

“Snow Hill Mansion” by J.D. Cooper

Critique by Coral Coons

“Snow Hill Mansion” had a great premise; however, in several ways, it fell short in execution. The storyline itself seemed jumpy, with several unnecessary breaks in the story and constant shifts in perspective. To put it simply, it didn’t flow well at all. It might have worked better if the third-person narrative had focused solely on Brad’s point of view, since he was the “sole survivor” and part of the big shock ending. The only instance that the breaks and perspective changes would have been helpful is at the very end, when the Navy Captain made the observation about Brad’s eyes. Aside from that, “Snow Hill Mansion” is in dire need of some solid restructuring.

There were also several glaring inconsistencies within the plot; most of them involved scenic details. There weren’t many instances where the characters’ surroundings were described in detail, so it was disappointing to discover how often the details flip-flopped when they were. A good deal of the downfalls of this story could be amended by lending more care to the descriptive language, and addressing the lack thereof in other areas. If that (and the perspective thing) were to be taken care of, the only remaining problems, so to speak, lie in careful editing (such as the addition or removal of commas here and there, and correcting the occasional misspelled word).

“Snow Hill Mansion” did seem to drag its feet a bit in the beginning, but it paid off nicely at the end. There were several great tidbits tied into the original lore of the house; this “loop” was eerily satisfying in a wonderful way. The bit about the color of Brad’s eyes changing was intriguing and a nice way to end the story on a high note (as far as this genre goes, anyway). It leaves a lot of questions in the reader’s mind; while there are perhaps too many, it does leave room for the imagination to run wild into all the possible reasons behind the house’s happenings. In a short story revolving around suspense, this is a nice touch. It’s a shame though that the story didn’t start picking up until closer to the end, but the aforementioned critiques could fix that.

All in all, “Snow Hill Mansion” has fantastic promise. It didn’t quite live up to it, to be sure, but the pieces of the puzzle are there. With a bit more care and attention to detail, it would

be the hair-raising, suspenseful story it's meant to be. It needs a little more work, but it was certainly on the right track.