

of our lives, and suddenly I feel cast far from solid ground, drifting.

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“Tillie, you help me more than I could ever say.” He moves his hand from my shoulder to the back of my neck, and pulls me near. Gently, he leans his head against my head and we sit in a sideways hug. “There was a bad time, remember me telling you?” he says. “After Will died. Your sister and I were . . . friends. I was confused. And then this beautiful house was empty and I’d walk through the yards, all alone, stoned, watching it all go to shit. And then you came, with your mother, and it was like the clouds parted.” He laughs and leans back in his seat to look at me. “You saved me, Tillie, the two of you. I don’t think you’ve ever believed me, have you?”

Comment [Office33]: This sounds vague. Use a more telling word here instead. You can still make it feel distant, but add more personality and more color, it can even be something simple, like, “dark”.

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I shake my head, watching his serious eyes. I remember his sadness when we first became neighbors, his quietude. And his drugs, I’ve never minded loose friends, but Henry smoked, snorted, and dropped like it was his true vocation. His friend from Eugene, Lyman, would sprawl on his couch for days and the two of them would try and rouse themselves for me, having barely coherent conversations and laughing like they were having a good time to try and get me to stay at their party.

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Comment [Office34]: This sentence drags out the pacing of the paragraph and reads as an unnecessary addition to her story. Cut this for ease and pacing.

“I know you were unhappy,” I say softly. “I’m glad you’re not that person anymore.”

He looks away, at the green grass and Mother’s perennials. “I don’t think I’m anyone but that person. I think what you are is what you are, then and now and forever.” Henry is far away, beside me, and his voice sounds low and reverent. “We don’t change, not really, not the parts of us that matter.”

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“Then God, what’s the point?” I say, trying to sound funny, trying to catch his attention again. “That’s so hopeless. I, at least, need to think I’m evolving.”

“Well, we get better at being ourselves. I think the point is learning to love what you

Comment [Office35]: What or who? Who sounds more inclusive of not only the human form, but of the mind. I recommend changing the “what” in this sentence and the next to “who.”

are. What you really are.” He reaches his hand for mine and squeezes and the light is back in his eyes. “Believe me, I need you as much as I’ve ever needed anyone. Probably more.”

He kisses his fingers and points at the sky, just as the front door opens and we see Mother on the porch. I glance at the bent shrubs, the thick tracks through the brown bark, then back at her open face. Henry slowly opens his passenger window and both give her grim smiles.

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“I’m glad you’re still here! I forgot milk. Half a gallon of 2%, please!” She’s smiling, still wearing her sunhat.

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Deleted: She is little and

Deleted: and

“Okay, Mother! See you soon!” I call over Henry’s lap. She waves at us as I shift into drive and turn the wheel grandly. I pull back slowly and we cruise sedately down the drive, as if I do this every day, as if I agree with Henry’s theories, as if nothing in the world could ever go wrong.

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#### Eve Shares a Secret:

Tillie just had a bit of an accident, but I’m pleased to see she’s driving herself. The house is cooler than outside, and my garden clogs make a satisfying *clump! clump!* on the kitchen floor. I sent Addie to the bath with a book, poor child, upset as she is by Emerson’s invitation. From the kitchen window I watch the swallows with their pointy wings flying errands around the garden. I’m glad Tillie is planting more this year. Every year she grows bolder with Emerson’s land, perhaps this time she has the courage to really tear it up. It’s been an unspoken arrangement for so long, as if we dare not be noticed here.

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Comment [Office36]: This is an awkward introductory sentence. Cut it and move straight into the next sentence for a stronger opening.

Comment [Office37]: This phrasing is passive, please rephrase for strength in the active voice. One way to do this is by restructuring the second clause, “upset as she is...” or cut it.

