

Melinda Jasmine Crouchley

Editor

Finding the Vein, Jennifer Hanlon Wilde
Developmental Edit + Line Edit

Dear Jennifer Hanlon Wilde,

Thank you for sharing the manuscript for *Finding the Vein* with me. This was a riveting, complicated mystery filled with strong confident prose, following the trials and tribulations of complex characters getting to the bottom of their own personal mysteries, as well as the death of a Heritage camper.

The strength of this story is in the way all of the inter-linked pieces are navigated and eventually come together. There is a lot of solid plotting that had to go into creating this story, and the tidbits and nuggets and details are expertly sprinkled throughout.

I'm extremely excited to tackle this project with you and have highlighted key areas of improvement throughout the manuscript. The following notes will cover the main elements of storytelling, focusing on narrative, structure, and language, as well as the subcategories that fall under those headings. If you are accessing this document via Google docs, there is a handy sidebar outline feature to help you easily navigate between subject areas.

To access this feature:

- Click on "View" in the menu
 - Select "Show document outline"
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NARRATIVE

This narrative section is focused on the finer points of story, the elements that make the story what it is like the characters, the setting, and what elements ring true or false to a reader. We'll look at how character and setting are used in the manuscript, as well as any issues of verisimilitude cropping up in the text.

CHARACTERS

Finding the Vein uses third person narrative and relies mainly on the characters of Isaac, a Heritage camper, and Mikie, the lead detective on the Paul Anderson case to tell the bulk of the story. Paul Anderson, Genevieve Rice, and Detective Jim Wu each also get a perspective chapter so we become closer to them. These are the primary characters that comprise the voices of *Finding the Vein*, but along the way we meet a handful of characters also enmeshed in the plot. Since we've been introduced to certain characters whose choices impact the narrative, it seems important to fully flesh them out and give them greater agency and dimension.

First, we'll look at all the named characters in the manuscript and their roles:

Major Characters

Paul Anderson
Isaac Whitson
Detective Mikie (last name)
Detective Jim Wu
Paul Shaw
Genevieve Rice
Sophie Rice
Tanya Miller

Minor Characters

Ty Janssen
Will/Mai Miller
Nathan
The Twins (Max and David)
Katie Martinson
Piper
Little Betty
Grace Chang (coroner)
Rachel (nurse, Emanuel)
Mr. Anderson
Mrs. Anderson
The Anderson Sister in Law
Mr. Dollarhyde (insurance)

Minor Characters (cont.):

Frank (EMT)

Jack (EMT)

Juanita (EMT)

Jamie (boyfriend)

Dr. Kitchener (Emanuel)

Tiffany Jones (newbie officer)

Melissa (brother's new girlfriend)

Michelle (Isaac's therapist)

Colin (IT Ninja)

There are eight main characters, and 22 additional named minor characters, some of whom are only mentioned once, and some of whom re-occur throughout the manuscript.

A few brief character name suggestions:

- **Give Mikie a last name** as nearly every other major named character has a first and last name.
- **Give Paul Anderson ONE name for consistency.** Isaac in particular calls him Paul Anderson, Paul A, and P.A. It's confusing for the reader. For symmetry sake, Paul Anderson is the best option because it mirrors Paul Shaw with the full first and last name.

CHARACTERS TO CUT

Jamie the boyfriend seems to be a subplot that is not resolved by the end of the manuscript. There is only one interaction between Jamie and Mikie, referenced in a flashback, and he is not mentioned again until a later scene with the nurse Rachel, and then at the end of the novel there is a short throwaway line about him.

Perhaps if Mikie were to pick up the phone and call him to wish him good luck at his gig, or at any other point interact with him in the way that is indicative of a relationship, that would further augment her character. As it stands, Jamie is a weird blip. Of course, he could be standing in for her full devotion to a case at the expense of a personal life/love life. If that's the case, there should be some higher stakes for Mikie in this relationship. If it's troubled or on the rocks, that needs to be a bigger part of Mikie's story

At the moment, his presence is more of a distraction than a boon to the story. Eliminating him as a named character and as a small subplot device would free up readers attention for the more important aspects of the mystery.

