



Reader Panel Feedback Form

French translation review

Book title reviewed	Bride of the Hollow King
Native language	French
Genre	Dark romantic fantasy / romantasy
Chapters read	Chapters 1–3

Section 1 — Overall Verdict

Chapter 1: Score: 4/5 — Good / mostly natural with minor issues

The translation reads smoothly overall and establishes the dark fantasy atmosphere very well. The prose feels appropriately dramatic and atmospheric, and I was able to read through the chapter without having to stop to work out the meaning. There are a few phrases that feel noticeably translated, mainly where an English structure or image seems to have been carried over too closely into French. These are occasional rather than pervasive, so they do not significantly disrupt the reading experience.

Chapter 2: Score: 4/5 — Good / mostly natural with minor issues

The translation reads smoothly overall and has the right feel for a commercially published fantasy-romance novel. The atmosphere, pacing, and emotional tension come through well, and I rarely felt that I had to work around the translation to understand the scene. A few phrases, particularly in the more metaphorical descriptions, feel slightly too close to the source-language structure and stand out as translated rather than naturally written French. These are noticeable, but they do not seriously disrupt the reading experience.

Chapter 3: Score: 4/5 — Good / mostly natural with minor issues

The chapter reads naturally overall and maintains a strong dark-fantasy/romance atmosphere. The prose is generally fluid, the imagery is vivid, and the dialogue has enough tension to keep the scene moving. I did notice a handful of phrases that feel more translated than originally written in French, particularly where English-style metaphors or sentence constructions have been carried over too closely. They are noticeable, but they do not make the chapter difficult to read.

Section 2 — Genre Feel

Does this read like it belongs in its genre in your language? (1–5)

Chapter 1: Score: 4/5

The translation fits the dark fantasy / gothic-romance genre well. The language is suitably atmospheric, mysterious, and dramatic, with consistent imagery around thorns, shadows, magic, roses, and the dark palace. The pacing also works well for a fantasy opening, moving from confusion and suspense into the first supernatural encounter and then toward the palace.

A few expressions feel slightly too literal or stiff for a commercially published French fantasy novel, but the overall vocabulary, emotional tone, and atmosphere feel appropriate to the genre.

Chapter 2: Score: 4/5

The French feels appropriate for dark fantasy with a strong romantic element. The vocabulary, dramatic pacing, supernatural imagery, and dangerous attraction between the characters all fit the genre well.

The main weakness is that some of the more elaborate descriptions become slightly stiff in French. In those moments, the prose loses some of the effortless quality expected in a published fantasy novel. The overall tone, however, remains convincing.

Chapter 3: Score: 4/5

The genre comes through very clearly. The court, the fae characters, the threatening atmosphere, possessive romance, supernatural bond, and dramatic exchanges all feel appropriate for dark romantasy.

The pacing also works well: the chapter moves from the unsettling palace imagery into the confrontation with the court without becoming static. A few expressions are slightly stiff or overly literal, but the overall vocabulary and emotional register fit the genre.

Section 3 — Voice Consistency

Does the narrator or main character voice stay consistent throughout the sample you read? (1–5)

Chapter 1: Score: 4/5

Shayla's voice remains consistent throughout the chapter. The narration is introspective, sensory, and dramatic, with a suitably elevated tone for the setting. The descriptions of fear and fragmented memory particularly maintain a strong sense of character.

The occasional awkwardness seems to come from literal translation rather than from an inconsistent character voice. I did not notice significant shifts in formality or tone that would make Shayla sound like a different character.

Chapter 2: Score: 4/5

The narrator's voice is generally consistent: introspective, lyrical, sensory, and emotionally heightened. Her mixture of fear, fascination, and attraction toward Caelan remains believable throughout the scene.

The weaker passages feel more like isolated translation choices than changes in character voice or register. The narrator herself remains consistent, and the dialogue also fits the tense, slightly formal atmosphere of the scene.

Chapter 3: Score: 4/5

The narrator's voice remains consistent throughout: emotionally immediate, introspective, and highly sensory. Her reactions to Caelan balance fear, resentment, curiosity, and attraction in a way that remains coherent.

