

This is a Copyediting example of a redacted/modified excerpt from a psychological thriller. The Line Editing 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

Copyediting Notes:

- Used the Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS) as the style guide
- Changed from straight quotes to curly quotes – All of those are documented as tracked changes because this is a sample. In an actual copyediting project, I'd run that macro first in Editing mode to minimize the markup and so I could check the output as I copyedit the rest of the document.
- Updated all hyphens to em dashes.
- Fixed the tense changes toward the end of the scene from present to past.
- The client would also receive a style sheet documenting unique spellings, grammar, word choice, punctuation, capitalization, character names/traits, and other key decisions.

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“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 have slipped 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 or 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—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.”

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“They’ll appreciate it even less if there’s another scene like this,” FMC replied coldly, her tone leaving no room for argument. “Wake up the hospital’s security chief. 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?”

“Look at this scene,” FMC 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 a.m. 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 a.m. and 1:15 a.m.”

“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

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want to know where this van came from. And check if any of the tonight's vendors use Mercedes."

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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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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."

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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.

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

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"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?

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The ME rose carefully, ~~stripped~~ off her gloves and ~~nodded~~ 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 other than sutures ~~is binding them~~ 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 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 ~~knew~~ exactly how to make this scene tell the story they wanted told.

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