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In the beginning, it was temporary. Emmy needed guardians for the place; she worried the value would plummet without tenants to care for the house. She prefers the Lake Oswego house with its grim, gray corners and cold lake views, and better memories of her husband than the ones she had here. I remember how steady she was when she called me that night; she needed someone to be with Michael. He was home from Stanford, a surprise visit. He found his father hanging in Henry's garden. If I could curse Will Worthy, I would for doing that to his son, never mind the rest of his family. And where was Emmy when Michael found Will? Where was Henry that warm summer night if not in his beloved stone garden?

I hear footsteps in the hall and greet Emerson before I turn around. She has that self-important look on her face, but her arms are crossed at her waist defensively.

"Mother, I need to talk to you." She steps forward and takes the sunhat from my head. I'd forgotten about that.

"You know I love talking to you, anytime," I say, wanting to calm her down. Both of my daughters get so worked up over little things sometimes; it's always been my job to make their mountains into molehills.

"Addie said she loved your trip to the library. And ice skating, too, was it?"

"We went to the Central Library, downtown and she said it was almost as good as the one in Anchorage. That child loves books, just like you did when you were a girl. She stood there just breathing it in, all those books. The children's room has that stony sculpture of a tree, and she stared at it so long I thought she'd climb to the top, then and there."

"Mother, please don't make assumptions. If Michael doesn't call tonight, then I will

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- Comment [Office38]: Is this the same garden that Michael found Henry in? If so, sync the two by inserting "stone" before "garden" in the sentence that mentions where Will is found and then remove the second garden.
- Deleted: he wasn't
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- Comment [Office39]: This reads like an afterthought, the sentence would read stronger, and the pacing would be stay in time, if this was cut.
- Deleted: , Mother
- Deleted: library
- Moved (insertion) [4]
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- Deleted: she
- Deleted: as if she could
- Deleted: breathe
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- Moved up [4]: She said it was almost as good as the one in Anchorage. That child loves books, just like you did when you were a girl.

call him. We need to know what's going on. I think we've all been very patient."

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"And I'm sure you're concerned about her mother's health, too," I say. My daughter has some glaring blind spots when it comes to general compassion sometimes.

Comment [Office40]: Instead of simply saying this to the reader, incorporate this into her reaction, show her cool frustration perhaps. It will

"I have less patience than I used to with people who take their own lives," she says. "Or who try to, anyway."

"That's not what I'd expect. I'd think you'd have more patience than most, honey." I turn back to the sink where I have three plates to soak. I'd noticed the small salad plates were disappearing and found them, as I thought I might, in Addie's room.

I hold one up. "Rosemary chicken," I say, and point to another. "Sweet potato pie. Spare ribs. Cheese biscuits, hard as concrete."

"What's this?"

Comment [Office41]: Let's see Emmy's reaction in this line. Is it concern? Surprise? Show the reader in action.

"I found these under her bed. She's been hiding food."

Emerson's face flashes true worry for a moment, she sighs. "Food insecurity, maybe? I'll talk to her. She should know there's plenty here for her."

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I shake my head, "Please, let's just keep this a secret for now. I have an idea I want to try first. What did you need to talk to me about?" I ask, even though I know. She wants to leave; she wants to leave Addie with us, in our safekeeping. She wants to wipe her hands—~~one, two~~—because she's wise enough to see the direction it's heading. We're all becoming emotionally involved, whether we like it or not.

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"I won't be able to stay," she says, seeming terribly downhearted about it. "I have so many commitments in the city, and the Lake Oswego house really needs looking after, there's just so much . . ."

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"Well, that's too bad. I've enjoyed having Addie here, but I'm sure she'll like your

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other house too.”

“Oh no, Mother, I meant—”

“I know what you meant, dear.” ~~She’s~~ so tall and thin, she reminds me of the icicles that used to hang from the eaves of chalets in Switzerland. ~~I take her hands in mine.~~ Her skin isn’t cold, as I would’ve guessed, but ~~warm~~ and strong. ~~I look up into~~ her ocean-blue eyes and I can see, in a minute way, that she’s afraid of me. Afraid of ~~connecting~~ with me. ~~You can tell by the way your daughters hug you,~~

I squeeze her hands and smile gently. “Emmy, I love you. I want rich happiness for you. I want the sun to shine on you and keep you warm and well-loved. ~~But you need to~~ accept this responsibility as your own. This child came to you. For whatever reason, she’s yours. But if you stay here, we’ll help you.”

