

## BETA READING REPORT – WARM BLUE WATERS

### Text details

Title of the excerpt: WARM BLUE WATERS

Author: E.J. Franklin

Beta reader: Carla Ros

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Word count: approx. 10k (FULL ACT 1)

Genre / Target audience: GL Romance, Sailing adventure. It also leans forward coming-of-age.

### 1. First impression

Honestly, I wouldn't have stopped reading. In my opinion, this manuscript is well-paced, it introduces unique characters like Sarah and her grandpa, and the narrative style is humorous and ironic at just the right moments –for example, the under-the-nose remarks during the scene where Sarah is ‘packing’ to leave the dorm. This kind of subtle humour adds a lot of personality to the story. I really enjoyed the rhythm and the descriptions, which made the story flow and develop beautifully. It genuinely felt like a book I would happily purchase.

### 2. Strengths

As mentioned before, one of the first things that stands out positively in this manuscript is the ironic voice that reads Sarah's mind –it's a brilliant touch. This humour adds a spicy, original tone to the narration, making it more enjoyable and engaging to read. It also helps shape Sarah into a strong and unique character with a clear personality. She feels like someone we want to follow along and get to know better.

Good start. The start of the manuscript just hits the point. Since the story opens *in media res*, there is no build-up –it begins with Sarah emptying her room in the most unusual way: just throwing all her belongings into the dorms' dumpster. The reader is immediately surprised, and the level of interest is high –we want to know why she's acting in such an unexpected way.

The dialogues between the characters –especially between the two young friends, Sarah and Becky– feel natural and realistic. In many novels, conversations between young people often

come across as caricatured or forced, but in this case, they are well crafted and flow with a spontaneity and authenticity that makes them believable and enjoyable to read.

The descriptions and overall atmosphere are rich and immersive, conveying the sensations and settings of each scene very effectively. With just a subtle description of Sarah's father, Tim's house, the reader can already infer that this is a well-off family, without the need for anything to be stated explicitly. Similarly, through the characters' dialogue and actions, their personalities are gradually revealed, rather than told. This requires a considerable level of narrative skill, and it makes the reading experience engaging, as things unfold slowly and with great subtlety. It's precisely these nuanced details that elevate the text and give it the quality of a strong, well-crafted novel.

Moreover, through the tone of the conversations and Sarah's attitude towards her father, the reader might initially infer that he is a workaholic who neglects his daughter and is eager to get rid of her. However, the detail that the only furnished room upstairs is Sarah's, suggests something more complex: it subtly reveals that, despite his distant or awkward behaviour, he genuinely cares for her. This kind of layered characterisation invites the reader to question first impressions and appreciate the emotional undercurrents woven into the narrative.

I thoroughly enjoyed the interpersonal dynamics between each pair of characters, as each relationship feels unique and, in its own way, endearing. For instance, the bond between Sarah and her grandfather, Ted, is exactly the kind of connection one imagines between a grandparent and a grandchild. He functions as a protective and transformative presence in Sarah's life –someone who offers her an 'escape' while also clearly playing a pivotal role in her character arc.

As for Becky, she's the kind of fun, supportive friend every twenty-something needs. Her lively personality and witty remarks bring a welcome sense of comic relief, enriching the narrative's emotional rhythm.

Meanwhile, the relationship between Sarah and her father reflects a familiar dynamic: that of a young woman in the process of self-discovery, and a father who, while perhaps emotionally reserved, wants to guide and spare her unnecessary pain or mistakes. These characters feel carefully crafted, and it's clear they will be instrumental to Sarah's journey throughout the novel.

### 3. Areas to improve

Keeping in mind that I've just read Act 1, I would like to say that, in my opinion, this part of the novel lacks a bit of purpose. I mean, it sets the scene well, but I missed some more depth or a hint of what's going to happen. I didn't lose interest, but as a reader, I didn't quite

understand why this is the first act. I know it's a work in progress, but I wanted to share this in case it's helpful for the rest of the novel.

That said, I would've appreciated a bit more weight, for instance, in the scene in Chapter 14 when Sarah and Ted are having dinner and Tim texts Sarah. This would have been the perfect moment for a deeper comment or reaction from Sarah. It felt like a missed opportunity to foreshadow the central theme or emotional stakes.

Since the manuscript is still a work in progress, I'm not going to go into an in-depth analysis of common writing or typing errors. However, in case it's helpful, I'd like to point out something I noticed in Chapter 7. I understand how hard it can be for an author to spot every inconsistency after so many rounds of revision.

In the following scene, there's a continuity error: it begins with a phone call between Sarah and Becky, but halfway through, they suddenly appear to be together in the same physical space. Then, at the end scene, they agree to meet up, which suggests they weren't together after all. This might be worth revisiting during revisions.

It was a bit late to call Becky but she wanted to let her know. Time to pack for Vietnam. She texts Becky, "Remember you asked me how long I'd be in town?" She presses send. "Flying to Vietnam Monday at 3 PM."

Immediately, her phone rings.

Becky yells into the receiver, "What?!? How can you do that? No way! You're messing with me!"  
"Sorry, just the facts, ma'am."

(...)

Becky blew a raspberry and playfully punched Sarah on the arm. "Cut the crap, bitch."

"Anyway, I figure I'll stay there a month. We'll do a lot of day sails. He's talking about sailing to some faraway islands, but I don't think I could handle that."

"Unbelievable. Well, let's get together tomorrow, okay? Lonny's working, so I can come around lunchtime."

Overall, I understand that I've only read the first 10,000-ish words, so my impressions are still limited. That said, I hope the observations above are useful in some way. At this point, I'd just encourage a closer look at the narrative focus and consistency, especially in scenes where there's potential to build emotional depth or foreshadow future developments. I'm sure many of these aspects will evolve as the novel progresses, and I look forward to seeing how the story unfolds.

## **4. Characters**

The characters in this novel are genuinely engaging, each playing a meaningful role in shaping Sarah's journey. Sarah herself stands out as a unique and witty protagonist, and there are already hints that she's on the path to some compelling character development.

What stands out to me as unique in Sarah is her quick wit, her ironic mindset, and her spontaneity. She's a truly original character –one you don't often come across in contemporary fiction. These traits open up interesting possibilities for her character development as the story progresses. I'm curious to see how these qualities will evolve or be challenged throughout the novel.

## **5. Coherence and potential**

I think this excerpt has great potential, especially because it touches on a coming-of-age subtheme that I believe will resonate with many readers in their twenties –and even older. Since it's such a universal theme, this novel could really connect with readers who appreciate well-crafted literature, enjoy adventure and travel, and are curious about discovering new cultures and perspectives. It would also appeal to those who enjoy light, witty storytelling that still carries meaning and purpose.

## **6. Suggestions and final comments**

Overall, I think *Warm Blue Waters* shows promising potential. While I felt that Act 1 could benefit from a stronger sense of direction and a few moments of deeper emotional weight, the voice is engaging, the characters –especially Sarah– are vivid and original, and the coming-of-age elements give the story a relatable foundation. I believe that, with further development, the novel could grow into a meaningful, witty, and enriching read.

And to answer your main concern with this reading: yes, I truly believe this is the kind of story many people would enjoy. Take me, for instance—this is the kind of book I'd happily bring along on my commute, to the beach, or even on a flight. It's a light yet engaging read that keeps you curious and makes you want to find out what happens next.

I'm genuinely curious to see how the story and characters evolve, and I'd be happy to keep reading as the project progresses.

Keep going, Jim—you're on to something good!