



Analysis, Critique & Recommendations

Interim: The First Three Chapters

The Ghost

Author: Lynda Fletcher

By Badman Publishing

8th July 2025

Analysis, Critique & Recommendations

Report type: Interim: The First Three Chapters

Book Title: The Ghost

Author: Lynda Fletcher

Date: 06 January 2026

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Story Critique
3. First Three Chapters Analysis
Accomplishments | Observations | Improvement Actions
4. Story Elements – Strengths | Weaknesses | Challenges
5. Narrative Insights
6. Next Steps
7. Conclusion
8. Additional Member Resources & Services

Disclaimer

This report is for the first three chapters of your book, and not the whole manuscript.

Literary Agents and Publishers being queried or pitched to normally only require the first three chapters together with directed comments and not the whole book.

This Analysis, Critique & Recommendations Report is based solely on our analysis and opinion of the contents of the document submitted by the Author. It does not refer to platform specific page formatting or book covers. This advisory report is provided in good faith and reflects our analysis of the manuscript using a combination of propriety document analysis software and our own professional opinions based on our experience as independent authors and providers of independent publishing services. Other party's opinions and conclusions may differ based on their own experiences and frames of reference.

Introduction

This critique is compiled for first-time novel writer, Lynda Fletcher. "The Ghost" is planned as a Roman historical novel of a young man, whom the reader meets as a sword-for-hire. The storyline will explain that he is not some thug but has ethics and works where justice cannot be found.

"Distancing himself from a mission (the prologue) until the heat dies down, he stays with a Silk Merchant in another town. While staying there, he helps the merchant and other traders get out from under the protection racket of a local mob boss. The merchant's daughter, Julia, is placed under his care (a bodyguard) to go to relatives in the countryside, away from unwanted attention in the town. Their adventures on the road will unfold, and Grantius (aka The Ghost) reveals his backstory and how he ended up doing what he does.

Our Story Critique

The Ghost opens with confidence, atmosphere, and a strikingly controlled point of view.

Across the prologue and first three chapters, the consensus is clear: you have a strong grasp of historical texture, a compelling central figure, and a steady narrative hand.

Grantius feels lived-in from page one—competent, restrained, morally complex—and the Roman-inspired setting is rendered with sensory precision that never tips fully into exposition dump. Comment: "quietly immersive rather than showy," which is high praise in this genre.

That said, the editors also converged on a few friction points. The prose occasionally leans toward over-explaining logistics and routine, which slightly blunts tension—especially after violent or emotionally charged moments. Several editors flagged that while Grantius is fascinating, his inner conflict lags behind his outer competence. We see what he does exquisitely; we're still waiting to feel why it costs him something. The Julia POV shift is effective but abrupt, and its purpose isn't fully clear yet beyond introducing Tiberion's household.

Overall verdict:

This is solid, professional historical fantasy groundwork with real promise.

With tighter pacing, sharper emotional stakes, and a clearer signal of the story's larger arc, *The Ghost* could move from "well-written" to genuinely gripping.

First Three Chapters (10,000 words) Analysis

Accomplishments and observations:

1. Atmosphere & sensory control are excellent. We liked the inn, the baths, and the street murder for their restraint and specificity.
2. Grantius is a credible, competent professional. His methods feel "earned", and not flashy.
3. Historical texture feels authentic without feeling like a lecture. The Roman details are embedded naturally in action.
4. Violence is efficient, not indulgent. This story demonstrates that the brutality serves character and not the spectacle.
5. The bathhouse gossip scene is doing real narrative work, demonstrating smart, organic information delivery.

Observations

1. Emotional interiority seems to lag behind action. It is felt that Grantius needs more felt consequence
2. Pacing slackens in travel and routine sequences. The pacing comes across as repetition without escalation.
3. Julia's POV arrives "abruptly". Analysis suggests clearer framing or thematic purpose.
4. It is felt the early "theme" of the story is implied but not clearly stated. A sharper signal of what this story is about, beyond competence, is recommended.