~~She pulls away, pulls her hands away, looks away.~~ ~~What sort of coercion is this?~~ If I stay, you’ll help me? This is my house, for God’s sake. Who is doing whom the favor here?”

She ~~turns~~ away, hands on her hips, trying to overpower me like Adam used to do. ~~They’re~~ so alike.

“And on that subject,” I say. “We need to have a conversation about this house. ~~Your~~ sister walks on eggshells around you—”

“Figuratively speaking?”

“And I know I don’t bring it up, ~~but~~ we can’t live like we’re going to be kicked out of a place. So lets either draw up an agreement or I’ll buy the property from you outright.” ~~I don’t tell her that the family lawyer has been pressuring me for years to solidify the arrangement, but he’s a sanctimonious boob and I only take his advice when I~~

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**Comment [Office42]:** Eve is not hugging Emmy, if you want to include this, make it more appropriate to the action, otherwise cut it, as it mutes the strength of the previous sentence by reading like an afterthought.  
**Deleted:** , sometimes  
**Deleted:** And I want

**Comment [Office43]:** This sentence would be stronger without the repetition. Repetition can be a wonderful effect, but here it stutters the sentence. Restructure this for strength and gravity by removing the repetition and create a single clause. It can say the same thing, but a sharp sentence will have better pull, as it is a small motion that says a lot.

**Comment [Office44]:** This sounds awkward, and far too formal for such intimate dialogue. I know that Emmy is more proper, but she is flustered in this situation. Cut this line and start with the next sentence instead.

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have to.

The color has risen high in her cheeks and her eyes look like she's about to bolt. "Do you have any idea what this place is worth?" she asks, her voice rising an octave.

"Do you have any idea how much money your father left me?" I ~~reply, placing my hands on my hips in response,~~ I can feel my cheeks growing red. ~~So impudent,~~ So hungry for power you need to try and grab it from your own mother. ~~I bite my tongue to keep from saying anything rude.~~

I take a deep breath, needing not to fight with her. "Your father took great care to ~~make~~ sure we'd be fine and you ~~know this.~~ We love it here, honey, and we love it even more when you're here with us." Emerson ~~turns~~ away from me and ~~I continue~~ speaking to a poker-straight, white-shirted back. "We can talk about ~~this~~ another time. Just think about it. Tillie and Henry and I have enjoyed having the both of you for a visit."

I dry my hands on a dish towel, ~~out of habit,~~ and walk down the hall to the bathroom Addie and Tillie share. I knock on the door ~~to check on her~~ and Addie says she's fine, she doesn't need anything. I walk the rest of the way down the hall to the back porch door and out into the sunshine. The deck is golden in the spring sunshine and I wish I'd kept my sunhat on my head. I crank open the umbrella over the glass table and pull a chaise into the shade. Here I will sit and look at the sky, ~~dreaming~~ of other places I could be.

Henry asked me once why I don't travel anymore, ~~and I didn't have a good answer,~~ I told him it ~~wasn't the same~~ after my windswept husband passed away. Adam and I used to love being able to up and leave whenever we wanted, ~~close the door on whatever was~~ bothering us and find a sitter for the girls. When we stepped on a plane we could be anyone we wanted to be, and nothing could touch us. ~~Nothing~~ expected us or needed us;

**Comment [Office45]:** This is minor information, and if it does not come up again or hold gravity to the story, cut it. End it on the sharp dialogue for a lasting effect on the reader, otherwise, her tone is lost in this afterthought.

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**Comment [Office46]:** Consider replacing these words with "this" so as to emphasize her feelings from the last two sentences. Or replacing them with the words she would want to say to her.