Caelan's dialogue also has a recognizable voice—controlled, formal, threatening, and occasionally revealing more emotion than he intends. The few awkward passages don't feel like genuine shifts in characterization; they mainly seem to come from phrasing that is slightly too close to the source.

Section 4 — Flagged Passages

Chapter 1

- **Paragraph/reference:** Paragraph beginning “Puis la douleur revint...”
- **Passage:** “se déployant à travers mon corps une souffrance à la fois”

What feels unnatural: “une souffrance à la fois” does not sound idiomatic in this context. The meaning is understandable, but the construction feels clearly translated.

Why it affects the reading experience: This comes very early in the chapter, during a passage that otherwise has a carefully crafted, lyrical quality. The awkward phrasing therefore stands out more than it might in a less descriptive passage.

Possible alternative: Something along the lines of “se déployant lentement dans mon corps, une douleur après l'autre,” or a freer reformulation of the image, would sound more natural in French.

Chapter: 1

- **Paragraph/reference:** Paragraph beginning “Je luttais contre l'épine...”
- **Passage:** “Quelque chose d'une taille impossible se dressait devant moi”

What feels unnatural: “d'une taille impossible” is understandable, but it is not a particularly natural way of describing a creature's size in French. It feels like an English construction carried over into the translation.

Why it affects the reading experience: This is the creature's first major appearance, so the wording should ideally heighten the sense of fear rather than briefly draw attention to itself.

Possible alternative: “Une créature d'une taille inimaginable se dressait devant moi” or simply “Une créature immense se dressait devant moi,” depending on the intended intensity.

Chapter: 1

- **Paragraph/reference:** Paragraph beginning “La terreur me saisit...”
- **Passage:** “un ordre primal de fuir”

What feels unnatural: “primal” is possible in French, but this particular expression sounds unusual and somewhat clinical or theoretical compared with the surrounding prose.

Why it affects the reading experience: The passage is otherwise very physical and immediate — the throat tightening, the trembling legs, the instinct to escape. “ordre primal” introduces a more abstract register that feels slightly out of place.

Possible alternative: “un instinct viscéral qui m'ordonnait de fuir” or “l'instinct irrépressible de fuir” would feel more naturally embedded in the narration.

Chapter: 1

- **Paragraph/reference:** Paragraph beginning “Je passai sous une arche...”
- **Passage:** “Ce n'était ni beau ni terrible, mais la forme d'un rêve au bord d'un cauchemar.”

What feels unnatural: The image itself works, but “la forme d'un rêve” after “Ce n'était ni...” creates a slightly artificial construction in French.

Why it affects the reading experience: It is not confusing, and the imagery is effective, but the syntax is noticeable at a point where the description would ideally flow without calling attention to the wording.

Possible alternative: “Ce n'était ni beau ni terrible : c'était comme un rêve au bord d'un cauchemar.” This keeps the same image while sounding more natural.

Chapter 2

- **Paragraph/reference:** Paragraph beginning “Le palais attendait au bout du chemin”
- **Passage:** “il y avait encore une part traîtresse en moi qui souffrait à sa vue.”

What feels unnatural: “Souffrait à sa vue” is understandable, but it does not sound particularly idiomatic in this context. It feels slightly constructed, as though the source-language phrasing has been carried over too directly.

Why it affects the reading experience: It briefly interrupts an otherwise vivid and immersive description.

Optional alternative: Something along the lines of “une part traîtresse de moi-même qui se consumait à sa vue” would sound more natural while preserving the emotional contradiction.

Chapter: 2

- **Paragraph/reference:** Paragraph beginning “Le cavalier ne portait ni heaume”
- **Passage:** “Son regard n'était pas simplement de la reconnaissance ; c'était une attirance brûlante. C'était un contact physique...”

What feels unnatural: The progression from “reconnaissance” to “une attirance brûlante” and then to “un contact physique” is awkward in French. The idea of a gaze feeling physically tangible works, but “c'était un contact physique” sounds too literal.

Why it affects the reading experience: This is one of the clearest moments where the translation becomes visible. The meaning is clear, but the phrasing does not feel like something a French-language novelist would naturally write.

