

# **DEVELOPMENTAL FEEDBACK**

## **ON HEROES OF AVANGARD**

### **BY EXZMA**

#### **Overall Reader Reaction**

Okay, so first impression: this prologue swings for the fences. You've got ancient cosmic warfare, a chosen-one moment with a mysterious artifact, and then a hard pivot into a grounded, first-person revenge tragedy. That's a lot of tonal ground to cover in a single opening, and honestly, the ambition is what grabbed me most. The Blightsaw section reads like the opening cinematic of a fantasy epic. Sandstorms, giant armored kings clashing, a desperate mission to hide something world-altering. It's propulsive and visual. I could see it. The transition to Don's narration, though, is where the chapter really locked me in. The shift from third-person mythic grandeur to first-person grit is jarring in a good way. It feels like you're deliberately saying, "The legend is one thing; the truth is another." The emotional beat that hit hardest was Silicia mouthing something Don can't remember. That's a genuinely strong hook. It's not just "my loved one died"; it's "I lost the last thing she gave me, and I don't even know what it was." That's specific. That lingers.

Did I want to keep reading? Yes, mostly because of Don. The Blightscau section sets up the world and the stakes, but Don's voice is what made me care. His flat, beaten-down delivery works because it's clearly armor. You can feel the grief underneath the numbness.

My main questions leaving this: What is the Lost Key, and why did hiding it end the war? How much time has actually passed between the war and Don's present? And what exactly is Don now, in terms of power and identity? The prologue gives me a lot of questions, which is good, but I want to make sure the story is going to answer the important ones.

## **Strengths**

The tonal contrast between the two sections is the strongest structural choice here. The Blightscau section is mythic, third-person, and grand. Don's section is intimate, first-person, and wounded. That contrast does a lot of work. It tells me this world has a legendary past, but the story I'm about to read is about the damage left behind.

Don's voice is distinct and consistent. Lines like "Talking wasted air. Thinking wasted time. Feeling got you killed" and "I didn't smile back. I didn't know how to establish character efficiently. You're not over-explaining him. The reader understands he's damaged, disciplined, and emotionally shut down without you having to say it directly.

The Silicia relationship is sketched with the real economy. You don't give us a long courtship. You give us a lead pipe, a bad joke about his name, and the detail that she talked constantly and smiled like the world hadn't tried to eat her alive. That's enough. When she dies, it lands because we understand what she represented: the first time Don wasn't waiting for an alarm.

The image of Don pumping energy into her chest, screaming for her to say it again, is brutal and effective. That's the emotional anchor of the entire prologue. It's specific, physical, and desperate. It doesn't try to be poetic. It just hurts.

The last line is excellent. "I just can't remember how she said it" is the kind of ending that makes a reader close the book for a second and stare at the wall. It's a clean, devastating button.

## Plot & Story

The prologue is doing a lot of heavy lifting, and for the most part, it works. The Blightscaw section establishes the ancient conflict, the Lost Key, and the fact that whatever happened at the Pyramids of Markilao ended the war. The Don section establishes the protagonist, his origin, his loss, and his current motivation.

That said, there are a few places where the plot mechanics get a little fuzzy.

The Lost Key's function is intentionally mysterious, which is fine, but the immediate consequence of hiding it is a bit abrupt. Blightscaw jams it into the pyramid; there's a massive light explosion, the Key vanishes, and the Lunaranites are already retreating. I understand that hiding the Key ended the war, but the causal link isn't clear. Did the explosion itself drive them back? Did the Key's disappearance remove their objective? Did Vigilzante win the duel? A tiny bit more clarity here would help. Not a full explanation, just a clearer sense of cause and effect.

The Lunar Surgicon sequence moves very fast. Don realizes what the artifact is, runs, gets shot, crashes, unlocks his powers, burns Moonforge, confronts Azor, drops the Surgicon, and then Silicia dies in what feels like a few paragraphs. The emotional weight of her death is strong, but the sequence of events leading to it is compressed. I wanted a little more time with Don's realization about the Surgicon and a little more tension in the standoff with Azor. Right now, Azor feels like a plot device rather than a person. He shows up, offers a job, betrays Don, and dies. He's functional, but he's thin.

The time gap between the war and Don's present is unclear. The header says the C.L. War was 10,000 years ago, and Don's section is labeled "4 Years Ago From Present Time. " So the war is ancient history, and Don's tragedy is recent. That works. But I wasn't sure if the Blightscaw section is meant to be read as literal history that Don knows about or as a separate mythic thread that will converge with his story later. Either way is fine, but the prologue might benefit from a tiny bit of connective tissue between the two sections, even just a thematic echo.