**Comment [Office47]:** Is this reference to the next sentence or the sentence "this" occupies. If it is it's current sentence, change it to "that," but if this is in reference to the next sentence, open the next sentence with it and add a conjunction between the clauses.

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**Comment [Office48]:** The action would be stronger without this addition. Please cut.

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every time we left we were alone and free of everything.

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### Emerson Shares a Secret:

Comment [Office49]: Be more specific with this statement. Make her tone be known to the reader, use stronger language to reinforce her feelings towards her mother and her frustration in this moment.

Mother makes me furious with her flapping about the arguments she refuses to finish. Sometimes, I just want to have it out with her—with all of them—but no one will stay to fight. Sometimes, I think that's why Will left; he refused to stay and finish the fight.

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Comment [Office50]: Elaborate on what Emerson means by this statement. What makes her a fighter? What makes her different that everyone else? What is she fighting? What is the connection? There needs to be more complete thoughts so as to pull the reader into her line of thinking.

Mother's kitchen is clean and bright, though I'm noticing the corners of this house are starting to collect dust. I have to consider her age, and her diminishing capabilities. It won't be too many more years before she and Tillie will need live-in help, and I know I'll have to fight them for that too. I walk down the hallway and stop outside the bathroom door. I almost knock, but reconsider—I'm not ever sure what to say to that child. If she is my granddaughter, why would Michael wait ten years to tell me? My son is like a storm on the horizon—powerful and holy, and terribly angry with me. Part of me is grateful that he stays so far away.

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Comment [Office51]: This is given in the follow[... [1]

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Comment [Office52]: You use a lot of -ly adver[... [2]

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Comment [Office53]: This is one option of cond[... [4]

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The door to Tillie's studio is ajar and I silently push it open. The room is wide and full of sunlight. It's a big room with art supplies and canvases heaped all about. Tillie has two places she likes to paint. One is a futon couch on the floor with a shortened easel Henry made for her. The other is a tall stool she climbs onto, near the window where she has a half-finished canvas. I walk quietly toward the painting, afraid to disturb even the dust in the air. I sit on her stool and look at the horizontal canvas. A group of women stand in the arc of an unfinished circle, heads bowed, the sky twilight dark although their faces are richly lit. Some of them hold hands, all of them reverently acknowledging

something in the middle of the circle that hasn't been painted yet. It reminds me of The Last Supper, whether or not it's meant to.

I step away from the painting and toward an open box on the floor, the one Addie found. She must've dragged it in here, to ask Tillie about the hat. I kneel down and open the flaps, wondering if it's a box I filled myself a decade before when I was cleaning up, tossing things away. A black t-shirt with a white raven silk-screened on the front, Michael's, I'm sure; a glass paperweight; a small box with a Cross pen set inside, a gift from someone with average taste; a brown wool scarf; a Thomas Pynchon and a Mark Twain, neither a first edition; and a tan Arturo Fuente cigar box.

I open the box to a neat line of cigars and a pair of round silver cigar scissors and a lovely deep smell of tobacco. I have a sudden memory of touching Will's jaw, his five o'clock shadow, in one of the rare moments he held completely still for me, of hearing the ice clink in his Glenlivet, and that faint scent of tobacco and cologne, of standing on the balls of my feet to kiss him on the lips, so lightly, so perfectly. He loved me. He is the only person in my life that I know who truly loved me.

I close the cigar box and tuck it close to my body. Tillie's empty studio is like a drug for me, which I always forget until I'm here again. Something about the warm, soft air tamps down my wicked parts and leads me quietly to peace, for a time. I think of Tillie's half-painted women—standing in reverence for a gift just given, one they don't understand enough to see yet. I'll have to tell her I prefer it undone.

