Elite Editing

Editing Test

***About editing at Elite***

**Book editing**

We offer several levels of book editing services in the traditional, hybrid, and self-publishing spaces. We edit everything from short children’s manuscripts (fewer than 10,000 words) to novel-length high fantasy epics and everything in between! That said, the average manuscript tends to be approximately 40,000–70,000 words.

Standard turn times depend on the needs of the client, but at a minimum, we provide one business day per 10,000 words. Our average manuscript (40–70K) will therefore have a typical turn time of 6–9 business days.

Our rates range from $0.007 to $0.01 per word for our publishing clients, depending on the client and the level of service requested—for example, copyediting versus line editing.

**Content editing**

We copyedit and line edit everything from university proposals and political flyers to games, gift bags, and greeting cards.

Standard turn times depend on the needs of the client and are always commensurate with the length of the document and the depth of the treatment. Short projects of this nature are paid on an hourly basis at rates varying between $22 and $25 per hour.

***About completing and submitting this test***

1. When you’ve completed this test (as well as any other tests you’ve decided to take), please [click here](https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/8f91bc0544724bd381feeb4dd54b3fba) for a submission link.
2. Once you’ve opened the submission link, answer the questions on the upload form, attach *all* completed tests, and then hit “Submit.”

**PLEASE NOTE! Whether you complete one test or all of them (or anything in between), you should upload only ONE submission form with ALL completed tests attached.**

1. At this point, you should see a confirmation screen that confirms we’ve received your test or tests. We will respond within 7 days to let you know the results of your test(s).
2. May the forces of good grammar and beautiful words be with you.

**Test Instructions**

1. Please follow [*The Chicago Manual of Style*](https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html) (*CMoS*), 17th edition, and adhere to the first-listed spellings in [*Merriam-Webster*](https://www.merriam-webster.com/). (That means if a word has multiple spellings, like “goodbye,” “good-bye,” and “goodby,” please use only the main entry.)
2. Use Track Changes. For this test, it doesn’t matter what the signature is set to.
3. Do not overcomment; there’s no need to explain the rationale or justification for your edits (e.g., citing common *CMoS* rules) unless the edit is uncommon. Only comment if you’re flagging something you think the author should weigh in on. Keep your comments diplomatic and precise. Address comments to the author with “AU.”
4. Respect the author’s style. We don’t want to cause author frustration by undoing clearly intentional stylistic devices like fragments or elided conjunctions.
   1. This means that you should not make substantive edits—word echoes or repetition and other problematic terms should be brought up in a comment to the author. Example: “AU: *Worked* appears four times in this paragraph; consider an alternative like *succeeded* or similar to avoid repetition.”
   2. Of course, true errors should be addressed, but you should not find yourself rewriting for style.
5. Speaking of true errors: be very aware of in-scene continuity errors, tense issues (especially with the past perfect or intrusion of the present in a simple past narrative context), homophone errors, and plain ol’ typos. Really watch out for tense shifts (e.g., if it’s a past tense narrative, even ongoing conditions should be in past tense, and use past perfect as needed to aid in readability and comprehension).
6. Internal thoughts can be styled using italics, per house style. No need to edit to roman or text enclosed in quotation marks.
7. Spaced suspension points are fine; lowercase any word after a midsentence ellipsis unless it’s a proper noun, per house style.

*To Liora for understanding that serial killers are a valid discussion for our anniversary vacation.*

**Chapter One**

***Chicago, Illinois, Sunday, July 10, 2016***

The sharp scent of formaldehyde filled the room as he poured the liquid into the mixture. He hated the smell at first. But he learned to appreciate it, knowing what it represented: eternity. The embalming fluid kept things from deteriorating. ’Til death do us part was an unambitious concept at best. True love should ascend beyond that point.

He added more salt than the last time, hoping for better results. It was a delicate balance; he’d learned that the hard way. The embalming fluid promised eternity, but the saline solution added flexibility.

A good relationship has to be flexible.

There was a creak beyond the locked door. The noises, a series of irregular squeaking and scraping sounds, intermingled with the girl’s labored groans, grated on his nerves. She was trying to untie herself again. Always moving, always trying to get away from him—they were all same at first. But she’d change, he would make sure of that. There would be no more incessant movement, no muffled begging, no hoarse scrams.

She would be quiet and still. And then they would learn to love each other.

A sudden crash broke his concentration. Irritated, he put down the salt and went over to the barred door. He unlocked it, and pushed it open. Light spilled into the dark room beyond.

She was lying on the floor squirming. She had tipped the wooden chair to its side, and it had broken. Somehow she’d managed to get her feet loose and was pushing herself across the floor on her bare back, trying to . . . what? Leave? There was no leaving. Her naked body was wiggling in a way that made him feel uncomfortable. Along with her muffled grunts, she seemed almost more animal than human. This had to stop.

He walked in, grabbed her by the arm and pulled her to her feet, ignoring her scream. She started thrashing and wriggling.

“Stop that.” he said harshly.

She didn’t. He nearly hit her then, but instead forced himself to breathe deeply several times, unclenching his rigid fist. A bruise wouldn’t fade easily from a dead body, and he wanted her reasonably unblemished.

Ideally, he wanted to postpone this moment. With the previous girl, he’d actually had a romantic candle-lit dinner just before the transformation. It was nice.

But not necessary.

