

Editorial Report and Style Sheet

STYLE SHEET

Title: Title redacted (68,241 words, including synopsis, according to MS Word's word-count function)
Author: Author redacted

Dear [author],

Thanks for the opportunity to work on this! Overall, I really enjoyed your novel – high on action, strong on setting, and compelling characters that were drawn distinctly. Powerful opening chapter that drew me in from the get-go. Story-telling is your strength.

Below is an overview of what I did, and a critique that discusses how I think you can move forward and take your writing to the next level.

Bear in mind that this was a sentence-level edit, rather than a developmental/structural edit!

Format for editing

I set up styles for the various elements of the text (e.g. chapter headings, main text, first paragraphs) to ensure consistency. I changed the font to Times New Roman for the purposes of editing because it's much easier on the eye and I'm much less likely to miss things. Happy to alter this for you if you need me to. I can do it very quickly just by amending the styles.

Chapters

These were structured well in the main. I do think, though, that Ch. 21 – Danny's recollection of Snipe's SAS service – would be better as a new section in Ch. 20. If you agree, let me know and I'll amend it for you quickly, and renumber the remaining chapters.

Dialogue

Watch out for repeating the information you've already covered in the dialogue:

Original: 'Am I still under arrest?' said Danny slightly unsure of his situation.

In the above example, his question tells us he's unsure of the situation so there's no need to clarify. It ends up as just a repetitive double-tell. All you need is the following:

Edited: 'Am I still under arrest?' said Danny.

Tics (especially filler tics)

There's a lot of mention of coffee preparation in this novel! It's realism, but realism that a novel reader doesn't need. Unless the fact that Paul takes his coffee white with one sugar is central to the plot, it's just filler that gets in the way. I recommend you avoid this kind of detail because it's a distraction. It's something we see often onscreen but in a novel it draws the

Editorial Report and Style Sheet

reader down a path of thinking this information is leading to a reveal of some sort, only to find that that's not the case.

Thoughts

Avoid using speech marks for thoughts because your reader will assume someone is speaking out loud (even if they're double and you're using single for speech). It's standard to use italic for thoughts.

Original: "Two days, just two more days and I go home" he thought.

Edited: *Two days. Just two more days and I go home*, he thought.

Also watch out for 'to himself' and the like since one can't, by definition, think to anyone else but oneself.

I've got to get out of this shit hole, he **thought to himself**.

I've got to get out of this shit hole, he **thought**.

Another option is free indirect speech – this is useful particularly in high-octane scenes. See more here: <https://www.louiseharnbyproofreader.com/blog/3-reasons-to-use-free-indirect-speech-in-your-crime-fiction>

Example: He had to get out of this shithole.

Interruptions

Trust the punctuation to do its job rather than using words to tell us what we already know from that punctuation.

Original:

'Mr Pearson you are being interviewed today to establish what your involvement is concerning the explosions at...'

'My involvement amounts to getting blown up, twice,' said Danny **interrupting** Mallory.

Edited:

'Mr Pearson, you are being interviewed today to establish your involvement with the explosions at—'

'My involvement amounts to getting blown up ... twice,' said Danny.

Unveiling characters

I felt there were occasions when your character descriptions were not as subtle as they might have been – more like information dumps. For example, when we're first told what Danny and Scott look like. Have a look at the books I recommend below for advice on character description. I'll also be writing a blog post about this shortly, so look out for that!

Editorial Report and Style Sheet

Vocatives

I've amended so that your vocative expressions are punctuated correctly. If you want to know how to do this with confidence, there's a video tutorial here:

<https://www.louiseharnbyproofreader.com/writing-resources.html> (scroll down the page and click on the video called 'Punctuating Vocatives).

