




Wait... do I have no notes?


This reader's first page is so good...



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Happy Friday! Today's reader first page is SO GOOD YOU GUYS! Seriously, I got to the end of the sample and I was like I HAVE NO NOTES?

That has never happened before.

I managed to dig deep to come up with EXACTLY ONE note to help the writer take this page to the next level, but I'm not kidding, if this had popped up in my inbox back when I was a literary agent's assistant, I would have had no choice but to keep reading to see what happens next. In fact, now that I'm thinking about it, I'm not even sure if my note makes the entry better so, if you disagree, be sure to let the writer know in the comments so they can decide whether or not they want to change it.

I hope you all enjoy it as much as I did! And, as always, if you're interested in submitting a page for me to crit, feel free to DM me on this app. I have a bit of a backlog at the moment, but I'm (slowly!) making my way through all the entries. Thank you so much for your patience!

The Twenty-Seven Club

I've always been a little superstitious.

DV: Great opening line. Fun fact, this is nearly identical to the opening line I was using for Delicate Condition for several drafts! I ended up changing it for theme reasons but I love it.

Probably everyone is, at least on a subconscious level. Some people bee-line around ladders. Others find affirming signs in burnt toast. Everyone has their thing.

DV: Your voice is coming through strongly. Keep it up!

My superstitions run the gamut, because I avoid bad luck like Midtown at lunchtime, if I can help it. Usually, this involves incorporating things proven to go "right" into my regular routine: I always take the northwest stairs from the 23rd Street station, for example, since I once scraped my palms tripping up the northeast stairs. I don't have a mother with a back to break, but I still avoid cracks in the pavement. You know. Just in case. My most important superstition, though, is knowing that when something bad happens, there will almost always be two more misfortunes on the way. R train delayed and late for work? Better take the stairs, not the temperamental elevator. Lose your ten dollar bill and burn your tongue on bodega coffee? I'd like to see you try getting that espresso stain out of your slacks tonight. In times like these—like, right now—when the last Bad Thing is so imminent that the orchestral theme from JAWS is practically filling the leafy, Mount Sinai Hospital courtyard around me, the best thing to do is brace for impact. Strap in, loser. Something is coming.

DV: I do not say this often but I have... no notes? Or maybe that's not true, but I have very, very, VERY few notes. This is a near perfect opening sequence. You do a phenomenal job of establishing a strong, authoritative voice. At this point, I'm confident in your ability to keep me engaged through an entire novel. Your prose is well thought out and well structured. You easily switch between details and interior monologue and voicey asides. You even do this truly remarkable thing where you include little details throughout this section to help ground me. I know from the "Midtown at lunchtime" and "23rd Street station" that we're in Manhattan. I know from "Mount Sinai Hospital courtyard" that your main character is probably a doctor or a nurse, or that she works in health care in some way. And reading between the lines here, I can tell that your main character is a little OCD as well as a little superstitious. She's coming across so strongly.

But even I have to admit I'm surprised when the Something is the wet splat of a warm, gritty fluid on my bouncing, bare knee. My first thought is that a tiny New Jersey tomato has just been flung in my direction, maybe shot out of the back end of a deli sandwich. Then the distinct beat of wings rustles the ginkgo overhead. An off-duty nurse in scrubs dashes toward me, cafeteria napkins in one fist, a lit cigarette in the other. "Damn rats with wings," she says. "You okay hon?" There's legitimate worry in her weathered face like I've just been struck by a freefalling air conditioning unit rather than the excrement of an errant pigeon.

DV: Okay, we've made it to the end of your sample and I have exactly ONE real note! It's a pretty big one but, seriously, this first page is so good that I know you can handle it.

With all the build up around superstitions, I was expecting you to get RIGHT into a larger conflict here. I'm not sure where you're going with the story, of course, but I was expecting your MC to get fired or slam into the love interest in a meet-no-so-cute moment or find out her mom died or something. Basically, you've done a great job of building some major dread in just one page (seriously, bravo) and now I want a just as big pay-off. Unless the pigeon poop leads to a bigger problem—she has to change her clothes, making her late for surgery, meaning she gets put on probation, meaning she meets the love of her life, etc.—I think you can dig a little deeper here and take us right to the action.

Of course, this is just my initial instinct from reading not even 1,000 words of your WIP, so take it with a grain of salt! But that's my guy feeling from reading this.

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