, and it closes the loop on her whole arc without a single word of explanation.

FIX

The queen's expression flickered - recognition, disbelief, then a fierce, weary kind of joy.

MECHANICS: Last one of these, en dash where it should be an em dash. Catch this one before it goes further.

Chapter 30

CONSIDER

"I believe that" Tomas said.

MECHANICS: Missing the comma before the closing quote, "I believe that," Tomas said. Small thing, your call.

FIX

She had a son, and she named him after the man we condemned.

CONTINUITY: This whole conversation is written against a different family history from the rest of the book. In Chapters 15 to 17, Shane and Shivon (Elen) are brother and sister and Elen marries Tomas, so Tomas is Faela's father. Here Tomas is Elen's son: Shane says she "had a son," Tomas says "his mother had told him stories," and he places a letter from Elen "after I turned ten." Shane also says Elen left "with your uncle" and not even "when her mother died," while Chapter 21 has Mereth say her mother's health is failing and Chapters 23 and 31 keep Maribel alive as Echelon's queen. Chapter 30 needs to be reconciled with Chapters 15 to 17 before anything else in the revision. This needs fixing before it goes further.

FIX

the woman his daughter had become

CONTINUITY: “His daughter” makes Elen Shane's daughter, but Chapters 15 to 17 make her his sister, and Shane himself speaks of her mother and her brother in this scene. Whichever relationship the scene is meant to carry, the narration has to match the rest of the book. This needs fixing before it goes further.

Chapter 31

She was her mother’s legacy. Now she would create her own.

OVERVIEW: The draft ends mid-journey, with Faela, Mereth and Nolan aboard an Echelon ship and the war just beginning, so the ending reads as setup rather than resolution. The threads seeded early on, the iron gate, the lights in the sky, the veiled woman's warning, the Prologue's queen and fleeing princess, are still open. Please confirm whether this is meant as book one of a series. If one thing is worth fixing before anything else, it is the group of continuity contradictions flagged in Chapters 11, 15, 16, 21, 24, 28 and 30, since those change what a reader believes about the story itself.

Character Reference

A running reference of named characters for the author's own consistency checks.

- **Faela** (first: Chapter 1) - Self-taught builder from Brindle, blonde hair in a loose braid, carries a blade her sister Tala gave her, close bond with her brother Orin over their shared building plans.
- **Orin** (first: Chapter 1) - Faela's brother, three seasons younger, ink-stained fingers from drafting, grounded and steady, dreams of building bridges and halls beyond simple repairs.
- **Tala** (first: Chapter 1) - Faela's sister, gave her the blade she carries on the journey, prefers hearth and home to building, not as close to Faela as Orin is.
- **Tedding** (first: Chapter 1) - Brindle's village smith, apprenticed under his father, gruff but doesn't resent Faela and Orin's repair skill.
- **The Queen** (first: Prologue) - Unnamed ruler who orders the harbor sealed to catch a fleeing princess, calm and merciless, orders Sir Efron's men killed when he refuses her command.
  Not named yet as of Prologue.
- **Sir Efron** (first: Prologue) - Veteran guard captain, questions the queen's order to kill a single fleeing girl, refuses to turn on his own men, escapes through a window rather than strike the queen.
- **Sir Spears** (first: Prologue) - Younger guard captain, unquestioningly loyal to the queen, takes over Efron's command and puts down his men on the queen's order.
- **Tomas** (first: Chapter 2) - Faela's father, shoulders rounded from years of timber work, blames himself when he learns Faela has left.
  Faela's father and Elen's husband in Chapters 2 to 25. In Chapter 30 he is written as Elen's son, which contradicts that (CONTINUITY comment in Chapter 30).
- **Elen** (first: Chapter 2) - Faela's mother, calm and watchful, reveals the family has deliberately hidden Faela for years to keep her from being seen. Revealed in Chapter 15 to be Shivon, a refugee of the fallen Echelon Empire and King Alaric's lost sister.
  Hid her true identity and history from Tomas and her children for years. Executed by Sylas, on Queen Mereth's order, in front of the full court and her family (Chapter 21).
- **Nolan** (first: Chapter 4) - Young mapmaker and builder, lost his fisherman father to the sea at fourteen, boyish and unguarded, dark hair, warm brown eyes, carries his father's unfinished boat designs.
  Believed lost after the dock arrest (Eura reports in Chapter 22 that he survived and searched for Faela). Reappears in Chapter 29 as a conscripted soldier in an Echelon uniform, forced to swear allegiance, and says he and Faela are “prisoners on our way to Echelon.” He is on the prison ship at the end.
- **Nolan's aunt Glea** (first: Chapter 5) - Mentioned only; told Nolan stories of 'watchers in the sky,' spirits that got stuck between heaven and wind.
- **Bertha** (first: Chapter 6) - One of three siblings stranded at the encampment while their father is missing at sea; relentlessly warm and generous despite hardship.
  Given Faela's keepsake river stone in Chapter 7.
- **Eura** (first: Chapter 6) - Bertha's sister, quiet and watchful, manages the practical details holding the family together.
- **Teigan** (first: Chapter 6) - Bertha and Eura's older brother, quietly strong, well liked, carries grief over his missing father.

