

This excerpt from an express editing job demonstrates our apprenticeship training process in action. In this edit, Elan Samuel, at the time an apprentice, was assigned the express editing task, wherein he would employ copyediting, proofreading, and as-needed developmental editing, working closely with John Robin, our senior editor.

This apprenticing method, developed by John, allows us to teach our new editors and train to our standards, while ensuring the same standards are delivered in the edits received.

sound it made was loud in the quiet park. Very few had chosen to come out here, something that ~~had~~ surprised her. She would have thought more people would choose such a place to face what could very possibly be their last day. She took a deep breath, savoring the taste of fresh air. When she exhaled a thin mist formed from her breath. She pulled her scarf tighter around her neck.

Comment [ES1]: Slightly awkward to read, consider rephrasing.

Most people were probably sitting in front of their TVs, or peering at some gadget or another, getting the latest updates and projections about Devastator. ~~It wouldn't be long now.~~ It was a relief to know that the long wait would soon be over. When Dianne had taken Brian to the community shelter, ~~she Kirstie had~~ hugged them both hard-tightly and told them everything would be all right. But Kirstie knew better. As one of the last remaining astronomers to leave Bern, Switzerland, before the gates of the ~~European Space Agency, ESA,~~ closed shut, she knew all too well what would come, even in the best possible scenario. Which happened to be the least likely. No, she wanted nothing more than for her daughter and grandson to keep their spirits up until it all ended. Of course, having to leave her outside must have been awful for them, but everyone knew that nobody past forty would be allowed into the shelter, unless ~~you they~~ were military or considered a special asset. ~~or in some cases, military. That~~ It was the same all over Europe. She might have been exempted back in Bern, had she pulled the scientist card, but all she wanted was to be home when the end came. ~~Now s~~She was content with her decision. The Parks would be the perfect spot to face whatever the day brought. Besides, who would have walked Shaggy if she hadn't ~~be~~ been here? No old or middle-aged people in the shelter. No dogs. She patted him again.

Comment [A2]: Use all right --
<http://www.quickanddirtytips.com/education/grammar/all-right-versus-alright?page=1>

Comment [ES3]: This doesn't read naturally—did she leave Bern specifically or Switzerland as a whole? Consider choosing one.

"You should have been a military dog. Corporal Shaggy, how does that sound?" ~~she~~ She chuckled, before adding, "But I

Comment [ES4]: The implication is that Kirstie knows what the day is bringing, except in this sentence. Consider altering: "The Parks would be the perfect spot to face what the day would bring."

guess you wouldn't last a day in the army, you silly dog. Too lazy." She looked up. It wouldn't be long now.

"I guess that makes two of us. You know, my father was a navy man. Sailed the world, he did. That was never for me though. I was far too bookish." They walked on. It wasn't as if she was walking toward something. She was just where she wanted to be.

Kirstie and Shaggy kept walking. The ~~parke~~Parks were, officially known as the Oxford University Parks, although nobody called ~~it them~~ that. ~~It They was were either~~ Uni Parks, or The Parks, ~~or less frequentlyr sometimes they were~~ the University Parks. She wondered how many people in this bustling city really knew much about its history, or ~~even~~ how long this place had been a sanctuary of quiet in a city, ~~which whose population~~ grew ~~into to~~ a million by the mid 21st century. But while the city had become a major metropolitan area, The Parks remained the same.

A flash in the southern sky startled her. *Here we go*, she thought. Another flash, ~~followed then by~~ another. She knew what happened ~~at once what had happened~~. It was breaking up. Way up there, in the upper atmosphere, ~~the~~ chunks of rock would be spreading out from their original trajectories, and ~~sometimes some of~~ the smaller pieces would explode and burn up. Those were the flashes. The larger pieces would continue their deadly flight.

The astronomer in her was calculating possibilities and probabilities, even though she wanted nothing more than to have some peace and quiet in her final moments. The flashes were all to the south and east of here. She didn't see anything else though. ~~Just~~ Just the light from the explosions. The main trajectory would be ~~a lot~~ further to the south than. At least on this longitude. ~~Southern~~ Somewhere in Southern Europe, perhaps, or even Africa. ~~The As for the~~ As for the rest of the world, there was no way to know. The trajectory could move in a straight line following the same latitude all across the world, or it could move north or south. There was just no way of knowing anymore. The folks in Bern would know, of course. But with most networks down, and not really feeling like it, she abandoned the reasoning. It didn't matter anymore.

