



Reader Panel Feedback Form

German translation review

Book title reviewed	Bride of the Hollow King
Native language	German
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 German reads fluently overall and has the atmosphere expected from a dark romantic/fantasy novel. The imagery, tension and emotional beats come across naturally, and I rarely had the feeling that I was reading a translation. There are a few places where the wording becomes noticeably literal or slightly unusual in German, but they are isolated rather than persistent. They do not prevent the story from flowing.

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

The German reads smoothly for the most part and maintains the dark, romantic atmosphere established in Chapter 1. The prose is vivid and the encounter with Caelan has a strong sense of tension and attraction. I did notice a handful of phrases that feel slightly translated rather than naturally written in German, particularly where English-style metaphors or constructions have been carried over quite closely. These are noticeable, but they do not disrupt the reading experience overall.

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

Chapter 3 reads naturally overall and maintains the atmosphere and narrative momentum of the previous chapters. The German handles the dark, romantic fantasy setting well, and the relationship between Shayla and Caelan comes through clearly. There are a few phrases where the German feels slightly constructed or too close to an English source, but these are isolated. Nothing here made the translation itself difficult to read.

Section 2 — Genre Feel

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

Genre Feel

Chapter 1: Score: 5/5 — Great / very natural

The text feels very much at home in the dark fantasy/romantic fantasy genre. The vocabulary and imagery are appropriately atmospheric without becoming unintentionally old-fashioned, and the prose has the heightened, dramatic quality that suits the setting. The descriptions of the forest, thorns, magic and the mysterious lover all fit the genre well.

The emotional language also works particularly well in German. Phrases such as „der hohle Schmerz unter meinen Rippen“ and „ein Jahr meines Lebens war mir gestohlen worden“ have the right dramatic weight without sounding excessively artificial. The pacing is strong, especially around the creature's appearance and the magical confrontation.

Chapter 2: Score: 5/5 — Great / very natural

The translation feels very comfortable within the dark romantic fantasy genre. The vocabulary, heightened imagery, emotional intensity and pacing all fit the genre well. Caelan's introduction in particular feels appropriately mysterious and dangerous, while the romantic tension is handled in a way that feels suitable for the genre rather than overly modern or casual.

The dialogue is also effective. The short exchange between Shayla and Caelan gives the scene momentum, and his formal declaration of his titles fits the fairy-tale quality of the setting.

Chapter 3: Score: 5/5 — Great / very natural

The chapter feels very much like commercially published dark romantic fantasy in German. The language is suitably dramatic and atmospheric, while the court scenes introduce the expected mixture of beauty, danger, intrigue and supernatural power.

The dialogue is particularly effective. The exchanges with Lady Morwen have the right amount of hostility and restraint, and Caelan's formal, threatening manner fits his position. The romantic tension also feels integrated into the fantasy setting rather than added on separately.

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 — Good / mostly natural with minor issues

Shayla's first-person voice remains consistent throughout: introspective, emotionally intense and slightly poetic. The narration does not suddenly become more formal or conversational, and the heightened imagery feels deliberate rather than accidental.

There are, however, a couple of moments where the phrasing sounds more like translated fantasy prose than something a German-language author would naturally choose. These are mostly isolated collocations rather than problems with Shayla's characterization or overall voice.

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

Shayla's voice remains consistent: introspective, emotionally heightened and strongly focused on physical sensations and impressions. The first-person narration feels cohesive with the previous chapter.

There are a few moments where her voice becomes slightly less natural because the German follows an English image or sentence structure too closely. These moments are isolated, though, and I would not consider them a broader voice problem.

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

Shayla's voice remains consistent with the earlier chapters. She is observant, emotionally reactive and increasingly willing to challenge the people around her, while the narration retains its poetic quality.

The main weakness is not character voice but occasional phrasing. A few sentences sound more like translated literary prose than spontaneous German, especially where an English metaphor has been transferred almost directly. These moments are noticeable against an otherwise confident narrative voice.