Sentence construction

I edited to tighten up, especially in the action scenes. You have a tendency to overwrite, which makes the narrative laboured. In tension-filled action scenes, this can moderate the rhythm in a negative way. Using sentence fragments and tools such as asyndeton can keep the pace sharp. There's more information on this here if you're interested:

<https://www.louiseharnbyproofreader.com/blog/playing-with-sentence-length-in-crime-fiction-is-it-time-to-trim-the-fat> and <https://www.louiseharnbyproofreader.com/blog/playing-with-the-rhythm-of-fiction-commas-and-conjunctions>

To ease the flow of the narrative and dialogue I also edited to avoid repetition of words. e.g.:

Original: 'Morning, Chris. Where's the prince this morning? Still in bed?'

Edited: 'Morning, Chris. Where's the prince? Still in bed?'

Original: Marcus sat in the big black leather office chair behind a large walnut veneered office desk of the director's office at CMS.

Edited: Marcus sat in a large black leather chair behind a walnut-veneered desk. From the director's office he ...

MI5 vs MI6

Please check every mention of both. MI6 is usually international stuff. MI5 is homeland security. I noticed inconsistencies.

Point of view

Your POV slipped often, meaning we shifted between knowing what once character was experiencing or hearing, and then shifting to a more omniscient viewpoint that showed us what was going on for multiple characters in different places, or into another character's head.

For future writing, consider sticking to one character viewpoint per chapter, or per section, so that we experience the story in terms of what one person is thinking, seeing, feeling. It's much more immersive and will improve your writing drastically.

An example is in Ch. 3 where we bounce between what's going on downstairs with Smith and Snipe, and upstairs with Ramirez and Peters, then into what Peters actually hears, and then to what Snipe thinks. This style of writing works fine with screenwriting but if you read the mainstream-published action-thriller novels, you'll see that they authors tend to stick with one viewpoint character's experience per chapter. People don't read in the way that they watch telly, which is why the styles are different.

Editorial Report and Style Sheet

I've amended where I can see a simple fix in this book (using dialogue or introducing section breaks). These fixes aren't always elegant but solving such problems on a large scale needs to happen at writing stage in the main or at structural/developmental editing stage.

There's an introductory guide to POV here: <https://www.louiseharnbyproofreader.com/blog/a-beginners-guide-to-narrative-point-of-view-in-crime-writing>

Pick up any book by one of the big-name crime writers and study how they work with POV. I think it'll really help you understand how to do this better.

Speech tagging

Sometimes you can remove speech tags if it's obvious who's speaking. That way you avoid a barrage of he-saids. More here if you want to read it:

<https://www.louiseharnbyproofreader.com/blog/dialogue-tags-and-how-to-use-them-in-fiction-writing>

Dangling modifiers that cause a logic flop

e.g. Leaping up, he grabbed his keys and wallet and slammed the door as he left the apartment.

Notice the linear element to this. The grammar for this kind of construction means that the character grabs his keys and wallet as he's leaping up. In fact, it's more likely that he jumps up first, then grabs his keys and wallet.

This structure works well in examples such as the following (which I've made up):

'Smelling the woodsmoke, he turned the corner to take a peek.'

In that example, there's a simultaneity to the actions.

More info here: <https://www.louiseharnbyproofreader.com/blog/beginner-fiction-writers-8-tips-to-stop-you-stumbling>

Stage direction

My overall feeling is that you give too much stage direction, which labours the narrative. I've tightened this up a little. I enjoyed some of the descriptions you gave to show us exactly what was happening (during, for instance, the break-in of Bradley's apartment). However, these tended to be wordy and repetitive, so I edited to make the narrative sharper.

Write for the page rather than the screen! They're very different experiences for the reader/watcher. We don't need to see every single action that takes place in a scene – how someone dresses, walks out the door, goes downstairs, walks into the kitchen, moves into the dining room etc. Focus on the character's goal in the scene and get them there as quickly as possible so that the reader doesn't lose interest.

Original:

At 1.00 p.m., two Range Rovers with blacked-out windows and two plain white transit vans passed through security and into the service courtyard of the Foreign Office.

Editorial Report and Style Sheet

Edward Jenkins emerged from the front passenger seat of one of the cars. Phil Silverman came from the driver's side. More MI5 officers climbed out of the other Range Rover. Security personnel in plain black overalls exited the vans and retrieved their excited sniffer dogs from the back.

