

This excerpt from a sample express edit is by Dale Lui, a junior editor, overseen by John Robin. This demonstrates the ideal amount of editing issues for the one-revision express edit. However, it should be noted that prior to editing this author had done an extensive amount of previous developmental editing, making a one-pass express edit sufficient to address copyediting and proofreading needs.

Note that there are no comments from John on these pages but several other places in this manuscript where he has added input as part of the oversight process; there are fewer instances here, due to the fact that junior editors have trained with John for a given time and in this case, Dale has already worked on several projects as an apprentice.

Seth, the golden haired flight attendant from my earlier flight, was standing up there, talking animatedly with another attendant. They each had clipboards, comparing them to one another. Just looking at him from far away brought back the memories of our flirting from the other night. I sighed, realizing I had given up more than a First Class dinner and more legroom. I could have had Seth to look at all night. But it was okay. I had done the right thing ~~—and when you do the right thing, it may cost you something. It doesn't mean it's not right.~~

I watched as Seth ran his finger up and down the other attendant's clipboard, searching for something. His finger finally stopped on a specific spot on the board, and then he looked up, right at me. And he smiled big and wide. He knew I could see him, so he motioned with his finger for me to come up where he was standing. How could I resist? Anything to un-pretzel myself for a few minutes, and besides, it was Seth. And he wanted me.

He watched me as I walked up the narrow aisle, his eyes moving up and down my body. Mine did the same to his. In the dim lights he looked even sexier than I remembered. I hoped my hardening dick didn't show in my pants. When I got to him he reached out to grab my arm and pulled me into the galley area and out of the aisle.

"Jack! I can't believe it. You're a sight for sore eyes." He was visibly vibrating with excitement.

"Seth, it's great to see you. I didn't know you were on this flight."

"I'm stuck in First again. Speaking of which, when I boarded I saw your name on the First Class manifest, but then you didn't board. I was so disappointed. I was looking forward to a fun flight with you again." He was grinning ear to ear and his eyes were sparkling with a special light again. What the hell was that?

Comment [D1]: Here, I'm suggesting a redaction since the line "But it was okay. I had done the right thing," says absolutely this part just attempted to explain. Although Jack at times can get redundant in his speech and thoughts, I think at this moment of the text, there is a risk of overexplaining what had happened.

“Yeah, well, I ended up back in coach. Sorry, long story.”

“Wait a minute . . . 4A and 4B, husband and wife. They’ve been crying off and on all flight. Did you have something to do with that? When I was serving them dinner, they said something about how wonderful it was for the airline to get them two seats together, and to upgrade them to First. Let me guess, United didn’t do it—you did. You swapped seats. You were supposed to be in 4A.” He smiled big, lightly poking my chest.

I blushed in embarrassment. “Yeah, well, they are a nice couple who needed to catch a break. They’ve had some really bad news and it was the only thing I could think of to do for them.” I told him the rest of the little I knew of the Colsons.

“You know, Jack. I said it the other night, and I’ll say it again. You’re a special guy. You do the kindest things. When they told me about their seat change, I wondered if you had changed as well. Our count was correct. So I came back to check. And I’ve got some exciting news I just have to tell you, since you played a big part in it.”

I could not imagine what I had done for Seth, except run him ragged fetching glasses of water so I could lust after his ass. Seth gently grabbed my arm and pushed me closer to the airplane wall and away from the aisle for more privacy.

“So Jack, remember the other night when I told you I really appreciated how good you made me feel, flirting and watching me all night? No, don’t be embarrassed. I loved it. I mean it. So much so it inspired me to do something I had needed to do for a long time. You see, I had been separated for three months from my boyfriend after being together with him for over two years. I was having an extremely difficult time letting go, even though I was the one who ended it. I loved Tim—so much. But . . . he didn’t love me the same way. I couldn’t even get him to move in with me. So Wednesday night, I was feeling better about myself than I had in a really long time. I decided I could do it. There were other guys out there who could love me, maybe even this hunk I met on my flight named Jack.” Now I was severely blushing—I hoped he couldn’t see it in the dim lights. Did he just call me a hunk?