Section 4 — Flagged Passages

Chapter: 1

- **Paragraph/reference:** Description of the creature's appearance
- **Passage:** „seine Glieder bogen sich mit einer Anmut, die auf gar keine Knochen schließen ließ.“

What feels unnatural: „auf gar keine Knochen schließen ließ“ is understandable, but the combination is somewhat awkward in this context. It feels like a literal rendering of the idea that the creature's movements did not suggest or appear constrained by bones.

Why it affects the reading experience: The surrounding description is vivid and atmospheric, so this slightly technical-sounding construction briefly pulls me out of the imagery.

Natural alternative/explanation: Something along the lines of „...mit einer Anmut, die keinen Gedanken an Knochen zuließ“ or „...deren Bewegungen nichts Knochenhaftes an sich hatten“ would sound more idiomatic, depending on the intended image.

Chapter: 1

- **Paragraph/reference:** Immediately after the creature appears
- **Passage:** „während sich die Schattenkreatur mit einer schwarzen, vielknöchernen Hand um einen Baumstamm schlängelte.“

What feels unnatural: „vielknöchernen Hand“ stands out quite strongly. It is grammatically possible, but it is not a natural German compound and sounds constructed rather than organically descriptive.

Why it affects the reading experience: This is a horror/fantasy image where the wording needs to feel immediate and unsettling. „vielknöchern“ makes the reader pause to decode the adjective instead of simply seeing the creature in their mind.

Natural alternative/explanation: A German author might use something like „eine knochige schwarze Hand“, „eine Hand mit viel zu vielen Knochen“ or another more concrete description, depending on exactly what the creature is supposed to look like.

Chapter: 1

- **Paragraph/reference:** The brief memory of the mysterious man
- **Passage:** „seine Hand in meinem Kreuz, sein Mund an meiner Kehle, seine raue Stimme, die flüsterte, sag, dass du mich wählst.“

What feels unnatural: „seine Hand in meinem Kreuz“ is the clearest wording issue here. In German, „im Kreuz“ refers quite specifically to the lower back and has a somewhat anatomical feel. In this romantic context, it does not sound as natural as the English-style image presumably intended.

The wording „sag, dass du mich wählst“ is understandable and can work poetically, but it also has a slightly translated quality in German.

Why it affects the reading experience: This is meant to be an intimate, emotionally charged memory. The unusual „im Kreuz“ makes the image feel more physical/anatomical than sensual and briefly weakens the otherwise strong romantic atmosphere.

Natural alternative/explanation: Depending on the intended gesture, „seine Hand an meinem Rücken“ or „seine Hand in meinem Rücken“ would feel more natural. For „du mich wählst“, a German author might use „sag, dass du dich für mich entscheidest“, although the shorter version could be retained if the slightly poetic fairy-tale quality is intentional.

Chapter: 2

- **Paragraph/reference:** Caelan's first appearance
- **Passage:** „Sein Blick war nicht bloß Erkennen; es war eine brennende Anziehung.“

What feels unnatural: The construction „nicht bloß Erkennen“ is quite abstract here, and the switch from „Sein Blick“ to „es war“ is grammatically awkward. More importantly, the sentence does not sound quite idiomatic in German.

Why it affects the reading experience: This is an important moment because Shayla is immediately overwhelmed by her attraction to him. The slightly awkward wording makes the emotional impact less immediate.

Natural alternative/explanation: Something like „Sein Blick war nicht bloß Wiedererkennen. Darin lag eine brennende Anziehung.“ would sound more natural while keeping the intended meaning.

Chapter: 2

- **Paragraph/reference:** Description of Caelan's face
- **Passage:** „Stattdessen hatte sein Gesicht die Beschaffenheit einer Maske, mitten in der Verwandlung erstarrt“

What feels unnatural: „die Beschaffenheit einer Maske“ sounds unusually abstract in a physical description. A German native author would be more likely to describe the face as maskenhaft or focus on its expression or appearance.