Other characters to consider eliminating as “named:” The Anderson sister-in-law that greets the detectives at the door. She does not need to be named (see specific line edit). The insurance agent (Dollarhyde). Melissa (the girlfriend).

CHARACTERS TO EXPAND

GENEVIEVE RICE

Genevieve Rice is the ultimate bad guy of the story as she commits the act leading to Paul Anderson’s death. But aside from being a nurse and a strong love for her daughter Sophie, very little is known about her. We get some extensive background details on Ty Janssen, Tanya Miller, and even Paul Shaw.

But Genevieve is something of a blank slate. As a suspect, someone should do a little digging on her background. Wu especially seems to like her for the murder, so if there’s some exchange between he and Mikie indicating that he did a background check and talked to someone (husband, ex-husband, etc), that would help flesh out her backstory a little better and even dissuade the reader from considering her a prime suspect. Or heighten the reader thinking she is a suspect, depending on what angle you want to play up.

SOPHIE RICE

Sophie is one of those characters that we know primarily through others views of her. First Paul Anderson, then her mother, then Isaac, and then Mikie. I wonder if you have ever considered giving her a perspective chapter. The plot really does revolve around her and at the moment she seems to lack so much agency in this story that she is directly involved in but which is playing out around her.

It would also let us see more of Genevieve Rice if we could view her through her daughter’s eyes. We could understand more about the complicated relationship between mother and daughter, and revealing details would likely better implicate Genevieve in the cast of guilty characters.

What if Sophie was revealed to have the robe and passport prior to the end chapter? Her innocence is rarely in question and an objective moment where she is coveting

these stolen items from a recently murdered person and talking about the guilt she feels would give readers even more to chew on in terms of motive.

Ultimately the reader wants a little more direct connection with Sophie.

RACHEL (The Nurse)

Rachel the nurse is a little too convenient for the plot and for Mikie to lean on. It would have been interesting to see Mikie trying to puzzle this out on her own, as a former nurse, playing with the epi-pen and piecing it together using her detective skills. Rachel having both treated Will Miller AND solved the puzzle about the epi-pen feels a little Deus Ex Machina. Unless, of course, Rachel is a little more invested in the story and with Mikie.

What if Rachel was Jamie? What if Mikie was still connected to the nursing world via her significant other? Or what if she and Rachel were part of a mystery novel group or both also shared a passion for true crime? Rachel needs some other element to connect her to doing all this detective work and for being so invested in this particular crime. And if she is a major player in solving the mystery, the reader should know a little more about her besides that she has seniority working the day shift (although we only see her working night shifts in the story).

CHARACTER EXERCISE

- ❑ Create profiles of important named characters, especially Genevieve Rice, Sophie Rice, and Rachel.

- ❑ Create at least one new, relevant to the narrative scene for each of these characters based on information developed in the profile.

Genevieve needs more backstory surrounding her possessiveness of Sophie. Sophie needs to have more agency in the narrative and despite Paul Shaw's insistence, should be considered as a suspect. Rachel needs more personal stake in the investigation and the relationship with Mikie should be more fleshed out.

SETTING

Setting is a major part of any story and either augments or detracts depending on how its treatment is handled. In *Finding the Vein*, the story is set in Oregon, somewhere near the Sandy/Troutdale area at a campsite used by the Heritage adoption agency for international adoptees. While familiar to Portland-area locals, these settings will be unfamiliar to those outside of the Pacific Northwest, and therefore could use more articulation and description.

GENERAL SETTING

The exact location of Heritage camp is a bit muddled to the reader. As a local, having been to the YMCA Camp Collins location, that was immediately where my mind went. So again, somewhere in the Troutdale/Sandy area. Lake Sandy is referenced but a quick Google search indicates this might be an entirely fictional setting. That's OK, but the reader is going to need some kind of indication of where these are in conjunction to the next major city or in the state of Oregon itself.

Think of setting a scene like one of those establishing shots at the beginning of a movie. We need to be zoomed out a little to be able to zoom in and understand where we are as a reader. This doesn't have to take up entire blocks of text. A few sentences or a short paragraph ought to do the trick. Especially in the first chapter or the first three chapters.