“So I got home, poured some wine, put on some music, and just chilled, feeling on top of the world. I could make choices again. Then there’s this knock on the door. It’s late, who could it be? Well, it’s Tim. I let him in and ask him what he wants—he says I want you, Seth. I want us to be an “us” again. And, Jack, it was the hardest thing I ever did, because a huge part of me wanted to take him back on the spot, but I didn’t. I listened to him give his reasons why we were perfect for each other—all of which are true by the way—and then dropped the bomb on him. There’s only one problem, Tim, you don’t love me—not the way I love you. I want the whole deal, not just sex and fun times. I’m tired of waiting for you to commit to this relationship and be all in. Good and bad, fun and shit times. All of it. And I’m not living alone anymore. So I’m sorry, but the answer is no. I need to move on and find someone who can love me that way and I

can love them the same way in return.

Comment [D2]: A+ dialogue here. Yikes . . . this is amazing!

“He goes quiet with this shocked look on his face, and I show him to the door. I tell you, Jack, when I closed the door I thought I was closing it on Tim forever. I cried and cried, but it was good, you know, like a cleansing. I know it sounds sappy, but that’s how it felt.

“The next day was my day off, so I’m just hanging out, eating a pizza and watching basketball. The doorbell rings, and it’s Tim again, only this time he’s got flowers, wine, and a request. Would I just hear him out? I thought, fine, why not, so I let him in. He proceeds to tell me how sorry he is for being selfish and afraid to move forward. He had been hurt pretty badly in a previous relationship when a guy abandoned him with no warning or explanation, never to see him again. He had never told me this story. I think he was embarrassed about it. Anyway, he tells me he absolutely loves me, can’t imagine not having me in his life, and he is willing to do whatever it takes to make it happen. And Jack, he gets down on one knee right there in my living room and I swear to God, gives me a ring. He asked me to marry him! I’m engaged, Jack. I’m getting married!” He held up his left hand, and sure enough, there was a beautiful platinum band around his ring finger.

He was so happy, giddy even, and I was happy for him. Disappointed for myself, but I was just being selfish. Seth deserved more than flirting and lustful desire from afar. He deserved Tim, from the sound of it.

“Seth, that’s fantastic. I’m so happy for you. Are you sure this is what you want?”

“Oh, yes, Jack. I’m sure. Tim and I are perfect for each other. Always have been. I just didn’t know why he was holding back. We talked a long time yesterday—and well into the night—and I promised him I would never abandon him like the other guy had done. He really was so scared it was all going to happen again. But now we are together forever, and I have you to thank for it, Jack.”

My mouth fell open. “Me? What did I do?”

“You gave me the courage to stand up for myself—to believe I deserved to be loved completely. Tim told me later it was my standing up for love ~~is what~~ ~~which~~ convinced him he had to make things right between us. ~~Did~~ you know he had had the ring for two months, trying to decide if he could do it or not? He’s so sweet. Oh God, Jack. I so love that man. And I know now he really, really loves me.”

Just then, the curtain separating First Class and Coach was thrown open and another flight attendant popped through.

“Seth! There you are. It’s time to start final prep.” She was looking at us, standing unnecessarily close together. By her grim expression, she clearly did not like what she saw. “Maybe you can give some of the other passengers a moment of your time instead of flirting with this one and being generally inappropriate?”

Seth saw the angry look rise on my face, so before I could say anything, he held up a hand to calm me and turned to face her. “Sure thing, Angie. I’ll be right there. Just helping this passenger with a connection issue.” He waved his clipboard at her [as if, like](#) a missed flight is what we had been discussing. More like a missed opportunity on a love life. Angie turned in a huff and disappeared through the curtain.

“Well, Jack. Gotta go back to the grind. I’m so glad I got to see you again tonight. I really can’t thank you enough for what you did for me.”

I was truly happy for Seth. He was getting what he always wanted. What I wanted. I was sad for me, though, and it must have shown on my face.