I leave the studio and quietly close the door. I walk out onto the back porch and into the sunlight of a perfect Northwest spring day with a smile on my face, like a cool drink of water. Mother is asleep on the porch, under a green shade umbrella. I walk past her

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**Comment [Office54]:** This is a given in this paragraph, cut this in favor of the first clause, which will give the reader a more interesting thought to lead on into the following sentence.

**Comment [Office55]:** Give a tighter description. what does Emmy mean here? I would recommend shaving this entire sentence down to the point, such as, "the warm soft air moves me quietly to peace, for a time."

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**Comment [Office56]:** Revision ok? This was done to clarify the sentence and provide a smoother transition and better visual.

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**Comment [Office57]:** There does not seem to be a clear pattern for this phrase, "I walk," in this paragraph, yet it is repeated throughout. This repetition does not have the appearance of meaningful organization and sounds simply repetitious. Instead, condense this phrasing where you can and replace with an action that gives her body language a tone. But, if you want to make "I walk" more of a pattern, make it clear and purposeful in every line.

Deleted: as quietly as I can.



airy little snores, down the porch stairs, past the upturned earth of Tillie's doing and the manicured lawn that is slowly being replaced by patches of garden. I walk the long paces down to the pebbled beach and rippling lake, past the sleeping boathouse and around the the hedges and the fence.

Standing on Henry's beach I look up to his cabin and I'm struck by the beautiful order of the place. He's not a put-together man, generally speaking, and yet his yard, his stone garden and meditative paths, are striking in their perfection. I walk up his paths, past giant stones he planted as mysteriously as tiki heads on a Pacific island, past small lush topiaries, past the heavy cedar pergola to the rear door of his cabin. I knock quietly, holding my cigar box tightly, then let myself in. I feel entitled; I'm a neighbor, once a neighbor's wife.

"Henry," I call. I can hear the shower running behind the moody ripple of a Henry kind of song on the stereo and a man singing "... you did what you could and it wasn't enough, just a face in her crowd..." I can see he hasn't lost his adolescent taste in music. I walk into his bedroom and call his name again.

"Be right out!" he says.

"Abandoned illusions, you're just her black cloud," the stereo in the bathroom plays pensively.

I slip off my sandals and lean his pillows up, just right, and sit comfortably on his bed, where I often sat so many years before, holding my box on my lap like an offering. The bathroom door is slightly open and warm steam tumbles out with the music. I feel dazed, unsure of why I'm here.

He abruptly opens the door and stands before me, naked and wet and richly tan. On

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Comment [Office58]: Be more specific here, as she is referencing the Moai statues on the Polynesian Island of Easter Island. They're not called tiki heads.

Comment [Office59]: Instead of focusing on what Emmy thinks of Henry in terms of being a "put-together" man, or how she is struck by the beauty in those words, describe what she sees, focus on finding the beauty and thoughtfulness in every stone.

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Comment [Office60]: Restructure this without the adverb. It causes confusion in the reading, as if the bathroom were the noun. One example is, "pensive sound rang from the the stereo"

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his head is a black winter hat with the stitched letters BFF.

“Look!” he yells happily. “Look what came for me today!”

~~It's a pleasure to watch his face register such deep surprise. He pulls the hat from his head and covers himself. I'm not the woman he was expecting to find on his bed. His body is perfect, sculptural, if sculptures had soft spots. How could any woman want a twenty-year-old when older men are so much more handsome.~~

“Nice hat,” I say. “Nice and big.” I can feel my face growing warm.

He gives me a toothy ~~photo booth~~ smile and says, “I’ll be right back.” ~~Stepping~~ back into the bathroom, ~~he~~ closes the door and I hear the music soften, then stop, ~~before he emerges~~, wrapped discreetly in a towel. “Might want to close your eyes,” he says, “unless you want the rest of the show.”

I laugh and cover my eyes, ~~peeking~~ through as he gets dressed. Henry always ~~made~~ me feel ~~beautiful and wanted~~, without seeming salacious. He is unabashed, without pretense, as if he’s incapable of hiding his attraction—~~whether that’s true or not, that’s~~ always ~~how he makes me feel.~~

“But do you like my hat?” he asks, pulling on pinstriped boxers and a pair of jeans. “Your sister got it for me. It came in the mail today.”