It's also unclear whether all of the camp attendees are local or if they're flown across the country (as some camps are set up this way). My guess is these campers are all local, as many of their parents arrived swiftly to pick them up following Paul Anderson's death.

Questions:

- *Whereabouts in Oregon is this camp located?*
- *How many of the campers are local?*

HERITAGE CAMP

It was also difficult to note the layout of the camp itself, as we don't get a general description until Mikie arrives on the scene in Chapter 4. This could be mitigated a couple of ways, through much clearer description in the first three chapters, or a map included in the front of the book. The reader could imagine different scenes in their particular settings, but by the end still might not have a solid understanding of where the cabins and communal areas are in relation to one another.

Getting that out of the way up front will help mitigate reader confusion down the line. It doesn't have to be more than a paragraph or two, and can be sprinkled throughout the first chapter into the second chapter.

INVESTIGATION TRAVELS

Mikie and Wu drive all over the Portland metro area to conduct interviews and again, for the Portland local it will be easier to place those locations in their minds eye and understand the time and distance traveled. For the unfamiliar reader, it's going to be tougher to get a mental picture of where some of these locations are, especially since Troutdale and the hospital are not given much description or placement in the map. It's not even indicated where in Portland the St. Vincent's or Emanuel hospitals are located. When Genevieve mentioned taking Sophie to Emanuel, it would make more sense for her to go to Adventist hospital near I-205 or Mt. Hood Legacy hospital in Gresham.

THE WEATHER

As a local it was somewhat surprising to hear the words "cold" and "damp" referenced so much in the middle of summer. Especially lately, summers have been relatively hot and dry, even in the more forested areas around Eagle Creek, Oregon. We definitely have bouts of rain during the summer, but in late July there would likely be more hot days than not.

Some of the weather descriptions can/should be changed to better accurately depict the summer setting.

SETTING EXERCISE

- ❑ Pick a general location for the camp and describe its relation to Portland on a macro and micro level. Especially include the different paths Mikie takes driving all over the city. With traffic being as it is, some trips to farther locations would take far longer than others.

- ❑ Hand draw a map of the Heritage camp, including where the different buildings are in relation to each other, where Lake Sandy is located and maybe where the police station is in relation to the camp.

VERISIMILITUDE

Verisimilitude deals with the “truthiness” of the story. What major elements in it raise questions or concerns for the reader? What seems like too much of a coincidence?

One of the biggest instances of verisimilitude has already been mentioned in the character of Rachel knowing and finding out a little too much. What follows are pointing out where those moments lay and suggestions for how to address them.

Paul Shaw knows too much. Paul Shaw is a fantastic character because he is a modern day Sherlock Holmes and his ability to deduce and notice the small details and weave them together to create a narrative really makes this character strong and compelling. His little quirks and oddities are fun to watch play out too. But the real rub is that in certain areas, Paul Shaw knows too much. Far more than the average sixteen year old would know. He’s too much of a mysterious character, and even as more of his background is revealed, the questions only mount rather than being answered. If Paul Shaw is emancipated, how does he pay for the costs of camp? Does he have a job? Where does he live? What exactly is he doing there? In some ways, Paul Shaw is the biggest mystery of all.

Most of the main adopted characters are Thai and are at Heritage camp. The connection between Heritage and the stolen Thai children needs to be better established and it should take Tanya more time to suss out this connection. What are the odds that Paul Anderson and Sophie would be related? What are the odds that three of the main characters would be the stolen Thai children and all end up at the camp together? There is too much coincidence happening here and a quick throwaway line from Tanya could help remedy that. She could say that she chose to work at this camp because a larger percentage of the campers themselves are Thai. Tanya seems to be the one person who can best explain and clarify this for the reader and if it is all coincidence, at least there should be some more solid explanation around that.

OTHER: CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

There has been suggestion to cut the subplot of the nude photograph and the child pornography ring run by Ty Janssen, and instead weave in a plotline about selling prescription pills. I would agree that is the right direction to move the manuscript in. Instead of the potent visuals of nude or half naked young women, perhaps the visuals on the phones are screenshots of conversations about drug deals. Sophie could be addicted to painkillers following the car accident and the amputation. Perhaps Paul Anderson had been looped in because Ty Janssen was trying to get him to sell some of his anti-depressants/anti-anxiety medication.