They were met by Glen and some of his staff while Edward had his folder open handing out copies of the schedule for the security sweep to all his men. There was no excitement just a professional calmness they all knew the procedure. It had been used dozens of times for countless visiting dignitaries and parliament press conferences. The men dispersed into the building leaving Edward and Phil to follow Glen into the security hut to check through all the log books.

'Whose M&K Air conditioning and Heating, Mr Saunders,' said Edward pointing to the entry on the page.

Most of what's in the example above isn't driving the novel forward. The key points here are that the team arrives and questions Glen Saunders. That's what we're interested in, not who's getting out of which door etc. You could try something like the following:

Edited:

At 1.00 p.m., two Range Rovers with blacked-out windows entered the service courtyard of the Foreign Office. Edward Jenkins and Phil Silverman climbed out of one. Two unmarked white transit vans parked next to them. Security personnel in plain black overalls retrieved their excited sniffer dogs from the back.

Edward handed out copies of the schedule for the security sweep. There was no excitement, just a professional calm. They'd been through the procedure dozens of times for countless visiting dignitaries and parliamentary press conferences.

Edward and Phil followed Glen into the security hut.

'What can you tell me about M&K Air Conditioning and Heating, Mr Saunders?' said Edward, pointing to the entry in the log book.

Names

You have multiple characters with similar names: David/Dave, Tom/Tommy, Robert/Rob and Peters/Peter/Pete, Phil/Philip. There are three Patricks.

I know this happens in real life but in a novel it's best to keep any possible confusion or distraction to a minimum. Give everyone a distinct name unless it's critical to the plot to introduce ambiguity.

Bear in mind, too, that it's unlikely that Danny and his team would refer to Marcus using his first name. In the chapter from their POVs, I've used his surname.

What's next?

This will need a final proofread because I've made thousands of changes. Ask a friend with an excellent command of English to give it a once-over once you've attended to the queries.

I also recommend you read Beth Hill's *The Magic of Fiction* and Nicola Morgan's *Write to be Published* for advice on structural craft and POV. I think they'll really help you hone your craft

Editorial Report and Style Sheet

and strengthen your writing. You're definitely moving in the right direction, and this book absolutely has strengths, but there's always room to grow, and these resources will help.

Consider also looking at chapters from mainstream thriller writers like Harlan Coben. He's a master of POV and demonstrates how to hold the narrative around one character at a time so that the reader isn't bouncing around in different people's heads.

Thanks so much, [Author]!

Language preferences/style

Regional spelling choice	British English
iz/is suffixes	is (e.g. organisation)
Slang/jargon/idiom/other	Profanity

Notes on formatting and layout (*back to top*)

Abbreviations/contractions	<p>NHR 10.2.1 recommends no full points for abbreviations (e.g. Dr, Mrs, Mr) but using them for contractions (e.g. Rev. vs Revd for Reverend), just as you've done.</p> <p>CMOS 7.14 recommends no apostrophe in plural acronyms as long as there is clarity (e.g. RPMs)</p>
Chapters	Checked to ensure numbers are chronological
Ellipses	Spaced either side (as recommended in NHR 4.7 and CMOS 13.48).
Numbers	<p>Fiction: CMOS 13.42: 'Spell out numbers in dialogue whenever it can be done without awkwardness.'</p> <p>Exceptions:</p> <p>1980s (CMOS 9.34 recommends no apostrophe before the s), or the eighties</p> <p>.22s / K-9s / 9/11 / Glock 17 / County 15 / October 30th</p> <p>Numbers at either end of a range are linked with an en rule (NHR 11.1.4 and CMOS 9.58)</p>
Paragraph indentation	<p>First paras in section or chapter are full out. Others are indented.</p> <p>This is standard in professional fiction and academic publishing according to NHR and CMOS.</p>