“Jack, don’t look so down, man. You’re an amazing guy, and if Tim and I hadn’t worked things out, you and I might be having a very different kind of conversation tonight. Believe, Jack. I know there’s an amazing guy out there looking for you. You’ll find him. And he will be the luckiest son of a bitch ever.” He smiled, and then did something completely airline inappropriate. He hugged me tightly. It felt so good. I didn’t want to let go, but I also didn’t want to get him in trouble.

I stepped back and looked into his eyes. “I hope you and Tim have a wonderful life together. It’s been fun hanging out with you on the plane. And thanks for sharing your good news. I mean it. It gives me hope.”

“Sure thing, buddy. Take care.” And then he was gone. I returned to my seat and squeezed back in. I was so ready for this flight to be over.

We landed a short while later and arrived at our gate only five minutes late. I could see a pretty fierce rain coming down through the plane windows. I was going to get wet finding my car for sure. I sighed, and sat back, waiting for all the passengers seated in front of me to deplane. Finally, it was our turn. I helped the lady on my left take down her carry-on bag, for which she thanked me sweetly, then put my duffel over my shoulder and headed up the aisle. I looked for him, but no Seth again. Oh well.

My four sips of water had not put any pressure on my bladder, but I figured I’d better make a pit stop anyway, before getting out there in the weather soup. I came out of the bathroom and saw Adam and Mary Beth Colson just a few yards in front of me. Call me ghoulish, but I was curious about the outcome of their daughter’s surgery. But I couldn’t exactly go up and ask them. They may not even know yet.

I decided to follow them to baggage claim. I could stand there, even though I had no baggage, without drawing attention to myself. So I did. I stayed behind them the whole way. Adam was trying unsuccessfully to get someone on his cell phone and he was clearly frustrated. We rode the escalator down to the baggage level and I followed them to carousel [four](#). I stood off to the side, maybe fifteen feet away from the Colsons.

We were only standing there maybe three minutes, waiting for the bags to arrive, when there was a shout behind us.

“Mom! Dad!” Everyone turned, but it was Mary Beth who took off running toward the shouter.

“Oh, Greg. How is she? Is she alright? Tell me, is she alright?” She was holding onto the sides of his face, daring him to look anywhere else and not give her the answer she desperately needed.

“Yeah, Mom. Jen is gonna be fine. She had a ruptured spleen, which they removed, and she has a few stitches, but that’s it. She’ll be good as new in no time.”

The family just stood there and hugged one another, tears of relief flowing freely. My own face felt wet. I decided then and there that, real love made me cry. It was a good feeling. To see a family who cared so much about one another, who lived for one another. I wanted that. I needed that.

There was nothing more I could do, so I followed the signs which led me up to the parking lot trams and jumped on one at the last second as the doors were closing. When we arrived out at the parking lot, it seemed especially dark and dreary, despite all the lights illuminating the cars, with torrents of rain falling. I got my jacket out of my duffel bag and saw the envelope of cash. My new toolbox.

I zipped up my jacket and trotted out into the rain. I have a pretty good memory for the placement of things, kind of like a built in GPS system, so I found my car with no effort. I got in and immediately had a puddle of nearly ice cold water on the floor mat below my feet. I got the heater going and by the time I got home, I had unzipped the jacket and could just about feel my toes again.

My apartment was my apartment. Nothing had changed. But as I stepped through the door and closed it behind me, I paused. I had a vague sense it was somehow empty. Something was missing, something I had not been aware of before. But I was too tired and wet to care. I didn’t even unpack. I threw the duffel bag on the floor in my bedroom, ripped off my clothes, and slid under the sheets. I slept like the dead.

Chapter 28

Face down. That's where he wants me. My chest pressed into the sheets below as his hands knead my upper back and shoulders. I try to yield to him. This is not a massage—this is him taking possession of what he wants. Me.