Why it affects the reading experience: The surrounding description is very visual and atmospheric, whereas „Beschaffenheit“ has a slightly clinical or technical feel. It briefly breaks the flow of the image.

Chapter: 2

- **Paragraph/reference:** Caelan walking toward Shayla
- **Passage:** „Das Moos und die Blütenblätter unter seinen Boots regten sich nicht, als wüsste die Erde selbst, dass sie ihn besser nicht störte.“

What feels unnatural: „dass sie ihn besser nicht störte“ is understandable, but „stören“ sounds rather mundane here. In the context of the supernatural imagery, it feels slightly too literal and everyday.

Why it affects the reading experience: The sentence is meant to reinforce Caelan's supernatural authority. The wording slightly weakens that effect because it sounds more like avoiding an ordinary person's annoyance than acknowledging a powerful supernatural being.

Natural alternative/explanation: Something such as „als wüsste die Erde selbst, dass sie ihn besser nicht aufhalten sollte“ would fit the image more naturally.

Chapter: 2

- **Paragraph/reference:** Shayla describing her inability to look away
- **Passage:** „eine Schwerkraft, die auf meiner Aufmerksamkeit bestand“

What feels unnatural: This is understandable as a metaphor, but „auf meiner Aufmerksamkeit bestehen“ is not a natural German collocation. It strongly feels like an English structure carried over into German.

Why it affects the reading experience: The scene is supposed to convey an almost supernatural compulsion. Because the metaphor itself is slightly awkward, the reader notices the wording instead of simply experiencing that sensation.

Natural alternative/explanation: „eine Schwerkraft, die meine Aufmerksamkeit festhielt“ or „eine Schwerkraft, die mich zwang, ihn weiter anzusehen“ would sound more idiomatic.

Chapter: 2

- **Paragraph/reference:** Caelan's reaction after Shayla says she knows his name but not the man
- **Passage:** „Seine Stimme wurde förmlich, jedes Wort zu einer tödlichen Schneide geschliffen.“

What feels unnatural: The image „jedes Wort zu einer tödlichen Schneide geschliffen“ is understandable but feels somewhat constructed in German. It has the quality of a direct transfer of an English metaphor.

Why it affects the reading experience: The change in Caelan's manner is effective, but this particular image feels more literary in a translated sense than naturally German. A simpler description of his voice becoming cold or cutting would probably have more impact.

Chapter: 3

- **Paragraph/reference:** Opening description of the palace
- **Passage:** „Der Palast erinnerte sich an mich.“

What feels unnatural: This is understandable as a deliberate personification, but in German „sich an jemanden erinnern“ is strongly associated with a person or conscious being. As an opening sentence, it therefore feels slightly more like a direct translation of an English fantasy formulation than an immediately natural German image.

Why it affects the reading experience: The sentence is clearly intended to be striking and mysterious. It works conceptually, but the reader may briefly register the unusual construction rather than simply absorbing the atmosphere.

Optional alternative/explanation: It could be retained if the personification of the palace is important to the world-building. Otherwise, something such as „Der Palast erkannte mich wieder“ would sound more immediately idiomatic while preserving the idea.

Chapter: 3

- **Paragraph/reference:** Caelan and Shayla among the thorns
- **Passage:** „Er kannte den Abstand zwischen unseren Körpern, und er wollte, dass dieser Abstand verschwand.“

What feels unnatural: The sentence is grammatically fine, but „Er kannte den Abstand zwischen unseren Körpern“ sounds unusually literal and analytical for a supernatural presence that is supposed to be sensing or responding to their physical proximity.

Why it affects the reading experience: The scene is intimate and tense. The wording momentarily turns that sensual tension into something almost spatial or technical.

Optional alternative/explanation: A more natural German rendering might focus on the court „spürte“ their distance or „verlangte“, dass sie einander näherkamen.