Improvement Actions:

1. Grantius lacks explicit inner conflict
Reason – Readers admire him but don't yet *bond*
Remedy – Add brief, pointed internal resistance after killings or moral decisions
2. Core theme not yet declared
Reason – Stakes feel local, not inevitable
Remedy – Seed a line or image tying “protection” to his identity in Ch. 1
3. Travel sequences over-detailed
Reason – Momentum dips when this happens
Remedy – Compress routine actions unless they change risk or mood
4. Julia POV transition “abrupt”
Reason – Risks reader disorientation
Remedy – Add a stronger scene hook or thematic echo to Grantius
5. Repetition of competence beats
Reason – Diminishing returns
Remedy – Maybe let one mistake or near-miss occur
6. Some sentences over-qualify
Reason – Dilutes punch
Remedy – Trim adverbs and explanatory clauses
7. Occasional passive constructions
Reason – Softens tension
Remedy – Flip to active voice during action beats

Story Elements – Strengths, Weaknesses & Challenges

Strengths,

1. Setting: The setting is convincing, immersive, consistent
2. Dialogue: The dialogue is Natural, period-appropriate, efficient

Weaknesses

1. Plot: The plot is made up of clear events, but larger arc still implicit
2. Character(s): Grantius is strong externally but thinner internally
3. Description: The description is strong overall. Minor tightening is advised.

Challenges

1. Stakes: Personal stakes are hinted, but not yet pressing.

Narrative Insights

This story aligns well with quiet historical fantasy and professional assassin narratives, stories where restraint and competence are the appeal.

However, the market expectation is that such protagonists eventually confront a moral fracture: loyalty vs. conscience, duty vs. identity, survival vs. meaning. You are clearly setting this up (the dream, the Moneylender, “protection”), but the signal is still too subtle for early chapters.

Structurally, the book currently reads like a confident slow burn. That’s not a flaw, but it means clarity of theme and emotional through-line becomes non-negotiable. Readers will follow patience if they trust the direction the story is taking.

Moving forward

Well done so far, don't let up, - maintain your momentum!

We recommend you make the following improvements to what you have written so far:

1. Strengthen Grantius' inner reactions.
2. Clarify the thematic promise by end of chapter one.
3. Compress non-escalating travel beats.
4. Reframe Julia's POV entry for purpose.
5. Add one small failure or complication.
6. Do a prose tightening pass focused on "punch".

For the rest of your manuscript, we suggest that you;

1. Continue writing by encompassing the analysis and feedback of your first three chapters to make the rest of your manuscript as good as you intend.
2. Check out our “The Slippery Stepping Stones between Sketching and Sales” articles which illustrate recommended best practice as well as the unexpected pitfalls of do-it-yourself publishing.
3. Continue checking your manuscript as you make progress, staying true to the plotlines and character arcs.
4. We suggest taking on board our feedback and making the necessary changes to improve your manuscript before submitting to a literary agent or publishing house.

When you are ready to publish

1. Do a complete spelling and grammar line by line check. Look out for words such as two/too/to which spell checking often misses.
2. Make sure your story, its plot lines and its characters are all consistent
3. You will need to consider formatting your document to match the requirements of your chosen publishing platforms
4. Check out our resources for advice and guidance for all of the above.
5. Consider using us professionally again with one or more of our other professional services on the next page.

Can we help you again?

As you complete your manuscript ready to the point of publishing You can opt to use the following pro services in addition to our online resources

These optional extra pay-as-you-use services include, platform specific document formatting, submission to literary agents, publishers or platforms such as Amazon KDP, as well as complimentary listings and showcasing on the Badman Publishing website and other channels.

Full pre-publishing check

This bundle includes a complete ready-to-publish manuscript final assessment, together with a publishing guide and checklist.

- It also includes a “Market Position for Agents and Publishers” Report. (Pitch Document) which contains an agent/publisher focused executive summary and a “one-paragraph hook”
- Market position factors including the main category, primary and secondary genres, tone, relevant targeted audience. The key differentiators which will make your book more likely to sell plus any comparable titles
- Three agent and publisher-orientated pitch queries.

Marketing Pack

People buy with their eyes, therefore quality and attractive covers of your book, and the images used on web pages, social media and print media are supremely important. We can help you produce attractive book covers and spine, as well as Images for social media. (2D flat covers and spine, Social Media sized featured images, 3D models of your book, both as a standalone and also on devices, etc.)

Publishing your book jointly with you

We can also help you by;

- Formatting/publishing your print or e-book to the platforms of your choice
- Showcasing your book on our own online and social media channels
- Create (increasingly popular) audiobooks of your work
- Create video books with images, narration and subtitles.