I personally don't have an issue with Paul Anderson having a porn addiction, as that's a very real thing that many teenage boys struggle with, but I don't think he would have pictures of underage girls or even "post-pubescent" girls. The picture of Sophie being passed around camp is also something that might conceivably happen, and if Paul Anderson and Sophie were dating, they would likely have exchanged nudes or some various pictures in a state of undress.

OTHER: DIABETES AND INSULIN

There has been suggestion to address the issue about whether or not Sophie not taking the insulin for a few weeks at a young age would have resulted in the loss of her limb.

As someone whose mother-in-law and brother-in-law are diabetic, it does take a considerable amount of damage to a leg (and usually some kind of untreatable infection) before the diabetes would ravage an entire limb.

The suggestion to have Sophie lose her leg in a car accident seems absolutely valid and would only involve the tweaking of a single line.

OTHER: EXPAND THE ADOPTION SUBPLOT

There is veiled suggestion that Mikie was fathered by another man, but it is only hinted at until the final chapter, so the emotional climax moment with her and her father doesn't quite pay off. The mentions need to be made much clearer to the

reader that there is a tense family situation between Mikie and her father. The reader doesn't need to know exactly what.

Perhaps she struggles with the emotions surrounding this throughout the investigation by asking inappropriate questions. Perhaps she pulls Tanya Miller aside and asks about how it feels to be a birth mother in search of your child. Something to that effect. Otherwise, the subplot feels half baked. Mikie is a tough, noiry detective and she might wallow a little in her feelings before finally allowing herself an emotional moment.

The parallels between her personal life and investigation are interesting but underdeveloped. She should be able to feel more for these kids. Perhaps stronger hints that this is why she's so aggressive with this case. Maybe Rachel says something? Have somebody make note of it, and give Mikie something to really lash out against.

STRUCTURE

This structure section is focused on the larger strokes of story, including breaking out the major events and chapter restructuring. We'll look at a plot summary, the chapter structuring, and any additional issues cropping up in the text.

SUMMARY

In *Finding the Vein*, we meet Paul Anderson, an attractive young man with a bright future ahead of him. Except within the first chapter, he's died from an apparent peanut allergy that not even a shot of epinephrine could resolve.

Enter Isaac Whitson, a curious fellow camper and Detective Mikie, a former nurse turned police officer who suspects foul play when she can't find the epi-pen used to try and save Paul's life.

Pretty soon an entire cast of characters is implicated in the crime, as almost everyone has some reason to kill Paul Anderson, including Paul himself. Why did a seemingly healthy and happy 18 year old boy take out a life insurance policy and a will mere months before his death? Was he really planning to attend Reed College that fall or was he destined for a Buddhist monastery in Thailand?

Who is the mysterious young man that used his identification to receive hospital treatment the day before Paul died? There are almost too many questions and Mikie and Isaac work in parallel to find the answers before camp ends and the killer escapes.

MAJOR SCENES

Fifteen major scenes come into play throughout *Finding the Vein*, grouped into thirty-nine chapters. These scenes serve to highlight the major moments of the story.

These scenes unfold via two major main characters, and so that order is preserved below. The scenes are distinguished between present and past timelines.

8 Major Scenes: Isaac

1. Isaac wakes up + letters to Michele
2. Isaac finds the first clue
3. Isaac reveals his knowledge of the pictures
4. The drug exchange goes down
5. Isaac listens in on Ty and Tanya interrogation
6. The Tanya/Will revelation
7. Ty's movie confession + the Nurse confession
8. The Aftermath with Sophie

7 Major Scenes: Mikie

1. Mikie arrives on scene, questions Katie
2. Mikie questions the EMTs
3. The autopsy + suspicious death
4. Mikie questions the Andersons
5. The insurance and epi-pen revelations
6. Back to Heritage camp
7. Dinner with Dad/maybe they got it wrong

Having roughly 39 chapters total means there are a lot of small scenes competing for reader attention and delivering information. Specifically there are multiple chapters in a row with the same character perspective that could likely be folded into one chapter. There are also several one or two page chapters that could be folded together so that one single chapter might feature multiple character perspectives, in the effort to reduce the total number of chapters.