She kept walking. It had been years since she had been ~~herein~~ The Parks. While working in Bern, she had taken vacations; usually short, to see Dianne and Brian... and Chris, while he was still alive. She still felt ~~a the~~ sting of guilt for not having seen eye-to-eye with him. Her ~~son-in-law~~ had been a good husband to Dianne and a great father to Brian. There was just this wall between them, and she suspected she was at least partly to blame. She had always prioritized her work, especially these last few years, knowing what was about to happen coming.

He had said once, "Kirstie, when time is so short, it's even more important to put family first," and she knew he

Comment [ES5]: A little repetitive—try to condense.

Comment [A6]: In particular, the first sentence of this next paragraph here is the source of repetition. I think you could just cut this sentence and begin with, "The Parks were..."

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Comment [ES7]: This word doesn't convey enough gravity—consider changing to "descent" or "plunge"

Comment [A8]: Note, this should be an em dash (it was an en dash before). The em dash is wider, which you can get in Word by holding: CTRL+ALT+-

Comment [ES9]: A little unclear—do you mean "point of impact"?

Comment [A10]: In particular, this phrase here could be modified to read something to the effect, "there was no way to know what they knew," and this would remove the contradictory flow of this sentence.

Comment [ES11]: Several contradictions in this sequence—consider revising. (There is no way of knowing, yet some people know, but she wants to know, but it doesn't matter.)

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was right. It was just that in Bern, she was actually making a difference. Her work might save people's ~~s~~ lives. Not hers and not her family's ~~s~~, for which she had nothing but regrets. ~~B~~but some people might actually live through this and whatever would come after, because of her work.

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The ~~great~~ Great flu ~~Flu~~ had taken Chris. It ~~had been~~ was such a blow to Dianne, and even harder for Brian. ~~In~~ Over just three months ~~time~~, ~~back~~ in late '79, while the world fought amongst itself over the tickets off the planet, hundreds of thousands died from a pandemic that barely made headlines. And in two short weeks, in bleak November, a boy lost his father and a wife lost her husband. Kirstie had taken a week off to be with them, but by the time they buried him, she was back in Bern, working. She suspected Dianne had never truly forgiven her for leaving, although her daughter had always supported her decisions, even her decision to make her work first priority.

The ground trembled, and bits of gravel jumped around her shoes. She stopped in place. ~~It~~ That had to be an impact. No way to know where though. No way to estimate how big. Being on an island, she expected tsunamis to be the biggest threat, ~~since~~ direct hits in the UK ~~were~~ being unlikely because of its small size. She patted Shaggy reassuringly, before they began walking again. Nothing to do about any of it, she thought, but there was a chill in her bones that didn't ~~it~~ stem entirely from the cold weather.

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She kept walking until she reached the Flower Bridge. It stood pristine, preserved in its original condition, ~~and~~ having been closed to the public for decades, except once a year, when people from all over Oxfordshire would gather to commemorate the fallen from the Magdalen College attacks. Thankfully, Britain had been spared the worst attacks in the Great ~~war~~ War on Terror. There had been nothing like Seattle on this side of the ~~pond~~ Atlantic.

Magdalen was the exception though, ~~and~~ a wound that had permanently scarred the nation. The ~~College~~ college itself had never been rebuilt— it would be sacrilegious, most believed. So every year, in an act of quiet defiance, the people of ~~the county~~ Oxfordshire would come here, and walk silently across the bridge in a line that went for hours, every one carrying flowers in every color of the rainbow. The flowers would be tossed into the Cherwell, ~~creating~~ filling ~~the~~ a river with of colors. Kirstie had only attended a few times, but it had been a majestic experience, a testimony to the strength of ~~this~~ people in the face of evil.

There was a deep rumble, ~~and she heard~~ followed by loud cracks and booms from afar. She turned halfway toward the sound before ~~deciding otherwise~~ stopping herself. She would face this her way. She took a step toward the bridge.