- **Crispo** (first: Chapter 7) - Old man at the encampment who speaks in riddles and tells unsettling stories of things seen at sea.
- **Lyra** (first: Chapter 8) - Princess, daughter of a queen at the encampment's palatial grounds; warm, playful, self-aware about the performance of being a princess, sparkles (literally).
  Collides with Faela while Faela is fleeing raiders; insists on bringing her to meet 'the queen.'
- **Queen Mereth** (first: Chapter 9) - Queen of Wester, severe and magnetic, speaks in probing, pointed riddles, said by her children to have been widowed the previous winter (the king is in fact alive, Chapter 15), deeply interested in Faela's origins from the moment they meet.
  Not confirmed to be the same unnamed queen from the Prologue who is hunting a fleeing princess -- distinct until/unless the manuscript connects them.
- **Prince Eryon** (first: Chapter 9) - Mereth's eldest son, dutiful, restrained, strikingly handsome, resigned to guarding his sister Lyra's claim to the throne rather than resenting it.
- **Prince Sylas** (first: Chapter 9) - Mereth's youngest son, playful and warm, assigned to guard the queen; draws Faela out of her shell and shows early romantic interest in her. His age is inconsistent: described as perhaps in his early teens in Chapter 9, yet he says he began guarding the queen at 16 in Chapter 11 (see the CONTINUITY comment in Chapter 24).
  Confirmed in Chapter 12 to have killed Toadcat during an ambush on the procession, claiming it was a threatening creature; shows no remorse when confronted in Chapter 14.
- **Sir Stellan** (first: Chapter 10) - A watchful, calculating man seated near the queen at dinner; presses Faela about outsiders in her village with practiced gentleness.
  First appears unnamed at para 683 (Chapter 10); named explicitly as Sir Stellan at para 795, same chapter. Referred to interchangeably as "Sir Stellan" and "Stellan" throughout (e.g. para 1753, 1812-1837, 2402-2422).
- **Mara** (first: Chapter 13) - Round, warm palace staff member assigned to look after Faela; practical and kind.
- **Lin** (first: Chapter 13) - Tall, quiet palace staff member who works alongside Mara; steady and trustworthy in bearing.
- **Renna** (first: Chapter 13) - Palace staff member, playful and mischievous, says she 'fetches things' and is good at secrets.
- **Prescott** (first: Chapter 13) - Young palace steward with ink-stained fingers, also works as a part-time messenger.
- **King Alaric (Shane)** (first: Chapter 15) - Reclusive, inventive King of Wester, born Echelon royalty; estranged from Queen Mereth, who has quietly taken over real power; secretly Faela's uncle.
  Told to Faela as Shane, born Echelon royalty who hid his origins and rose in Wester under King Haran. Lyra says in Chapter 11 that her father died last winter of a fever, but he is alive and speaks with Faela in Chapter 15 and again in Chapter 30. The book never explains why his children believed he was dead; raised as a CONTINUITY comment in Chapter 15. In Chapter 30 he speaks as Elen's father and of her brother and mother in ways that conflict with Chapters 15 to 17 (CONTINUITY comments in Chapter 30).
- **King Haran** (first: Chapter 17) - Previous King of Wester; took in and promoted Shane/Alaric; named him his heir with no marriage required.
  Deceased before the main story begins.