## **Pacing**

The Blightscaw section moves fast and feels appropriately urgent. You drop the reader into the middle of a battle, and the momentum carries through to the moment the Lost Key is hidden. The short paragraphs and clipped dialogue keep the energy up.

The Don section, by contrast, is more measured, which fits the reflective first-person narration. But there are moments where the pacing stumbles.

The Moonforge sequence is the biggest pacing issue. Don agrees to Azor's job, discovers the Surgicon, runs, gets shot, unlocks his powers, destroys the camp, confronts Azor, and loses Silicia all in fairly quick succession. The emotional climax, Silicia's death, lands well, but the events leading up to it feel rushed. I wanted more time in the camp. More time with Don and Silicia's dynamic under pressure. More time with Don's internal conflict about accepting Azor's offer. Even a few more sentences of sensory detail or internal monologue would give the tragedy more room to breathe.

The transition from the Blightscaw section to the Don section is abrupt. The header "DARK DON'S PROLOGUE" and the note about "grounded, punchy narrative flow" feel like authorial scaffolding rather than part of the story. It pulled me out. I'd recommend cutting the explanatory line and letting the shift in voice and tense do the work on its own.

## **Characters**

Blightscaw is likeable enough for the short time we spend with him. He's stressed, out of his depth, and sarcastic about it. Lines like "Why me?!" and "definitely did not sign up for this level of stress" give him a modern, quippy voice that stands out against the epic setting. That's a choice, and it works if the tone of the story is going to be a mix of grand and irreverent. If the rest of the book is more serious, it might feel inconsistent. But in isolation, he's fun.

Vigilzante is a classic heroic sacrifice archetype. He gets one great line: "That wasn't a suggestion. That's an order! GO!" That's enough to establish him as a leader worth following. I don't need more from him in a prologue.

Don is the strongest character here. His voice is consistent, his backstory is clear, and his motivation is simple and powerful. The detail that he remembers every battle and every enemy's face but can't remember Silicia's last words is a great character hook.

Silicia is more of a symbol than a person, but for a prologue, that's acceptable. She represents hope, warmth, and the life Don could have had. The lead pipe introduction and her teasing about his name give her just enough personality to make her death matter.

Azor is the weakest character. He exists to betray Don and die. I don't need a full backstory for him, but a little more texture would help. Why did he want the Surgicon? Was he working for someone else? Did he feel any conflict about what he was doing? Even one line of hesitation or explanation would make him feel less like a cardboard villain.

## **Dialogue**

The dialogue in the Blightsaw section is functional and keeps the action moving. "Keep firing!" and "That wasn't a suggestion. That's an order!" are exactly what you need in a battle scene.

The dialogue in Don's section is sparse, which fits his character. "I'll get us out" and "Let her go" are simple and effective. The fact that Silicia's last words are unheard is a strong choice. It makes the silence do the work.

One small note: "Okay, either you're dead or you're about to explain yourself" is a great line. It immediately establishes Silicia's voice and her relationship with Don. That's the kind of dialogue that does three things at once.

## **Emotional Impact & Reader Engagement**

The prologue's emotional peak is Silicia's death and Don's inability to remember her last words. That moment is earned. The buildup is efficient, and the payoff is devastating. I cared about Don's loss because I understood what Silicia meant to him: she was the first person who made him feel like he wasn't just waiting to die.

The Blightsaw section is more about spectacle than emotion, which is fine for a prologue. It establishes the world and the stakes. But the emotional core of the chapter is entirely in Don's section, and that's where I felt most engaged.

The one moment where my attention dipped was during the Moonforge escape. It happened so quickly that I didn't have time to feel the tension of Don's decision to take Azor's deal or the horror of discovering what the Surgeon was. Slowing that sequence down would make the emotional payoff of Silicia's death even stronger.

## **World-Building & Setting**

The world-building is introduced naturally through action and implication. I don't get a full history lesson, which is good. I understand that there are Celestianites and Lunaranites, that they've been at war, that there's a Dark Universe and a planet called Night, and that Don is from somewhere outside this world's familiar conflicts.

The Pyramids of Markilao, Moonforge, and Foreshade are all vivid enough to visualize without being over-described. The lunar beams, celestial bursts, and silver fire give the world a distinct visual identity.

One thing I'd like a little more clarity on: the relationship between Celestianites and Lunaranites. In the Blightsaw section, they're enemies. In Don's section, the Celestianites are slavers and the Lunaranites are victims. That's an interesting reversal, but I wasn't sure if that was intentional or if I was misreading. If it's intentional, a tiny bit more context would help. If it's not, it might need clarification.

## **Clarity & Potential Reader Confusion**

Most of the prologue is clear. The action is easy to follow, and the emotional arc is well-defined.