Optional alternative: “Son regard était presque un contact physique” or “son regard me toucha avec une force presque physique” would convey the same sensation more naturally.

Chapter: 2

- **Paragraph/reference:** Paragraph beginning “J'avais déjà vu de beaux hommes auparavant”
- **Passage:** “l'homme devant moi n'était beau d'aucune manière que je reconnaissais.”

What feels unnatural: “D'aucune manière que je reconnaissais” is grammatically understandable but distinctly unnatural in French. It reads like a fairly direct transfer of an English construction.

Why it affects the reading experience: The sentence is meant to introduce an important description of Caelan, so the awkward construction is particularly noticeable.

Optional alternative: “Sa beauté n'avait rien de ce que je connaissais” would sound much more natural while keeping the same meaning.

Chapter: 2

- **Paragraph/reference:** Paragraph describing Caelan's clothing
- **Passage:** “une irisation incolore qui rendait les contours de ses membres momentanément incertains”

What feels unnatural: “Une irisation incolore” is an unusual combination in French. It is possible in a fantastical context, but “irisation” already suggests shifting or rainbow-like colour, so pairing it with “incolore” feels slightly contradictory.

Why it affects the reading experience: The image takes a moment to process and slightly weakens what is otherwise a strong visual description.

Optional alternative: “une étrange irisation,” “des reflets changeants,” or “une lueur presque incolore” would be more immediately natural, depending on the intended visual effect.

Chapter: 2

- **Paragraph/reference:** Paragraph beginning “Cela le blessa”
- **Passage:** “Je le vis dans la glace soudaine qui chassa la douleur de ses yeux.”

What feels unnatural: The image is understandable, but “la glace soudaine qui chassa la douleur de ses yeux” is not a very natural French metaphor. The intended meaning seems to be that a cold expression suddenly replaced the pain in his eyes.

Why it affects the reading experience: Because this is an emotionally significant reaction, the unusual metaphor draws attention to the wording rather than to Caelan's emotional change.

Optional alternative: “Je le vis à la froideur soudaine qui remplaça la douleur dans ses yeux” would read more naturally.

Chapter 3

- **Paragraph/reference:** Paragraph beginning “Une rangée de hauts miroirs bordait les murs.”
- **Passage:** “une peur qu'elle essayait très fort de cacher.”

What feels unnatural: “Essayait très fort” is understandable, but it sounds distinctly conversational and somewhat literal in this otherwise elevated prose. In a French novel with this tone, “qu'elle s'efforçait de cacher” or simply “qu'elle tentait de dissimuler” would feel more natural.

Why it affects the reading experience: The phrase briefly drops the register compared with the surrounding, more atmospheric narration.

Chapter: 3

- **Paragraph/reference:** Paragraph beginning “La main de Caelan se posa au creux de mes reins”
- **Passage:** “un geste de possession destiné à toute la cour.”

What feels unnatural: The meaning is clear, but “un geste de possession destiné à toute la cour” feels slightly analytical and explanatory. The narration elsewhere tends to let physical actions carry the emotional meaning rather than explicitly labeling them.

Why it affects the reading experience: It makes the narration momentarily feel more like commentary on the scene than the protagonist's immediate experience.

Optional alternative: Something more direct, such as “un geste de possession à l'intention de toute la cour,” would at least sound more idiomatic, although the action itself could arguably be left to speak for itself.

Chapter: 3

- **Paragraph/reference:** Paragraph beginning “Alors, il répondit à ma place.”
- **Passage:** “C'était le son de l'hiver, celui des pierres qui grincent l'une contre l'autre au fond de la terre.”

What feels unnatural: The image is evocative, but “les pierres qui grincent l'une contre l'autre” is an unusual collocation in French. Stones generally “crissent” or “se frottent” rather than “grincer” in this particular image.

Why it affects the reading experience: It is an important description of Caelan's voice, so the unusual verb becomes more noticeable than it would in a less prominent sentence.

Optional alternative: “celui des pierres qui crissent l'une contre l'autre au fond de la terre” would sound more immediately natural.

Chapter: 3

- **Paragraph/reference:** Paragraph beginning “Je regardai alors Caelan et vis quelque chose que je n'attendais pas.”
- **Passage:** “leur jugement lui appartenait avant tout.”