Another suggestion is to eliminate reference to the year, so that the entire book becomes more evergreen. As it stands, this book could easily take place in 2020 or 2025 and there's no real reason to date the book before it's time. Therefore, in the following structure suggestions, I have eliminated reference to the year.

CHAPTER TITLING

The new chapter title suggestions through chapter ten (for brevity sake):

Chapter Sequence	Chapter Title
Chapter One	July 25, 7:30pm - <i>Paul Anderson</i>
Chapter Two	July 1 - July 24 - <i>Isaac Whitson</i>
Chapter Three	July 25, 10:45pm - <i>Isaac Whitson</i>
Chapter Four	July 25, 10:00pm - <i>Detective Mikie</i>
Chapter Five	July 25, 11:30pm - <i>Isaac Whitson</i>
Chapter Six	July 26, 12:00am - <i>Detective Mikie</i>
Chapter Seven	July 26, 12:15am - <i>Isaac Whitson</i>
Chapter Eight	July 26, 1:25am - <i>Detective Mikie</i>
Chapter Nine	July 26, 2:00am - <i>Isaac Whitson</i>
Chapter Ten	July 26, 2:15am - <i>Genevieve Rice</i>

These chapter titles are suggested to keep with the consistency of the first few chapters, which fell off in the middle and then was hit or miss on naming characters as the perspective shifted. The time stamps are based on some of the actual times referenced in the manuscript. As some of the characters hardly seem to sleep, the days begin to blend together and it would be nice to illustrate to the reader how quickly the investigation unfolds over the course of just two or three days. The date and time stamps will quietly add to the reader experience and articulate the timeline.

There are such quick jumps in between chapters that clocking the time will help keep the reader on track. It might even be helpful to include location at certain points since Mikie and Wu do travel quite a bit around the Portland metro area. That could be a good way to quickly establish setting without having to spend too much time describing everything in detail.

CHAPTER STRUCTURE

To reduce the total number of chapters down to a more manageable 30 vs. 39, I'd suggest folding shorter chapters that don't have specific time stamping together. For instance:

- **Chapter Eight and Chapter Eleven** both feature Mikie. Chapter Eleven is a short conversation with Mikie's dad that could easily be tacked onto the end of Chapter Eight without upsetting the timeline.
- **Chapter Thirteen and Chapter Fifteen** also both feature Mikie. They could be cut together with a line break and/or a time stamp to indicate the passage of time.
- **Chapter Sixteen and Chapter Eighteen** both feature Isaac and could be merged without disrupting the timeline.
- **Chapters Thirty-Five through Thirty-Seven** all feature Isaac and could be cut down to two chapters instead of three.

Those are at least four instances where chapters could be reduced and eliminated. Spend some time going back through the manuscript and noting the shorter chapters and where those could be combined with others, again, without disrupting the timeline.

PACING

Most issues in pacing would be solved by sewing together some of the shorter chapters which feel more abrupt and jolting to the reader.

The biggest other issue in pacing is the quick snippet letters to the therapist Michelle. As this was a fun plot device used to provide some of the exposition and backstory on Isaac and the other campers, it would bring some cohesion to the story for Isaac to perhaps even start a letter to Michelle amid the chaos, and then scrap it, but perhaps return at the end to scribble down his final thoughts on the experience.

Otherwise Chapter 2 sticks out as being wildly different from all the chapters with a format that doesn't carry through.

LANGUAGE

DIALOGUE

Finding the Vein has fairly clean, sparse dialogue that is void of most common manuscript issues including too much exposition, over explanatory tags, and extra stage direction. This manuscript suffers none of those challenges.

A few too few dialogue tags. In the line edit you will note a couple places where dialogue tags were suggested because it would be unclear to the reader who was speaking. Otherwise, the sparse use of tags and the almost strict adherence to the three most useful tags (said, asked, replied) are textbook perfect. Well done!

Introductions and name usage. Again, for the most part the dialogue was solid and veered away from too many needless introductions and repetitive use of names in dialogue, but there were a few offenders that were noted in the line edit.