The main points of potential confusion:

The Lost Key's function and why hiding it ended the war. I don't need a full explanation, but I need a clearer sense of cause and effect. Right now, it feels like the Key disappears and the enemy retreats because the plot needs them to.

The relationship between the two sections. Are they connected by more than theme? Is Don aware of the ancient war? Does the Lost Key matter to his story? A tiny bit of connective tissue would help.

The timeline. The C.L. War was 10,000 years ago. Don's section is 4 years ago.

That's clear. But I wasn't sure how much time passes between Don's arrival in Foreshade and the Moonforge sequence. Weeks? Months? Years? The emotional weight of Silicia's death depends on how much time they had together.

Don's powers. He unlocks lunar fire, his boots ignite, his wings unlock. Is he a Lunaranite? Something else? The text says he's from the Dark Universe, not Avangard-made, so I'm not sure what his species or power set is. That's fine for a prologue, but I want to make sure the story answers it.

## **Areas for Improvement**

### **1. Slow down the Moonforge sequence.**

This is the biggest issue. Don's decision to take Azor's deal, his discovery of the Surgicon, his escape, his power awakening, and Silicia's death all happen in rapid succession. The emotional climax lands, but it would land harder if the preceding events had more room to breathe. Consider adding a few more beats of internal conflict before Don agrees to the job, a moment of horror when he realizes what the Surgicon is, and a little more tension in the standoff with Azor. Even a few extra sentences would help.

### **2. Clarify the cause and effect of the Lost Key's hiding.**

Right now, Blightsaw hides the Key, there's a light explosion, and the Lunaranites retreat. I understand that hiding the Key ended the war, but the mechanism is unclear. Did the explosion itself drive them back? Did the Key's disappearance remove their objective? A tiny bit more clarity would make the sequence feel less arbitrary.

### **3. Give Azor a little more texture.**

He's functional but thin. One line of hesitation, one hint of motivation, or one moment of conflict would make him feel like a person rather than a plot device. It would also make Don's decision to trust him feel more meaningful.

### **4. Remove the authorial scaffolding.**

The line "The focus is shifted to grounded, punchy narrative flow, raw sensory detail, and direct character emotion" feels like a note to yourself rather than part of the story. I'd cut it and let the shift in voice speak for itself.

### **5. Consider adding a tiny bit of connective tissue between the two sections.**

Even a single line that echoes thematically, or a brief hint that the ancient war and Don's story are connected, would make the prologue feel more unified. Right now, it reads like two separate prologues stapled together. That can work, but a little more cohesion would strengthen it.

## **Chapter Ending**

The ending is the strongest part of the prologue. "I just can't remember how she said it" is a killer final line. It's specific, emotional, and it creates a clear question: What did she say? Will he ever remember? Does it matter?

It also establishes Don's motivation in a way that feels organic. He's not just hunting Celestianites for revenge. He's hunting them because they took the last thing she gave him, and he can't even remember what it was. That's a much more interesting hook than simple vengeance.

The ending provides a satisfying emotional beat while also creating curiosity about what comes next. It's not a cliffhanger in the traditional sense, but it's a strong invitation to keep reading.

## **My Final Verdict**

**Overall impression:** This is an ambitious prologue that successfully establishes a unique world, a compelling protagonist, and a devastating emotional hook. The tonal shift between the two sections is risky but effective, and Don's voice is the standout element.

**Biggest strength:** Don's emotional arc. The Silicia relationship, her death, and his inability to remember her last words are all handled with economy and precision. That's the heart of the prologue, and it works.

**Biggest weakness:** The Moonforge sequence is rushed. The events leading to Silicia's death happen too quickly, which weakens the emotional payoff. Slowing that sequence down would make the tragedy land even harder.

**Most important revision priority:** Expand the Moonforge sequence. Give Don's decision to take Azor's deal, his discovery of the Surgicon, and the standoff with Azor more room to breathe. The emotional climax is strong, but it would be stronger with more buildup.

Does the chapter accomplish what it appears to be trying to accomplish? Yes. It establishes the world, the protagonist, and the central emotional wound. It creates questions and invests the reader in Don's journey.

**Would I continue reading?** Yes. Don's voice and the mystery of Silicia's last words are strong enough to carry me into the next chapter. I want to know what happens to him, and I want to understand how the ancient war connects to his story.

## **Rating: 7.5/10**

The prologue is strong, but it's not perfect. The Blightscaw section is an effective setup, but it's the Don section that carries the emotional weight. With a little more room for the Moonforge sequence to breathe and a bit more connective tissue between the two halves, this could easily be an 8.5 or 9. The bones are solid. The execution just needs a little more patience in the middle.