“Best friends forever? That’s cute.”

“Blonde From Fargo,” he says, stretching a t-shirt over his blonde head, then replacing the hat. “It’s a band.”

“And it’s always good to have a snow hat this time of year,” I say. “You never know.”

“That’s right, you never know,” he says with a grin, laying down at the foot of the

**Comment [Office61]:** Show us this reaction, rather than simply telling the reader.

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**Comment [Office62]:** This statement is vague, give a feature, or more gripping description of how older men are handsome, that exemplifies the weakness she sees in younger men.

**Deleted:** He pulls the hat from his head and covers himself, like soccer players do.

**Comment [Office63]:** This sounds corny. Cut this line and leave it at the first. We still get the sexuality of the moment without this line.

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**Comment [Office64]:** Tense shift. Is the use of past tense on purpose?

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**Comment [Office65]:** This is repeated in the sentence before. Restructure this so that the meaning does not change, but give a more specific expression or reaction to his character.

bed, crosswise to where I sit. “~~What’ve~~ you got there?”

**Deleted:** What have

I look down at the tan box, then open it and pass it toward him. “Remember these?”

He leans toward the perfect line of cigars and breathes in deeply. “He used to get so mad at me,” Henry says, propped on one elbow. “I didn’t like his scotch. I preferred a warm Guinness with my cigar.”

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“That sounds like a punishment.” I make a face, remembering Henry and Will in deck chairs under the stars, the tips of their cigars glowing red. “Will was very taken with you. He said he’d never met anyone like you. You two were close.” I shut the cigar box and run my hand gently over the tan lid.

**Comment [Office66]:** This sounds like it is a dangling fact, and one that is assumed throughout the text. No need to say it, cut it.

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Henry’s face is inscrutable. “That was a long time ago,” he says, clearing his throat. “Twelve years, this summer.” He’s beautiful laying by my outstretched legs. I feel his hand gently on my bare foot and his eyes, watching me, as if nothing else in the world exists, as if he’s waiting for me and isn’t afraid. I find I’m not minding his warm hand on my foot.

**Comment [Office67]:** Give a stronger visual, this sounds vague and overused in the last couple paragraphs.

**Deleted:** He is

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**Comment [Office68]:** Don’t use too many adverbs, replace or restructure. One option is “grazes my bare foot.”

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**Moved (insertion) [5]**

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“We were close once too,” he says softly and I feel my throat catch.

“Oh, that made Will so angry. Do you remember that night with the bonfire?”

**Moved up [5]:** I find I’m not minding so much his warm hand on my foot.

Henry laughs his deep laugh and his brown eyes sparkle. “My God, of course I do. I thought he was going to kill me.”

Will had been in L.A. on business, and I’d opted not to go. He was a successful man, always, and Tate & Bookhammer was a successful firm, but an old Beta brother suggested a more lucrative move to entertainment law. That appealed to his vanity, of course, and he flew down to test-drive the lifestyle for a few days. He came home a half day early to find Henry and I at a makeshift bonfire on our beach near the lake shore. A

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balmy night under perfect stars.

“I’d never seen him like that,” Henry says. “I’m sure you were used to it.”

“We’d been married almost twenty years by then,” I murmur.