He straddles my ass, a knee squeezing on each side. I'm pinned down as he slowly rocks back and forth, pressing my engorged cock into the mattress. He's got a rhythm going now—slow movements—he's in no hurry. He's in total control of how this goes.

His dick gets heavier and harder as it slides along the small of my back, gliding on the slime of our sweat and his pre-cum. His balls rolling around at the top of my crack, full of what I'm craving but can't have yet. This time is his. To do things his way.

I feel his tongue land between my shoulder blades, sucking at the sweat. Then it moves down my spine slowly—very slowly—sending waves of electricity to every part of my body. The heat ratchets higher.

His weight shifts upwards as he leans down to kiss the back of my neck, —the spot where my hair ends and the nerves link to places farther down, —~~+~~The place he knows —the place where my passion turns into incomprehensible gibberish. He camps there with his magic tongue, swirling and sucking, sending me nearly to the edge. I'm writhing under him, moaning with no words, sliding my cock around in its own juices, aching for release. Just as I'm about to go over the edge, his tongue moves down my back again.

Suddenly he rears back, pulling me up with him, arching and twisting to meet his kiss. His tongue pierces my lips, unmistakably insisting on its right to be there. I open up to it, sucking it in as a welcome invader. :- bBreathing in his air, his heat, his need. :- sSharing mine with him as only a kiss like this can. Tongues explore mouths as if they were virgin territory to be mapped. I'm no longer aware of time. Only of our want, our need for each other. I'm panting now, needing it to be over, wishing it could last forever.

He releases me and I fall back on my face, instantly mourning the breakup, my tongue searching for its companion. But he has other plans. He slides backwards now, sitting on my thighs, his hands squeezing and massaging my ass cheeks, spreading them far apart and stretching the tender skin around my hole. Starting at the top, his tongue now invades my crack, bathing it in slick saliva. He flicks it over my hole, teasing, flirting, not yet serious, not fully committed. He goes further down, licking my balls, swollen with seed. He takes one and then the other into his mouth and sucks. It is exquisite pain.

He slides his tongue faster through the split in my ass, top to bottom, bottom to top. He's deliberately hitting my hole now, making sure I feel it, as he moves past. Finally he returns to it and stays, his tongue circling, probing, demanding I open up to it. I feel him penetrate, barely

parting my flesh, and my dick pulses beneath me. I can't hold out much longer.

Suddenly he pushes himself up again and slides his cock up and down my love groove. When he's as hard as he'll ever be, he reaches with one hand to push his cock down so it presses urgently at the entrance as he moves, up and down, up and down ~~in~~, an unrelenting torture. Each pass shoots electricity straight to my dick ~~as it~~ drips ~~in~~ in anticipation of the onslaught to come. He continues, until I am beyond control, demanding ~~no~~, begging ~~to~~ be fucked. I need him in me. Now.

He lifts his ass up as he aligns his throbbing cock with my hole, the only thing of him touching me now. I try to push up with my ass to hurry the invasion, but he slaps it hard and pushes me down again. He is in control. I agreed to this. I struggle to submit.

He slowly ~~slowly~~ relaxes his weight, a millimeter at a time, and his cock begins pressing on my hole, wanting in. I try to will it to open faster, to swallow him up, but he's holding back. I'm in agony. ~~My~~ hands squeeze ~~the~~ sheets, open and shut ~~as~~ sweat pours ~~off~~ of me ~~my~~ body searching for its release. Shaking now, tremors rise ~~from~~ from my feet all the way through to my chest. I can feel my own orgasm racing along the path that leads to my freedom. My muscle ring begins to yield to his advance, burning with the heat of his white hot dick. Just as I feel the head slip through, I cum ~~.~~

I woke up, face down on my bed, panting for breath. My hands gripped the sheets, which were soaked in sweat. Beneath me they felt slimy and wet. I knew the smell. I could still faintly remember the scene and the sensations, but it was fading quickly. I never even saw his face. I collapsed and waited to catch my breath.

I suppose I shouldn't have been surprised at the mess. I hadn't jerked off for two days, so I guess I was due. Plus I had spent more time flirting with guys in those same two days than I had in the two years prior, so yeah, I was a little revved up.