"Come on Shaggy," she said quietly, comforting the dog. Shaggy looked at her with those sad eyes, as if asking what

was happening. The rumble got louder, and Kirstie set her jaw and took another step, then another. Shaggy hesitated before letting her lead on, toward the bridge. Kirstie hunched under the ~~boom~~-noise and walked briskly until she reached the middle of the bridge. She ~~could~~-followed the river with her eyes, and she saw the water was stirring.

The rumble ~~was~~-grew to an overwhelming ~~volume~~-now, and just as she began to lift her arms to cover her ears, she saw it. Just above the tree line, a wall rose quickly, shadowing her from the afternoon sunlight. She had imagined it would be blue, since the ocean usually looks blue, but it was a mix of grey and brown, dark colors that spelled doom. *And so it is*, she thought as the wall closed in on her. As Shaggy jerked loose and ran, all she could think of was Dianne and Brian--- those shelters better be watertight.

The sea swept her along, as it swallowed her world.

1.

Jenny

Tom's Diner wasn't exactly the place to bring a date, or to take your family out for dinner. It ~~lay-sat~~ right next to the road, where trucks would rumble by, sometimes stopping to grab a coffee or something to eat, but most preferring to continue on to the next small town ~~instead~~. The exterior looked run ~~-down~~, and the paint, which was once a bright yellow, was ~~-new~~ faded and flaking. Only a few dusty cars stood outside, which was how it usually was, and once inside, a visitor would notice the sand and dust, especially near the door, that threatened to bury the place. The only thing that kept Tom's Diner running was that it was old enough to be debt ~~--free~~, and it had a few steady patrons who would tip nicely. It was a ~~thing-relic~~ of the past, and working ~~here-~~there was a dead end with no prospects whatsoever.

Jenny Salinger picked up the greasy plate, and stacked it up top of the others. The tip wasn't much, but it would do. She put it in her apron pocket, and lifted the stack of ~~trays-plates~~ to take out to the kitchen. The only customer left today was a regular, a trucker who stopped by once a week. She tried not to look his way, although she would soon have to go over and ask if the food was any good. He wasn't all bad, and he always tipped well, but he had a way of making her uncomfortable. Sometimes he would touch her arm or accidentally brush up to her just a bit too close for comfort ~~, but~~ never anything worse. But then he would ask how she was doing, if she was lonely, or maybe she wanted to hang out after work. And those piercing eyes would scan her up and down, which was the worst. So she tried to avoid him as much as possible.

She looked out the window ~~,~~ at what had once been a playground. At 26, she was too young to remember, but she had heard from Tommy, who had taken over the diner ten years ago ~~,~~ when his father ~~,~~ Tom, died, ~~and he had told her that this-the~~ place used to be packed with people, families. The kids would ~~be swarming-swarm on~~ the playground back then, and if the timing was right they could pick oranges straight from the trees. She imagined that would be nice. But desert sand had overtaken the playground, and the orange trees were all dead. Last winter had been the final nail in the coffin. As if the summer drought that fueled the ever ~~--~~ increasing expansion of the desert hadn't been enough. That winter had killed off a lot of people, and Jenny wondered if next winter would be ~~just~~ as bad. She shook her head. They were paying a high price for the years of fossil fuels that their grandparents had enjoyed.

Comment [ES12]: This phrasing seems unnatural. Consider revising.

Comment [A13]: Might consider something like "to his satisfaction".

Not that it mattered; with Devastator on its way, they didn't have much time left anyhow.

"Slow day, for sure," Tommy said as she entered the kitchen and put the plates down in front of the dishwasher.

"Maybe someone will stop by later," she said. It wasn't likely, but it was possible.

She walked over to the old coffee maker and poured herself a cup. She sipped it and wrinkled her nose. Not only had it been standing too long, but it was the fake version, real coffee mixed with artificial flavoring. Pure coffee was hard to come by these days. Wars and failed crops made it an expensive luxury, and not something to be brewed in a run down diner in the desert.

"Remember real coffee?" she said, and Tommy came over and grabbed a cup of his own.

"Yeah..." He sat down where he could see the entrance, in case a customer would enter.

"Look, Jenny..." he paused. "I can take over for you. I know you don't like that guy, and I get it..." he said.