Henry likened Will once to a speed freak, after he’d been up for two days painting and re-painting the bathroom. He was like wildfire tearing through wilderness, having to be everywhere at once, and the next morning socked in by fog, rolled up in the blankets, as gray as wet ash. Will was medicated, self-medicated, we coped. ~~When he wasn’t tangled up in his depression he was phenomenal: wjcked smart, highly driven, terribly entertaining, a covetous lover, a witty friend. Will had never hurt me before, never raised a hand to me, never twisted my arm or pinched me too hard.~~

~~He’d flown in early from L.A. that night and saw us together sitting by the lake, Henry’s hand on my arm was a black mark, the laughter on our lips another, each subtlety a line of evidence adding up to the biggest transgression.~~ Will stood tall-suited, dark hair tufted from travel, cheeks ash gray with pain, believing I was cheating on him, loving another man. Henry had used his old wooden wheelbarrow to haul firewood over to the beach and it camped nearby, casting shadows in the summer dark, with only a few sticks of wood and the axe inside. ~~Without a word, Will kicked over the wheelbarrow, and~~ picked up the axe. I remember Henry leaping from his chair like a sprung toy, but I felt frozen, stuck in place. It happened fast. Henry reached his hands up and Will raised the heavy axe to his shoulder. Then he spun, yelling, and plunged the axe into the thick wood of the side-stranded wheelbarrow, ~~wood splintering as~~ the axe head stuck. Working it free, he raised it and struck again, and again, and again—, yelling, the axe head biting. I watched in the firelight, watched my husband’s face shine damply, his color high, lit

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- Moved (insertion) [6]
- Deleted: he made assumptions.
- Deleted: He
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- Moved up [6]: Henry’s hand on my arm was a black mark, the laughter on our lips another, each subtlety a line of evidence adding up to the biggest transgression.
- Deleted: Will said not
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- Deleted: he walked to the wheelbarrow,
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- Deleted: And Will had never hurt me before, never raised a hand to me, never twisted my arm or pinched me hard.
- Deleted: , as if making peace,
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from within as he was with his own terrible fire. His wordlessness was as frightening,

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~~Finished~~—the wheelbarrow splintered into pieces around the metal frame—~~he~~ gave me a diamond-sharp look, dropped the axe onto the grass, and walked back up to the house in the evening dark, his gray suit jacket swung over his shoulder like a pilot who’s finished his flight.

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Comment [Office69]: Let the audience see the emotion in his face, diamond-sharp does not tell us much in this moment. Make it feel cutting.

“Do you know what I remember?” Henry says and I shake my head slowly. His brown eyes, strong and kind, are a quiet riverbank I could nap on. He makes me think of who I used to be, when Will and I had a son away at college and a new house and so many hopes for how our lives could be different.

Comment [Office70]: This simile does not give effect to this scene. I recommend cutting it in favor of leaving with the sharper, aggressive action of the coat over the shoulder.

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Henry squeezes my foot, gently. “I remember how you didn’t even react. You didn’t scream or cry, jump up and down, or run away. You were so calm. Too calm. Still are.”

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His words make my throat tighten and I look down at my tightened hands. Why is it that men think if a woman isn’t hysterical she isn’t reacting? I close my eyes to keep from snapping at him and take a deep breath, feeling my body strung tight as a bow.

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“Can I tell you a secret?” I say softly, with measure, and watch his snow hat make a slow bob. “I hated you for a long time, Henry. It wasn’t an accident that he hung himself in your garden.”

“Emmy,” he says, and stops.

“But then I stopped hating you. I decided it would be wiser not to consider you at all.”

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I raise my chin and watch Henry’s face bloom with color, transparently wounded.

I’m not sure why ~~though, it’s not~~ something he doesn’t already know. He opens his

Comment [Office71]: Revision ok? That way, the reader has a better visual of this action in the moment. Otherwise, how does she know he is about to say something? This rewording implies it.

mouth, to say something when we hear a delicate woman’s voice at his cabin door. I slip

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my sandals on quickly, as if we'd been planning something untoward, and stand up in a hurry. Henry reaches for me, but I turn, remembering the never-used front door, I slip from his bedroom to his kitchen, down a dirty hallway, (tripping on the rag-rug), and spill out the rusty-hinged front door into the sunshine of Saturday afternoon.