Editorial Report and Style Sheet

Possessives	<p>An apostrophe and s are generally used with personal names ending in an s, x, or z sound: NHR 4.2.1 and CMOS 7.17)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • David Peters’s gun
Public buildings and published works	<p>CMOS 8.56 and NHR 5.5:</p> <p>The names of buildings, monuments and other named places of interest are generally capitalized but without italic. Generic terms are usually in lower case.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Winooski River <p>Songs take quotation marks; albums take italic: “Box of Rain” from the album <i>American Beauty</i>.</p> <p>Magazines and books take italic. Chapters take quotation marks. e.g. <i>Guns and Ammo</i></p>
Punctuation	<p>En rules: spaced when used for parentheses: e.g. He – that is, my husband – is a gem (NHR 4.11.2)</p> <p>Closed-up em rules for end-of-sentence interruptions: e.g. ‘But—’</p> <p>Spaced ellipses for trailing sentences: ...</p> <p>Double spaces removed after full points (CMOS 2.9 and 6.7). Not tracked to reduce clutter.</p> <p>Periods and commas precede closing quotation marks. This is a conventional style in fiction writing. (CMOS 6.9)</p> <p>No serial comma unless required for clarity</p>
Quotation/speech marks	<p>Singles (nested doubles). Changed from straight to smart/curly. (Not tracked so as to avoid clutter.)</p>
Section breaks	<p>I changed the spaced lines asterisked section breaks so that I could spot them easily and format the next paragraphs conventionally. Again, happy to remove these for you – I can do this quickly.</p>
Spaces	<p>Double spaces changed to single (not tracked so as to avoid markup clutter) (CMOS 2.9 and 6.7)</p> <p>Rogue spaces at end and beginning of paragraph removed (not tracked so as to avoid markup clutter)</p>
Time styles	<p>CMOS 9.39 and NHR 11.3 both recommend the following: times of day in even, half, and quarter hours are usually spelled out in text. With o’clock, the number is always spelled out</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Her day begins at five o’clock in the morning. • The meeting continued until half past three. • He left the office at a quarter of four (or a quarter to four). • We will resume at ten thirty. • Cinderella almost forgot that she should leave the ball before midnight.

Editorial Report and Style Sheet

	<p>NHR recommends full point between numerals, except with 24-hr digital clock, in which case a.m./p.m. not required</p> <p>The first train leaves at 5.22 a.m. and the last at 11.00 p.m.</p>
Streets	<p>CMOS: 9.51: Numbered streets</p> <p>Names of numbered streets, avenues, and so forth are usually spelled out if one hundred or less. For the use of N, E, SW, and the like, see 10.34. See also 8.56.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Avenue • Ninety-Fifth Street • 122nd Street
Titles and ranks	<p>It's standard that these take lower case when used generally, but an initial capital letter when used in a form of address, before a name, or as part of a name</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • his dad (lower case) but: 'He'd heard Dad say it was unnecessary' • a/the detective, but Detective Sergeant Gwen Rohm • a Roman general but 'Good evening, General!' • the rank of a duke but the Duke of Wellington <p>See CMOS 8.18 and NHR 5.10</p>

Main character names and key features *(back to top)*

Akbar	Bakr	General.
Amaya	Sato	Computer programmer. Boyfriend: Eito Hamisaki.
Andrew (Spider)	Pitts (Spider)	US hacker.
Bradley	White	Lives in one-bed in a neglected part of Greenwich Village.
Chris		Security detail
Chris	Mayhew	Former director of CMS.
Cody		Security detail
Dale	Parnell	General.
Danny	Pearson	<p>Security detail. Six foot two and seventeen stone. Hair short, dark and unruly. Deep-brown eyes.</p> <p>Had a wife (Sarah) and son (Timmy) who were killed in a hit and run seven years earlier.</p> <p>Does freelance work for Paul.</p>
Dave	Pullman	Gym owner.