Jenny smiled. Tommy, almost sixty now, was like the father she never had. She leaned over and kissed him on the forehead.

"Thanks, but I'm all right." Tommy looked up at her.

"Why haven't you ever finished that novel of yours?" he said. Jenny smiled back at him.

"What's the point? I dropped out of college because there's no point, and I'll never finish the novel because there's no point. In two years we're all dead anyway."

"Yes, but wouldn't it be nice to have created something? To have completed something?" he said.

"I just... You know, Tommy, I've tried. I tried studying, but I just couldn't. And I've tried sitting down to write, ~~several times~~. But it just slips away, if you know what I mean. I just can't finish a sentence. Feels pointless, I guess."

"But what you showed me, it was really good. I liked it. I'd love to read it before..." Well, well, you know..."

"It was just a partial first draft..."

"Nevertheless. I am a reader, you know. I've read hundreds of books." He waved his hand, indicating everything around them.

"I would have gone to college too, done something completely different, if not for this place. I had to help my dad, you know. And then, all of a sudden, here I am, pushing sixty, with two years left to go. That's life, I guess. At least you could go out knowing you wrote a book. That's not too bad."

Jenny placed her still half full cup on the counter, and shook her head.

"I don't know, Tommy, I guess I would do it if I could. I still try, now and then. Who knows?"

Comment [A14]: Note that there is always a comma after dialogue when you follow with a dialogue attribution verb like said, replied, asked, etc. You would only have a period if this was an implicit dialogue attribution achieved through something like an action the speaker is doing, i.e. "Slow day, for sure." Tommy put the plates down in front of the dishwasher.

Comment [A15]: This is a place where "he said" is redundant because we already identify the speaker before this in "he paused"

Comment [A16]: Because the speaking ends and this now turns over to Jenny, it should be a new paragraph.

Comment [A17]: Note with ellipses: when the trailing off is mid-sentence, we don't have a space and we don't capitalize. If the trailing off is followed by the start of a new sentence, we have a space and begin with a capital.

Comment [A18]: This should be capitalized because it's an action (implicit dialogue attribution).

She walked out to ask the trucker if the food was good and if he wanted some dessert with his coffee.

Comment [A19]: This ending feels abrupt and interrupted. I think phrasing this to show some more of her emotions might help, i.e. Finally, she steeled herself and walked out to face the trucker.

2.

Mark

Mark Novak considered the sorry state of his cabin, wondering if he should have brought some materials with him to replace the rotten boards on the south wall. While he would have if he had planned to spend more time here, he knew this would be the last time he ever came, and there was no use in spending time fixing up the place now. With just two more years to go, he'd be spending more ~~and more~~ time in the underground facilities, getting everything ready for the big day. The cryo technique worked, same as it had since before they sent the starship off, but there were still so much left to do. He had discovered something about the cryo sequence that ~~could might possibly~~ lead to a groundbreaking discovery, and he wanted to complete as much of his research as possible before Impact, since who knew how much what would be left ~~afterward for after~~.

The view was still breathtaking though. The sun was slowly descending and the lake gave off an orange glow that bathed the entire area in light ~~like something~~ —straight out of a fairy tale. The deep forest, surrounding Lake Roanoke, Virginia, one of the last preserves in the East, had grown thicker these ~~last past~~ twenty years, and while the rest of the state was part of the ever-expanding metropolis stretching from Florida to New England, this was a place to breathe, to rest.

"I brought beer," his friend ~~said called~~, from inside the cabin, "but your fridge is busted. It's leaked all over the floor, and something stinks in there."

"We'll just have to drink it all then," Mark said.

Trevor came out to stand beside him on the porch, and placed the six-pack on the railing. He took one and handed it to Mark, and grabbed ~~one another~~ for himself. ~~None~~ Neither of them said anything as they opened the cans. Mark sat down on a rickety chair.

"Are you on the list? For the shelter?" he said. ~~Trevor nodded.~~

Trevor nodded. "For now. My guess is that the list will change several times before Impact ~~day~~."

Mark nodded, and took a big gulp from his can.

"Any word from the senator?" ~~he said. Trevor shook his head, and frowned.~~

Comment [A20]: Elan: Note this too.