- **Princess Mabel** (first: Chapter 17) - Haran's eldest daughter; married Alaric and briefly became queen.
  Died (along with the rest of the royal line except Mereth) at her own wedding reception, under suspicious circumstances.
- **Carlos** (first: Chapter 17) - Farmer in Wester who took in young Shane after his separation from Shivon, believing him simply displaced by war.
- **Garen** (first: Chapter 19) - A boy from Faela's village who courted her with small gifts; imagined only in a hypothetical 'what if she had stayed' reflection.
- **Queen Maribel** (first: Chapter 23) - Faela's grandmother, current ruler of Echelon across the sea.
  Named from Chapter 23 as Faela's grandmother and ruler of Echelon, and confirmed by Stellan in Chapter 31 to be a Chairon. Has not appeared on the page; the Echelon invasion acts under her order.
- **Jed** (first: Chapter 29) - Echelon soldier who finds and escorts Faela after the dock invasion; discreet and watchful rather than cruel.

Glossary of Terms

- **Toadcat**: An invented creature in Faela's world, part frog and part feline, believed rare or near-extinct; one begins following Faela through the forest in Chapter One. Killed by Sylas during an ambush on the royal procession in Chapter Twelve. (first use: Chapter 1)

Content Ratings Above the Publisher's Limit

The publisher accepts sexual content up to Flame 3 on its five-level scale (1 closed door; 2 kisses, embraces and promises of fidelity; 3 symbolic body parts with marriage promised before or after; 4 anatomical names and description; 5 other participants). These scenes rate above that limit and will need to be revised before the manuscript can be accepted.

- 🔥🔥🔥🔥 Flame 4 · limit 3 (Chapter 19, para. 1383-1384)

  > *The small guard got close to Faela. He put his hands at the bottom of her dress and moved it up as he touched his hand to her inner thigh. Faela palmed the blade tighter, closed her eyes and hoped she would not have to use it. A single tear rolled down her cheek. The only one she would allow herself. When the taller guard joined in, leaning close to place his lips on her neck, Faela moved as if involuntarily. She grabbed a fistful of cloth and yanked him forward. In one swift motion, she spun, drove the blade under his arm. Chain-mail could not save him. He gasped, staggering back, and Faela kicked, and kicked until he fell over. The short guard lunged for the sword he rested by the door when he undid his belt prior to his assault on Faela, but she anticipated his move, sliding off his grip and sending the blade slashing across his thigh.*

  Depicts two guards beginning a sexual assault on the imprisoned Faela with specific physical detail (hand moving up her dress to her inner thigh, a guard's lips on her neck, one guard undoing his belt) before she fights them off. This goes beyond alluding to the threat into rendering the assault's physical particulars. Rated Flame 4 against a limit of 3 on the depiction alone; the publisher's scale was written for intimacy, so confirm with the publisher whether it applies to a threatened assault in the same way.

- 🔥🔥🔥🔥 Flame 4 · limit 3 (Chapter 24, paras. 1741, 1747-1750)

  Sylas knelt before her. His hands curled around her hips, both meeting at the small of her back. His head laid in her lap with his cheek resting on her thigh. […] Now, as Sylas' hands searched her body, fingers grazing her nipples under her silks, which stiffened with every pass, that familiar heat bloomed low in her stomach. With that, her body relaxed, and Sylas' tongue had found his way into her mouth. […] He grasped her tight by the waist, his mouth moving from her lips to her neck. Then lower. His hands were rougher than she expected, uncertain but determined, like he did not know what was allowed. […] "Faela?" he asked, voice raw as he laid her down and slowly slid up her slip, running his lips up her thigh. She resisted, pushing him up to his feet and spun in coordination until she was pushing him back onto the bed. She said nothing. Her mouth was already on his neck, his ear, his lips. She stood, commanding his view as she dropped her expensive silks to a ball at her feet. He looked as if he may speak, so Faela lowered back down onto him. She kissed him as she moved a hand down his chest towards his navel, then lower. He did not stop her. Of course, he did not.

  Faela seduces Sylas as a manipulation tactic; the scene renders the physical progression of the encounter in specific, graphic detail (touching her nipples, his tongue in her mouth, his lips moving down her thigh, her disrobing and moving her hand down his body) rather than alluding to it. The clearest and most explicit instance of this found in the manuscript so far. Rated Flame 4 against a limit of 3: bodies and touch are described and the scene is interrupted only after it has begun.
