

What follows is my editorial report on The Road to El.

The first thing I have to tell you is how much I love this story! I love the characters of Taryn, El, and Paul and how their relationship comes together. I think the pacing is great, as there's no point in the story where anything drags. The sex is hot! Overall, it's just an awesome story.

There are some things I think could use some work. They are as follows:

El's Character

As much as I love him, I think El is just a little bit too close to perfect. He really doesn't do anything wrong. Even when he loses his temper, he mostly keeps it inside. He could really punish Taryn for keeping Paul from him for 16 years, but he doesn't.

On that note, Paul is the perfect father, even with very little experience. Yes, he works with kids, but working with other people's kids is so different from having your own, especially since he hasn't been around to raise Paul from birth. I wonder if he could make some kind of a mistake with Paul. It doesn't have to be anything major, but it just seems like they take to each other so well and so quickly, it doesn't seem realistic. Just some kind of typical father/son disagreement.

The only minor flaw I see in El is that he criticizes Taryn for being so controlling of Paul, and then he tries to control her dating life. That seems like a bit of a double standard. Maybe there could be another small flaw or two, just to make him seem a little more realistic.

Paul's Character

Here's another place where you can make a character seem more realistic. Paul acts like the typical teenager when he's with Taryn. In fact, maybe even a little worse than the typical teenager. The fights they get into seem pretty intense. At that point, he really does seem multi-dimensional.

But then, when he meets El and starts to spend time with his father, suddenly he's perfect. He gets a job, saves a kid from drowning, gets a social life... His mother wanted him to do these things (maybe not the saving a kid) but after his accident he withdraws. That's normal. But how does he come out of this so quickly when he arrives at El's? Doesn't it seem like it's a little bit too quick of a change?

Maybe Paul and El can get into some intense moments. El can try to be "fatherly," and Paul can say something like, "You've been my father for five minutes. Stop running my life," or something like that.

I just want to see Paul be more like a typical kid with both his mom and his dad. And that doesn't seem to be happening right now.

On another note with Paul, I'm not sure I understand the arm issue. He was attacked by a shark. But did he have to have part of his arm amputated, or is the arm just very mangled? And even if it was mangled, wouldn't it heal at some point to where it wouldn't

look so awful? And wouldn't he still be able to swim, although not at Olympic speeds? I get that the injury was serious, but what exactly happened to the arm? I see you say there's a chunk out of it, and it doesn't fill out a sleeve, but I'm still a little confused.

Ava's Character

In all honesty, I'm not sure what purpose Ava serves in the story. I get that she becomes Taryn's friend. But she shows up, they hang out a little bit, and then she's gone.

She's in town to work on some kind of a case. Why not turn that into a subplot? Maybe it could have something to do with Gabe or Zeke. Maybe she's investigating one of them for something. She could even find out she was wrong in her investigation, and could have a thing with Gabe or Zeke.

Or perhaps she could help Taryn with the logistics of getting El's name on Paul's birth certificate.

I just think that as she stands right now, she doesn't do much to advance the plot. If you don't want to give her more of a story arc, I would suggest taking her out.

Taryn's Accident

This is one place where I think you miss a big opportunity for Paul and El to further their bonding. You have, in the end of Chapter 35, Taryn having the accident and Paul and El finding out. The next chapter shows them in the hospital. I think there could be a great chapter in there about El telling Paul, Paul freaking out, El having to calm him down all while keeping himself in check. You could go through the mad dash to get a flight and get to the airport, then to the hospital for Taryn. It could make for some very emotional material for El and Paul. And Paul could even backslide here. Even though he's getting along with El, until he realizes his mother is going to live, he can be panicked and rude to El about having to stay with him. El can even fight back. But of course, it's all coming from a place of fear.

The way the story reads now, we don't even see the accident happen or the immediate aftermath of Taryn getting to the hospital. How does the accident happen? How does Marie find out and call El? Is Marie listed as Taryn's emergency contact? If not, how did she get the news?

Also, El and Paul finding out about the accident is cut pretty short. I think there could be much more drama involved with this.

A Couple of Smaller Things

I said above that the sex was hot, and it really is. And for the most part, it's anatomically correct and easy to picture. But there is one place where I don't think their bodies are physically capable of being in the positions they are in. On page 235, she's bent over the side of the bed on her knees, and I'm imagining her back is to him, but he's kissing her face and breasts. Wouldn't she have to turn over for that to happen? I pointed that out in the manuscript.

There's also one scene on page 242, when there seems to be some confusion over who is driving, Taryn or Ava. I pointed that out in the manuscript as well.

The comments you'll see in the manuscript are the copyediting changes, and they are very few. Your writing is quite clean. The bigger issues that I've mentioned above are not commented on in the manuscript, because I felt the comments would be too long.

I'm happy to meet with you via phone or Zoom to discuss these changes if you have any questions.

Let me say again that I think this is a fantastic book. I can't wait to see what you do with these suggestions.