**Chapter 2**

***Dale City, Virginia, Thursday, July 14, 2016***

Katy Baxter sat up in the darkness, a scream wedged in her throat, her fingers clutching the bedsheets. Her body shook slightly, and her heart thrummed in her chest. Her relief at realizing she was in her bedroom was palpable. *Just another nightmare.* She knew it would come when she went to sleep. The nightmares always came back when she got the brown envelopes in the mail.

She hated herself for being so easily manipulated, so weak.

She picked up her phone from the nightstand and checked the time. The bright light of the screen made her blink, spots danced in her vision. Twenty-one minutes past four. *Damn it.* It was just early enough to start the day rather than having a chance to coax herself back to sleep. It would be a seven cups of coffee kind of day. No way she could manage with her usual five.

She got up and untangled herself from the blanket, shivering as the cold air caressed her bare torso and shoulders. She had managed to twist it several times around her waste during the night. She turned on the light, blinking. Through the window, she watched the building opposite her, still shrouded in the night’s darkness. All its windows were dark. She was one the first in the street to wake up—an undesirable achievement. She looked at the messy bed, clothes on the floor, the scattered books on her nightstand. Chaos, in her mind and out of it.

*Katy*, she recalled the voice from her dream, *open the door. Can’t stay in there forever, Katy.* And then that giggle, the sound of a man consumed by need.

She shuddered and shook her head. She was thirty-three years old, damn it. She wasn’t a child anymore. When would her memories release their hold on her?

Probably never. The past had a way of sinking its roots deep inside. That’s something she, of all people, should know. How many of her subjects had been permanently scarred and changed by their own pasts?

She plodded into the bathroom, discarding her shirt and underwear on the floor behind her. The water of the shower cleared her head, helped her to shake loose the last threads of sleep. The shampoo bottle was empty. She filled it with some water to get the dregs, and came up with nothing. She had used this trick yesterday, and three days ago. If she wanted shampoo, she’d have to buy some. She let the water caress her skin a bit more. Refreshed, she walked out of the shower, thinking, *add shampoo to shopping list. Add shampoo to shopping list.* She rummaged through the clothes on the floor, finding nothing she wanted to wear. Opening the closet, she located a button-down blue shirt and black pants and put them on. *Add shampoo to shopping list.* She combed her auburn hair impatiently, stopping once the worst tangles were gone. *Add shampoo to shopping list.*

She plodded to the kitchen and switched on the light. Her eyes immediately focused on the king of the kitchen: the coffee machine. She walked over and picked up the jar of the Colombian ground coffee that stood next to it. She never ran out of coffee, not since the debacle back in the summer of 2011. Two filters in the machine, to make it stronger. She needed an aggressive caffeine jolt to get her going in the morning. She put a small mountain of coffee inside the filters, then added a bit more. She poured the water on top, then turned the machine on, watching the beautiful sight of coffee trickling into the pot.

While she waited for the liquid of life to brew, she walked to the shopping list on the fridge door and stared at it. There was something she had to add. Finally, she wrote down toilet paper. It was a safe bet; she was always running out of toilet paper. She returned to the machine and poured the coffee into her favorite, albeit chipped, white mug, ignoring the row of unused mugs on the shelf. They had been exiled from use for being too small or too large, or having a thick lip or an uncomfortable grip. The coffee mug Hall of Shame.

She sipped the brew, inhaling as she did. She stood next to the machine, just drinking and enjoying the feeling of coffee spreading through her body, until the mug was empty.

*One. Six more to go.*

The brown envelope laid on the wooden kitchen table, the grey strip of cloth protruding from it. She had discarded it there the night before, as if trying to prove to herself she didn’t care, that it didn’t matter anymore.

Now, in the darkness of early morning, it seemed like a stupid thing to have done. She picked up the envelope and walked over to her home office where her desk was. She gathered her courage and opened the desk’s bottom drawer, the one that she almost always kept closed.

A small stack of similar envelopes lay inside. She shoved the newest envelop onto the pile, crumpled it, and slammed the drawer shut. She felt better. She walked back into the kitchen, her steps a bit lighter.

As the clutches of the nightmare faded she realized she was starving. Here’s the one good thing about waking up early: she had ample time to make herself some breakfast. She cracked two eggs into the frying pan, let them sizzle, put a piece of bread in the toaster. She decided she deserved a dollop of cream cheese on her plate as well. She smiled as she slid the eggs out of the frying pan and laid them gently on the plate. Both yokes remained unbroken. A win for Katy Baxter. She cut the toast into triangles, then carefully dipped one of them in the round, yellow center and bit into it.

And the thing to really go with this breakfast was a cup of coffee. She poured herself another one.

*Two.*

She glanced at her phone again. Five-thirty. Still too early to go to work. But the thought of staying in this silent apartment, with the envelope lurking in the drawer, was unpleasant.

*If I need to break this door, you’ll regret it, Katy.*

She went downstairs and slid into her cherry-colored Ford Fiesta. She switched the engine on, and put on Taylor Swift’s “Red,” fast forwarding to “All Too Well.” Taylor’s voice and guitar filled the car’s small interior, soothing Katy’s frayed nerves. She could always count on Taylor to make it all better.

The streets of Dade City were nearly empty. The sky was still dark, and a shade of dark blue signified the approaching sunrise. Katy enjoyed the silence as she drove down Dale Boulevard. She’d make herself a fourth cup of coffee when she’d get to work, she decided. Those cups should carry her until lunchtime. She got off on Fuller Road, the road signs to Quantico leading the way.