

This is a Line Editing example of a redacted/modified excerpt from a psychological thriller. Copyediting example is available on <https://www.robynedits.com/editing-services>
Note the abbreviations used:

- MMC = Male Main Character
- FMC = Female Main Character
- ME = Medical Examiner

#

"Ah," MMC nodded, understanding. "So we're looking at formal evening events. Places where people dress up. The hospital had a fundraising gala tonight." He looked up from his phone, sweat beading at his temples in this sweltering heat even at the early hour. "Two people could slip away without causing immediate alarm."

"Get the guest lists and security footage from the gala," FMC instructed, watching the medical examiner's team work against time and temperature. "Prioritize early departures, missing persons reports, and anyone acting unusually. The killer would have needed time to..." She left the sentence unfinished, her eyes on the bodies. There weren't signs of a struggle and no blood splatter. They had been killed elsewhere and moved to this spot.

MMC's phone chirped through the darkness. He listened, his expression tightening. "The hospital's event was high society stuff - politicians, professionals, old money. The guest list is over three hundred. These are the kind of people who won't appreciate us asking questions at this hour."

"They'll appreciate it even less if there's another scene like this," FMC replied coldly.

"Wake up the hospital's security chief," FMC said, her tone leaving no room for argument. "I want staff lists, contractor details, service entrance logs."

MMC's thumb hovered over his phone. "You think our killer was at the gala? Among all those fancy people?"

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Commented [RWS1]: This scene has many instances of "exact" and "precise." I edited those out for clarity and word choice.

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Deleted: His fingers moved across his phone screen. "

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Commented [RWS2]: This is the first time she thinks this so I added foundation to help this be a more natural conclusion and bring the readers on the investigation.

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Commented [RWS3]: I deleted the next two sentences because 1. It doesn't tie to this dialogue 2. The point about the chemical smell was removed as a clue in the last editing round 3. FMC moving toward the ME doesn't lead anywhere. If we apply this test: Character [thinks/feels/does] something because [reason] which leads to [result], we're left with an action without a reason or result.

Deleted: She moved closer to the bodies, careful not to disturb the MEs work. The chemical smell the ME had noted earlier hung in the air - sharp, antiseptic, out of place in the frozen park....

"Look at this scene." FMC's ~~said, moderating her voice to control her rising frustration,~~
 "The positioning, the timing, the location - all of it required planning." The haze crept closer to
 their evidence markers. "Whoever did this knew what they were doing. And they knew who
 would be at those events tonight."

"Detective?" A young beat cop approached, tablet in hand, his uniform still crisp despite
 the hour. "We got something from traffic control. Late-model white Mercedes van on the west
 end of the main road at 1:10 AM, plates not visible. Stopped for exactly eight minutes in the
 camera's blind spot."

The officer queued the footage on his tablet. The night-vision feed showed the van's
 approach - headlights off, moving with purpose. It disappeared into the camera's blind spot
 precisely where the road curved toward the park. Then, the same methodical departure.

Eight minutes in darkness.

The van's timing aligns perfectly with initial time of death estimates," the ME called over,
not looking up from her work. Her gloved hands continued their precise measurements. "Based
on liver temperature and environmental factors, bodies were placed between 1:05 and 1:15."

"The timing's right and they knew where to stop to avoid the cameras." FMC locked eyes
 with MMC. "Get Tech Services to pull footage from every traffic camera within two miles. I
 want to know where this van came from. And check if any of the tonight's vendors use
 Mercedes."

Eight minutes to position two bodies. Her eyes tracked to the tree line, where uniformed
 officers' lights still swept through the haze. The thought rammed into her: their killer might be
 out there now, watching their work like watching a performance unfold from the perfect vantage
 point.

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Commented [RWS4]: This sets up the next scene where her frustration boils over.

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Commented [RWS5]: Confirmed foundation for this statement is in previous scene.

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Commented [RWS6]: I edited this section to remove the FMC's "location" question because 1. The young beat cop says "on the bridge" and 2. Her asking that doesn't move the story forward or impact her character arc 3. It smooths the reading experience.

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... [1]

Commented [RWS7]: Moved to emphasize the key point.

Moved (insertion) [1]

Moved (insertion) [2]

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Commented [RWS8]: I removed this sentence because the characters and readers don't know it's the right moment until the next scene.

Moved up [2]: The van's timing aligns perfectly with initial time of death estimates," the ME called over, not looking up from her work. Her gloved hands continued their precise measurements. "Based on liver temperature and environmental factors, bodies were placed between 00:15 and 00:25."¶

Deleted: FMC absorbed this information, watching the forensics team document every detail.

Deleted: , , ensuring they'd be discovered at exactly the right moment...

The ME gestured FMC closer, her LED penlight illuminating the points where the victims' bodies met. "Sutures at every contact point." Her gloved finger traced where flesh pressed against flesh. "These aren't random. The depth and angle are identical at each site. The entry points suggest a left-handed administrator, likely using a standard ½ inch curvature needle."

FMC processed this information, studying how the bodies had been arranged, creating a sense of intimacy at each contact point. Everything about this scene pointed to expertise and purpose - medical knowledge, deliberate choreography, clear sight lines to the hospital, and perfect escape routes. A stage designed by a killer who knew what they were doing.

The ME consulted her tablet. "The progression of the sutures is telling - methodical, right to left, maintaining consistent pattern. The technique mirrors surgical protocols."

"A surgeon," FMC said quietly, the pieces clicking into place. Not just medical knowledge, but specialized expertise. Someone who knew how evidence degraded, how bodies cooled, and how to stage a scene for maximum effect. She studied the tree line one more time, thinking of the hospital's guest list. Three hundred people. How many of them were doctors?

The ME rose carefully, stripping off her gloves and nodding toward the approaching transport team. "We need to move them before it gets even hotter. Once we separate the bodies, we might lose evidence from where they connect."

"How long to document the contact points?" FMC asked.

"Thirty minutes. Any faster would compromise the evidence. I want to understand if anything else is binding them other than sutures before we break the connection."

FMC watched the ambulance's red lights pulse through the haze, casting an eerie glow across the ground. The surgical precision and the theatrical arrangement pointed to someone with

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Commented [RWS9]: Other options are intent, deliberation, experience.

Deleted: understanding of anatomy,

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Deleted: The killer had positioned them with surgical precision, creating a sense of intimacy at each injection site. Perfect

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Commented [RWS10]: Deleted the next sentence because it was repetitive.

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Deleted: She adjusted her light. "

Deleted: Each entry point precisely planned, like following surgical guidelines.

Deleted: Someone who understood anatomy, who worked with surgical precision.

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specific skills. Someone who might have been at the hospital gala tonight, moving easily among the city's elite. The kind of person no one would question. The kind of person who would know exactly how to make this scene tell the story they wanted told.

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Commented [RWS11]: Option: ...who knew how to make this scene tell the exact story they wanted told. This option changes the emphasis from the process (exactly how to do it) to the outcome (the exact story they wanted told).