What feels unnatural: The intended meaning can be understood, but “leur jugement lui appartenait” is somewhat opaque in French. It takes a moment to work out that the narrator means the court's judgment of her was, in a sense, Caelan's responsibility or concern before anything else.

Why it affects the reading experience: The sentence occurs at an emotionally important moment, so the ambiguity slightly weakens the impact of the realization.

Optional alternative: Depending on the intended nuance, something like “il les laisserait la juger seulement après avoir pris leur jugement sur lui” or a more direct formulation of his responsibility toward her would be clearer.

Chapter: 3

- **Paragraph/reference:** Paragraph beginning “Les mots tombèrent doucement”
- **Passage:** “Ils me firent imaginer une autre version de moi-même...”

What feels unnatural: This is perfectly understandable French, but “une autre version de moi-même” has a slightly modern, translated feel within the otherwise fairy-tale register. It sounds more like contemporary psychological language than the surrounding prose.

Why it affects the reading experience: It is only a small issue, but it briefly changes the texture of the narration.

Optional alternative: “une autre moi-même” would be more compact, or the idea could be expressed through an image of the woman she once was rather than through “version”.

Section 5 — Reader Verdict

After reading the sample, which best describes your reaction as a reader?

Chapter 1

- ☒ I would keep reading — it held my attention and felt natural.
- ☐ I would keep reading but something felt slightly off — note below.
- ☐ I would put it down — the translation itself made reading difficult.

The chapter establishes its atmosphere quickly and gives enough mystery to make me want to continue. The few translated-sounding phrases are isolated and do not interfere significantly with immersion. I would definitely keep reading.

Chapter 2

- ☒ I would keep reading — it held my attention and felt natural.
- ☐ I would keep reading but something felt slightly off — note below.
- ☐ I would put it down — the translation itself made reading difficult.

I would definitely keep reading. The atmosphere and tension between the characters are effective, and the translation is generally easy to read. The occasional awkward or overly literal metaphor is noticeable, but not frequent enough to interfere seriously with the story.

Chapter 3

- ☒ I would keep reading — it held my attention and felt natural.
- ☐ I would keep reading but something felt slightly off — note below.
- ☐ I would put it down — the translation itself made reading difficult.

I would keep reading. The chapter has good momentum and the relationship between Shayla and Caelan is engaging. The occasional translated-sounding phrase is noticeable, but the prose remains sufficiently natural that it does not interfere with the story.

Section 6 — Anything Else

Anything a native reader of your language would notice that we haven't asked about — cultural references that need bridging, genre conventions that are missing, formatting habits specific to your language, or anything else.

Chapter 1

I did not notice any cultural or terminology issues that significantly interrupted the reading experience in this excerpt. The fantasy vocabulary is consistent, and the recurring imagery of thorns, black roses, and silver gives the chapter a strong sense of cohesion.

The main thing I would watch for is an occasional tendency to preserve English structures or images too literally. The translation feels strongest when it prioritizes natural French rhythm and phrasing rather than following the English structure too closely. In this chapter, however, these issues are limited enough that the overall reading experience remains strong.

Chapter 2

Nothing particularly problematic stood out in terms of cultural references or genre conventions. The terminology surrounding the faerie court and the supernatural setting feels appropriate and consistent.

The main thing I would watch is metaphorical phrasing. The French works best when it follows its own natural rhythm; it becomes more visibly translated when an elaborate English image or sentence structure is carried over too literally. These moments are relatively isolated, so they would be worth smoothing rather than requiring any broader stylistic revision.

Chapter 3

Nothing culturally inappropriate or particularly distracting stood out. The terminology and conventions of the fae court fit the genre well, and the formal exchanges between Caelan, Morwen, and the narrator feel appropriate to the setting.

The main thing I would flag for the translation team is register and idiomatic metaphor. Most of the chapter has a suitably polished, atmospheric French style, so phrases such as “essayait très fort” or some of the more literal metaphors stand out precisely because the surrounding prose is stronger. A light stylistic pass over those isolated expressions would make the chapter feel more consistently native-written.