Hi Cali,

Your excerpt from your novel is about a metahuman named Simon that can’t be killed and a Representative of Aether named Valarie whose goal is to bust Simon out of his prison to end riots in Mors.

**What’s working**

The idea of Simon being unkillable is cool and reminds me a lot of Wolverine from the X-Men comics. I also liked the descriptions of when Simon disembowels himself to trick the guards, it’s very gory and disturbing, and I love that stuff. Even though the excerpt is only two chapters long, I can tell that this story is set in a dystopian society. Furthermore, you’ve put much thought into the backstory of this setting and have in mind an entire world that’s completely different from ours. I’m a sucker for dystopian and speculative fiction, so I thoroughly enjoyed myself.

**What needs improvement**

With that being said, this excerpt desperately needed a plot synopsis as I became confused when reading, unsure of what the characters’ titles meant and their responsibilities. One example is the title of “Representative.” It seems that you’re angling for “representatives” to be a kind of leader for a country, but the title of “representative” indicates that the person is part of a legislative body working on behalf of the people. If the “Representative” is the leader, then a different title would be better, such as “Director” or “Commander.” Another thing that would have helped with a synopsis is where the locations are and how they interact. As I read the story, I thought that the leading country was a confederation of smaller states, but there was mention of an empire militia. A very quick rundown of the political environment would have benefited the story considerably.

I appreciate the effort and time you put into the backstory, but there was too much exposition that was vague and bogged down the story. The second chapter was almost entirely exposition with little action, and what action and dialogue there was was confusing. I often found myself disoriented when characters moved around in the world because I had no firm descriptions of the environment, so I felt like I was quickly shepherded from one part of the story to another without being able to appreciate what was going on. I know it’s hard to do, but this is a case where the axiom of “kill your darlings” is needed. There’s much work put into the backstory, but it doesn’t serve the purpose of the plot within the chapter, so a lot of it should be cut.

Additionally, there needed to be more descriptions of everything; when Simon was pulling his guts out, I wanted to see in my mind every single organ spilling from his stomach like a sieve. I wanted to be able to smell the iron in the blood. I wanted to hear the squeaking of a broken bone rubbing against a broken bone. I wanted to be there, but the description was so few that I felt like a pedestrian walking past a murder and paying it no mind. It seems counterintuitive but give me more with less.

I would love to read the revision.

All the best,

Payton Ison