Editorial Report and Style Sheet

David	Peters	Boss. Cold eyes, so dark you couldn't tell the iris from the pupil. Wavy brown hair slightly greying at the sides.
David	Mallory	DCI. Police
David	Cummings	In Danny's team.
Edward	Jenkins	Contact of Paul's. MI5.
Erich	Schneider	Murdered
Hamish	Cambell	Fixer. Curly copper hair and matching beard.
Harry	Knight	Danny's uncle. Daughter called May.
Helen	Piper	DI police
Kadah	Naser	Tall Arabic man immaculately dressed in a tailored dark suit. His dark curly hair had been brushed back with wet-look gel and his brown eyes glinted behind small square Gucci glasses. He smiled with perfect teeth through a short, precisely trimmed but dense beard. Uncle: Barzan Naser
Lola	Vetra	
Lucas	Gonzalez	Helping team with Argentina job. Posing as client.
Marcus (Yoseph)	Tenby (Mosul)	True identity: Adopted brother of Kadah and nephew of Barzan. Now runs CMS. Born in Iraq.
Marius	Rodriguez	Agent in Argentina.
Nicholas	Snipe	Muscular body and thick neck. Massive. Short blond crewcut. Works for Peters.
Patrick	Fallen	FBI agent
Patrick	Garmen	Smith's fake ID.
Patrick	Dobson	Fake ID
Paul	Greenwood	Danny does security work for him.
Paulo	Ramirez (Rami)	Stocky Mexican. Works for Peters. Scar from brow to cheek.
Phil	Silverman	Security team.
Phillip	Gotts	Manager at T.A. Leamings
Raiden	Hamisaki	Works for crime syndicate. Cousin is Amaya's boyfriend, Eito.
Rob	Pearson	Danny's younger brother. Graphic designer
Robert	Smith (Smithy)	Lean, pointy-faced man with small round glasses and slicked-back ginger hair. Works for Peters.

Editorial Report and Style Sheet

Robert	Tripp	Works for MSI.
Robert	Grey	Fake ID.
Rufus	Petrov	Supplier of nerve gas. Former KGB major.
Scott	Miller	Known Danny since primary school. Computer genius. Divorced. 36. Slim and athletic with a year-round sunbed tan and manicured nails. His floppy sand-coloured hair.
Shan	Al Amat	Iranian teenager who works for Tenby/CMS. Has autism.
Tom		In Danny's team.
Tomaz	Grinzski	Maintenance supervisor.
Tommy		Works for Harry
Trisha	Fields	Paul's PA.

Reference sources *(back to top)*

Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS): Chicago University Press
New Hart's Rules (NHR): Oxford University Press
Oxford Dictionaries Online: www.oxforddictionaries.com (includes US spelling variations)

Spelling preferences *(back to top)*

AB	CD	EF
adrenaline among ASAP army bought (past tense of buy); not to be confused with brought (past tense of bring) bigwig bastard	cybercafe (one word) cyberattack Cold War CMS Software Corporation Companies House Deckland Consultants	Foreign Office
GHI	JK	LM
Homeland Security (initial caps when referring to the office)	kerb (curb is USEng in this sense) King's College Hospital	licence (noun) license (verb)

Editorial Report and Style Sheet

<p>hmm (to indicate thoughtfulness)</p> <p>gotta (short for have a got a; or have got to)</p> <p>its (belonging to it); it's (contracted form of it is; or it has)</p> <p>Greenwood Security</p> <p>Gulf War</p> <p>Grand Reception Room</p>		<p>mid-step</p> <p>lager (beer)</p> <p>Mafia</p> <p>mmm (to indicate appreciation)</p>
NO	PQ	RS
	<p>pickup (noun)</p> <p>practise (verb)</p> <p>practice (noun)</p> <p>peek (verb – look); peak (noun – top); pique (verb – arouse curiosity)</p> <p>sub-machine gun</p>	<p>Ray-Ban (adj) or Ray-Bans (noun)</p> <p>semi-</p> <p>storey (as in level of building)</p> <p>shithole</p> <p>shitload</p> <p>satnav</p> <p>Savile Row (one l)</p> <p>St. John's Wood</p> <p>Stannah (lift company)</p>
TU	VW	XYZ
<p>T-shirt</p> <p>Taser</p> <p>Toys R Us</p> <p>T.A. Leamings</p> <p>Tube</p> <p>transit van (but Ford Transit)</p>		<p>Yakuza</p>