

## A TOUR OF MY HEART - Editorial Feedback

Thank you for allowing me to read the first chapter of A TOUR OF MY HEART. This opening wastes no time setting up the inciting incident of the story, and you've created a protagonist to root for. I have some suggestions on how to sharpen this opening to make it work even harder for your story.

### YOUR TOP PRIORITIES

These three revisions will sharpen your opening to make it work even harder for your story.

#### 1. Make Macy and Lucas's text exchange work harder

- *What's happening in the story now:* Macy and Lucas's text thread takes up a lot of real estate in these initial pages. Right now Macy is egging on a pointless (but adorably banter-y) conversation with Lucas just so she can keep talking to him. We've all been there!
- *Why revise it:* The back and forth about French fries doesn't tell us anything about their relationship history beyond giving us a glimpse into how they speak to one another.
- *What to do:* Pull Macy/Lucas's history forward in the exchange. I made some example changes in the manuscript pages by making one of Lucas's top favorite fries from a restaurant he and Macy have both been to...possibly together when they were in college? This is just an example—do what feels right to you—but would give Macy an opportunity to reflect on a potential date with Lucas and connect us to their time together at school.

#### 2. Clarify Milo's character

- *What's happening in the story now:* Macy and Milo live together and have a good relationship—though she is keeping the secret of her music from him, and it feels like she is comparing herself to him and falling short.
- *Why revise it:* I'm still not positive who Milo is—are they best friends? Brother and sister?
- *What to do:* Add one or two clarifying details to confirm who Milo is to Macy. Since this chapter is very short, you don't need to bog it down with too much background.

### 3. Ground scene in micro setting

- *What's happening in the story now:* Macy is in the apartment she shares with Milo, so focused on her phone and the text exchange with Lucas, she's not taking in much around her (she doesn't realize she never left her bedroom after taking her notebook back).
- *Why revise it:* We don't get much that anchors readers in the setting. Since we're in Macy's space, this is an opportunity for the reader to learn more about her.
- *What to do:* Choose one or two relevant items in the apartment for her to observe. Maybe she notices some of Milo's theatre decor (playbills from other shows he's been in on the wall) before she sits down at his piano, which makes her feel inferior as a performer? This could also be the chance to quickly show us her relationship with Milo (**Priority 2**) via a framed photo or some other type of high school memory on display.

### WHAT'S WORKING WELL

- The opening hits all the important plot beats: establishing the main character, a strong opening image, and the catalyst that kicks off the whole story, complete with a catch.
  - You're starting your story in the right spot. The inciting incident—Lucas asking Macy to come to a wedding with him—happens at the bottom of page two... diving right in!
  - The “catch” of it being not just a date but a road trip adds immediate pressure/tension.
- You've created a protagonist I immediately empathize with and root for (more in *Character* section).

### OTHER NOTES

*Character:*

Macy: Oh, sweet Macy. She's downplaying her musical abilities right from the opening paragraphs (“passable piano skills” “one of us is qualified to belt out show tunes and the other isn't”)—there's a definite insecurity there. But in her text exchange with Lucas, she comes across as confident and a little snarky. Their back-and-forth texting seems like a comfortable banter... is talking to him easy for her, or is she obsessing over making herself seem calm?

*A thought for future pages:* I'm curious to see how she portrays herself outwardly, since we don't see her interact face-to-face with any other characters. The chapter ends just before we get clarity on what Macy wants out of the inciting incident (aka Lucas's invitation to the wedding): does she want to date Lucas? Prove something to him? She's described herself as desperate to keep their texting conversation going, so I'm leaning toward she does want to go on this roadtrip with him, but a touch more clarity on why she's staying in touch with him wouldn't hurt.

Lucas: I find it fascinating that Macy refers to Lucas by his full name in her head three times. Almost like a celebrity or a title. It's less familiar and creates some distance. Is that how she views him? On a pedestal of some kind? Similarly, his contact name in her phone seems like a title/nickname, and she awards him the title of "Not A Relationship Guy"—which sounds like something he told her at some point in their history.

*Setting reader's expectation for the story:*

The manuscript is tentatively titled A TOUR OF MY HEART, so that tells me tour guiding is most likely a large part of the story. But right now, because we open with Macy composing a song at the piano and thinking about show tunes and Milo's current production, this seems like more of a music focused story. The references to tour guides are, seemingly, the plot of her musical ("two campus tour guides as they find themselves and fall in love") and Lucas's contact name in her phone.

*A thought for future pages:* You may consider weaving one or two more references to tour guiding (for example: does she reflect on how his contact name got into her phone that way?)...if that is indeed the focus of your story. Otherwise you may want to reconsider the title down the road.

## **DON'T LOSE THIS IN REVISION**

- Voice! The first person POV works well, especially since we're in Macy's head almost entirely in this first chapter. Your voice as the author is approachable, and the prose is sharp.
- Don't bog down the chapter with macro setting/the bigger world around Macy.
  - She's moved back to her "adorable small town" near her family in Southeastern PA. That's plenty for this chapter.

## **FINAL NOTE**

This opening is full of gems, and I hope my feedback will help strengthen your story. Please let me know if anything is unclear or you have questions — I enjoyed reading your first chapter so much!

Kaitlin