I hopped up and went to the bathroom, gave my bladder the relief it demanded, then came back and looked at the bed. Good thing Saturday was laundry day. ~~There~~ There was no way I could sleep on those sheets tonight. I peeled them off the bed and threw the whole mess into my laundry basket. I spied the duffel I had thrown on the floor, and I got everything out of there, too. The suit went into a pile all ~~into~~ into its own for a trip to the dry cleaners. The rest of the clothes joined the messy sheets. I was ready to do laundry.

But first, I needed food. And a shower ~~I~~ I stank. When you can smell yourself, you know you're in trouble. So I grabbed my toiletries from the duffel and headed in to clean up. The smell of Bvlgari shower gel brought back pleasant memories of my trip.

~~After my shower, I smelled a lot better~~ ~~I smelled a lot better after my shower.~~ I brushed my towel-dried hair—~~which~~ which really needed a haircut—and put on my last pair of clean jeans and a long sleeved t-shirt. My Saturday outfit. The bathroom towels joined the other dirty clothes in

Comment [D3]: Quick edit, but since this paragraph is a series of events happening one after the other, I decided to suggest this part be more narratively focused as opposed to thought focused, i.e. to complement the rest of the paragraph as opposed the character developing further his thoughts on the matter.

the basket.

I grabbed a quick bowl of cereal and decided to get the laundry over with. It was eight in the morning on a Saturday. Hopefully I could use both washers downstairs and get it done in half the time. I grabbed my big bottle of detergent and a couple of dryer sheets and headed to the basement.

My building ~~had~~ six apartments, two on each of three floors. The basement had storage lockers on one side for each of the tenants. Mine was empty. On the other side was the utility room, with furnaces, hot water heaters, and the electrical service. I only knew because I was downstairs once when someone was doing repairs and I peeked in. Usually that door was locked.

Tucked into a corner was the laundry room, with two sets of washers and dryers. Washers were \$1.50, dryers free. There was a counter along the opposite wall from the machines for sorting and folding. That's where I threw my basket.

I was in luck—~~both~~ washers were empty, ~~so~~ I sorted my clothes into two piles, cold and hot, and started the machines. I added the soap, tossed in the clothes, and dropped the lids down.

For the next thirty minutes while my clothes agitated and spun, I thought about the day ahead. First up was a haircut—I couldn't take it anymore. And I needed to buy some new underwear and jeans. The pair I had on were almost two years old and they looked it. I now had money, and while it wasn't exactly burning a hole in my pocket, I was starting to allow myself to think about a few things.

When my clothes had spun down, I tossed them into the two dryers and set the timers for one hour. That should be enough time for me to clean my apartment—another Saturday morning ritual.

Back in my bathroom, I squirted toilet bowl cleaner where it was supposed to go, sprayed scrubbing bubbles over everything else—sink, tub, tile walls—and started wiping it all down. Once I had the toilet scrubbed, I got a bucket from my front closet and poured some Lysol in there and filled it with the hottest water I could stand. I hand washed the bathroom floor with that. Bathroom, done.

Kitchen was easy—just wipe everything down. I didn't cook much, so the stove was usually never dirty. I threw the dishes in the dishwasher and started it. Then I got some more hot water and Lysol and hand washed the kitchen floor. Kitchen, done.

I had an ancient vacuum cleaner, but it still worked, so I pushed that around the rest of the apartment after I dusted the very few pieces of furniture I owned. Apartment, done.

I grabbed a pile of hangars and ran back down to get my clothes which had a couple of minutes left in the cycle. I checked and they were already dry, so I pulled them out and folded them there on the counter. I didn't own an iron so I tried to keep wrinkles out from the start, ~~keeping me from looking so I wouldn't look~~ like I slept in my clothes, even when they were

Comment [D4]: Since the structure of the sentence was beginning to get a bit too familiar, I've suggested an edit to vary it up (i.e. Subject + so + next action).