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I don't want to see who he was waiting for, what woman is so blindly captivated by him. Henry is too young, even in his forties, and any feelings I may think I have for him are the same ones every woman has. There's a reason he's popular with my sister, with my mother, with whoever he was expecting to find on his bed this afternoon. It's cultivated, his appeal, and he'll never be able to choose one woman because he'll never be able to turn it off, or turn others away. His need is no different than anyone else's, it's just wrapped in a more likeable package.

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I stomp my way home, past the woman's Jetta parked by his cabin, up his gravel drive and down my own, making a giant circle from the way I'd originally come. It isn't until I'm on my own white porch steps that I realize I've left Will's cigar box behind, stranded and forgotten on Henry's wide and welcoming bed.

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#### Addie Shares a Secret:

I've been to birthday parties before. Mrs. Worthy seems to think I won't know how to behave, or that maybe I'll do something embarrassing. She's driving and talking, and keeps looking over at me with squinting eyes. When Ms. Eve drives and talks, she mostly watches the road. Well, at least she doesn't squeeze her eyes at me. On my lap I have a big blue-papered present with a soft white bow that Mrs. Worthy handed me. My fingers keep wandering over to rub the fuzzy bow. It's the most beautiful package I've ever seen.

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I'm giving a present to someone I've never met and I don't even know what's inside.

Mrs. Worthy is dressed importantly, like always, but she seems ~~distracted~~. ~~I've been~~ trying to figure some things out and one thing ~~I've~~ figured out is that ~~she's~~ a *pushing* sort of person, always rushing like a river. It must be tiring. I wonder when she gets to rest. Makes me think of Mama trying to rest, trying to get better. Ms. Eve says ~~we'll~~ call LuAnn tonight and talk to Mama, ~~so~~ I have that to look forward to, at least. We drive on the freeway and then on steep, steep roads with houses close together, and then ~~park~~ outside a big house. I feel shaky inside again. I almost wish Mrs. Worthy was a hand-holder, but that might make me more nervous. I left Mrs. Anderson at home because Mrs. Worthy's eyes insisted. Her eyes said, *Please don't bring that doll!* So I didn't.

We walk into the house without knocking and down a tiled floor hall to a big kitchen with a sliding glass door. ~~There's~~ a big warm wooden deck with some white grownups and a swimming pool full of white kids, mostly older than me. Mrs. Worthy introduces me to Mrs. White, the grandmother. Her body moves like ~~she's~~ very busy, but her eyes lock onto me and I hand her the giant blue present. ~~My~~ fingers hold Mama's bear amulet tight. She calls for "Whitney! Whitney!" and a blond girl in a bikini swimsuit runs up the stairs to meet me. ~~She's~~ the granddaughter ~~who's~~ turning thirteen. She's nice; she says "Hey" to me and leads me to a plastic chair ~~where~~ I sit in the sun by the pool. ~~But~~ when I turn around next I see Mrs. Worthy leaving, without even saying goodbye.

~~My pool chair is blue and white plastic woven together and it can tip back if I want to lay down but right now I am sitting up.~~ On the green and white plastic chair beside me is an older boy, ~~with wet brown hair and brown eyes and freckles on his nose~~, sitting in wet swim trunks and talking on a cell phone. ~~He's~~ very good-looking. He smiles a little at

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- Comment [Office72]: This is repetitive in a way that stutters the pacing and Addi's voice, rather than just her though pattern. Either cut it, or rephrase it to remove repetitive and vague language such as, "figure out," and "some things," for more specific details.
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- Comment [Office73]: This is assumed based on the actions of the previous sentence. Cut this and move straight into "She's nice..."
- Deleted: She is
- Deleted: and she's
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- Comment [Office74]: This information is irrelevant to the action, and cuts into the sting of the moment before. Instead take this time to focus for half a second on her emotion, on her disappointment, feeling of being different, even of shame.
- Deleted: like an eighth grader
- Deleted: He has wet brown hair and brown eyes and freckles on his nose and
- Deleted: he is
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- Deleted: boy