Chapter: 3

- **Paragraph/reference:** Shayla addresses Lady Morwen
- **Passage:** „Wenn Lady Morwen mich beschuldigen will, kann sie das mir ins Gesicht sagen.“

What feels unnatural: „kann sie das mir ins Gesicht sagen“ is understandable, but the placement of „das“ makes the sentence sound slightly stiff. More importantly, „jemandem etwas ins Gesicht sagen“ usually carries a somewhat confrontational, everyday tone.

Why it affects the reading experience: Shayla is deliberately standing up to a hostile court, so the confrontational tone itself is appropriate. The issue is simply that the phrasing sounds a little less polished than the surrounding dialogue.

Optional alternative/explanation: „Wenn Lady Morwen mich beschuldigen will, kann sie es mir ins Gesicht sagen.“ would be more idiomatic.

Chapter: 3

- **Paragraph/reference:** Caelan's threat to Lady Morwen
- **Passage:** „Es war der Klang des Winters, von Steinen, die tief in der Erde aneinander mahlten.“

What feels unnatural: The image is understandable, but „der Klang des Winters“ followed by „Steine, die ... aneinander mahlten“ feels somewhat constructed. It has the atmosphere of translated fantasy prose rather than a naturally occurring German metaphor.

Why it affects the reading experience: The threat itself is strong, and the surrounding passage is effective. This particular image is slightly over-engineered and makes the reader notice the prose instead of Caelan's menace.

Optional alternative/explanation: The sentence could be simplified and made more sensory, for example by describing his voice as „kalt und mahlend“ or simply as something that sounded like stone grinding against stone.

Chapter: 3

- **Paragraph/reference:** Final exchange between Shayla and Caelan
- **Passage:** „Sie ließen mich eine andere Version meiner selbst in dieser Halle stehen sehen“

What feels unnatural: „eine andere Version meiner selbst ... stehen sehen“ is understandable but feels strongly influenced by English phrasing. German would usually express this more directly as imagining, seeing or remembering herself differently.

Why it affects the reading experience: This is an important emotional realization for Shayla, so the wording should feel intimate and immediate. Here it becomes slightly abstract.

Optional alternative/explanation: Something like „Sie ließen mich eine andere Version meiner selbst vor mir sehen“ or „Plötzlich stellte ich mir vor, wie ich früher hier gestanden hatte“ would feel more natural, depending on the intended nuance.

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 translation is immersive enough that I would continue reading without hesitation. The atmosphere and narrative voice work particularly well, and the few awkward expressions are noticeable mainly because the surrounding German is strong. They would benefit from a light native-language pass, but they do not interfere substantially with the reading experience.

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 chapter has a strong atmosphere and the meeting between Shayla and Caelan is engaging. The few awkward phrases are noticeable, but they are isolated enough that they do not make the German feel generally unnatural.

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 without hesitation. The court scene is engaging, the dialogue has energy, and the romantic tension develops naturally alongside the fantasy plot. The few awkward constructions are noticeable but do not interfere significantly with immersion.

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

Nothing major stood out culturally or in terms of genre conventions. The fantasy terminology and imagery feel appropriate for a German-language publication, and the names and invented locations do not create any obvious problems.

The main thing I would have checked before publication is a small number of unusually literal image descriptions and collocations. They are easy to miss because the prose around them is otherwise quite polished, but smoothing those few phrases would make the German feel consistently native rather than occasionally translated.

Chapter 2

Nothing significant stood out in terms of cultural adaptation or German genre conventions. The fantasy terminology and titles feel appropriate, and the overall tone is consistent with the genre.

The main thing I would recommend checking is the handful of metaphors that seem to follow English phrasing particularly closely. Most of the prose is already quite natural, so this feels more like targeted smoothing of individual sentences than a need for broader revision.

Chapter 3

There are no major cultural or genre-specific issues that stood out. The treatment of the Fae court, titles, supernatural hierarchy and threatening dialogue feels appropriate for German-language fantasy.

The main pattern worth watching is the occasional use of English-style metaphors and constructions. This chapter has quite a few poetic images, and most work well; only a small number sound noticeably translated. I would focus on those rather than doing a broad stylistic rewrite.