

Artisan ReviewSM

Quality Control for Independent Publishers and Writers Wondering What to Do Next

General comments:

You asked me to read the start of your book as a consumer. This is just about what I would do on Amazon or in a bookstore with a cafe where I could sample and make the decision whether to buy.

There's a lot here that's absolutely fascinating, and you have some lovely phrasing, but I'm afraid over all it's very slow going, and after reading three chapters, I'm still not really sure what it's about or where the rest of it is going to play out. I assumed it would go to America, but then was jarred by some comments about Carl's future. There are too many names thrown in too soon, and it's very difficult to determine who is the main character and what the real story is going to be. I haven't found a hook to make the story matter to me as much as it does to you or the narrator (and I'm not sure if there's a difference).

I'm afraid I probably would not buy your book, or even read this far into it without good reason.

Specific comments (I did not keep a count of minor (copyediting) issues because I didn't see any in the first page or so):

1. Don't repeat information between the title and first paragraph, and be careful about consistent spelling of proper nouns. Transliterate rather than using diacritical marks that are unfamiliar to general readers.
2. Early mention of the Baltic helps me figure out the geography, but I did have to figure it out. And then there's not much said about it for some time.
3. Where is Maria's husband, father of all these children?
4. Took too long (end of ch.1, p. 10) to get to the "my father" of the title.
5. Ch.2 is even slower, dragging out the loneliness of the mother and grandparents that we already know about.
6. Reflection about Emil's story is a major interruption yet raises many questions.
7. How does Maria say "Connecticut"? What does she think of the name of the town?
8. What would Emil do for a living after he inherited the house (which also seems very odd, since his employers don't sound Swedish).

9. I've again lost track of the cast, with the boy who died and then the other one who was never happy.
10. I'm not at all sure whose story this is.
11. Where is Maria's husband? (end of ch.2)
12. Ch.3 still very slow, very unclear.
13. Comments about what would happen to Carl in the future are distracting and confusing because they imply that he never goes to America.
14. Was Carl familiar with indoor plumbing? I believe there was mention of carrying water from a well in Torsas.
15. I can't see most of the scenes, especially the church. Is the ancient church a separate building from the current one?
16. Had Carl ever been to a museum to know the church felt 'more like one'?
17. The "chalk drawings" are a major interruption, as totally unfamiliar to me and unexplained, though intriguing.
18. What lighting was provided in the boarding house? Did he have to pay for a candle to read by, or buy his own oil, or ...?
19. The pocket watch should have been mentioned before, probably as he was leaving home.