Spelling out accents or vocal tics. The only other issue to fix might be trimming down the instances of writing out the up-speak done by Tiffany Jones. It really becomes annoying for the reader after the first two or three instances. If you tell them she's using up-speak they'll get it and you don't have to spell it out any further.

Dialogue heavy. This isn't a criticism, but more of a congratulations that in such a dialogue heavy manuscript, there was really very little dialogue to edit out or change. Most other edits are noted in the line edit and can be easily fixed.

GLOBAL COPYEDITS

One of the bigger issues to address are double spaces after periods. That was an issue that existed with typewriters but modern word processors do not need double spaces and you will find most book manuscripts do not have them. Please delete throughout the manuscript.

Insert em dashes instead of dash marks throughout. It's a fairly quick find and replace function in any word processing document.

Tightening the language of the book can be quickly remedied by finding every "just, that, had, saw, felt" and either deleting them, or making a good case for why they should remain. Word find is a quick and easy way to view how many instances appear in the manuscript, go directly to the examples, and review each use for relevancy.

- **"Felt" appears 39 times. Example, appearing twice on page 8:**
 - "His throat **felt** tight, his chest raw and itchy. "I could use a Benadryl," he said. A small whistle escaped him as he spoke. "Get your mom - whee - my inhaler- whee-" Now the feeling was congealing in his neck. It **felt** like a panic attack, like he used to have before a party, or a presentation at school, but he knew this was different."

- **"That" appears 579 times. Example, appearing three times on page 9 within three sentences:**
 - "I had to talk myself out of running into the woods and climbing a tree - as you know, **that's** the extent of my athletic ability, but I am truly boss at it. **That** and running from bullies - a related skill. Hey, **that** could be an Olympic biathlon! Sort of like cross-country skiing and shooting, only more useful.

Overall the manuscript does a good job of avoiding using cliché phrases, and veers instead towards unique and interesting descriptions of characters and action. A few instances of the cliché phrases do pop up however, and should be ferreted out and eliminated as much as possible.

- **Example: Page 123** , “Mikie! **Holy Hannah**, it’s been awhile. You okay? You’re not here as a patient?”

DESCRIPTION

Physical setting and descriptions. This was already covered in the setting section so no need to go into much further detail here. The manuscript already does a great job of providing just enough character description and detail without going overboard. There are great uses of sensory details too, including taste, touch, and smell. Sounds could be sprinkled throughout some scenes to provide even more intensity, especially scenes where characters are hiding in closets or in trees (mostly talking about Isaac).

REVISION ROADMAP

Here is a helpful framework for tackling the suggested revisions. The table has organized the suggested revisions into a checklist, with the key points summarized, and a space to indicate if and how the revisions were completed.

Key Revision Area	Revisions	Edit Completed
Child pornography	Change this plotline to one about illegal selling of prescription medication.	
Cut characters	Specifically Jamie, the boyfriend subplot, unless that is getting expanded into something more.	
Expand Mikie Adoption Subplot	More moments of tension with Mikie and birth or adopted parents. More tension with her father.	
Expand Genevieve Rice	Who is she? What is her backstory?	
Expand Sophie Rice	Give her more agency and a change to tell her side of the story	
Chapter Titling + Structuring	- Restructure the suggested chapters and fix the chapter titling	
Setting	First address general setting issues and then add in specific description and details.	
Dialogue	Review line edits and revise based on suggestions.	
Global Copyedits	Review line edit and revise based on suggestions.	

CONCLUSION

This is a fantastic manuscript with many great things going for it, as mentioned earlier. The multiple themes of the story, including love, death, family, international adoption, and obsession are all articulated wonderfully. There are so many exciting opportunities to expand this story, as well as refine what currently exists.

I would encourage you to turn these notes into a checklist for yourself, going through the roadmap outlined above and checking off each item until you have a stronger revision of your manuscript, then submit it for another round of editing.

Please feel free to reach out to me via email, text, or phone with any questions during the revision process, especially if there are points I can further clarify. I am deeply committed to this project, and I very much look forward to reading the new version of *Finding the Vein*. This is such an intriguing mystery with a dynamic cast of characters. I can't wait to see it all come together!

Take Care,

Melinda Jasmine Crouchley