

Sample Developmental Edit

The close canopy makes the path hard to see in the dimness, and the forest is denser than I remember. I find a lush spot under a tree and sit to rest a while. Butterflies criss-cross the dusky air as the sun sets, and I find myself smiling, reflecting on the afternoon and all the good things in my life – Kate, my new job, not breaking my ankle. Not to mention having the cabin to escape to when city life gets too much. Being a few hundred kilometres from my parents doesn't hurt either.

And Kate's cooking. Oof. That woman can cook. Mamma always said I should marry a woman who could cook – the way to a man's heart.

I hear Toby come running up to me, tired of sniffing for rabbits and beetles. I'm still not sure about him, I've never owned a dog before, but Kate refuses to give him up, so ... here his we are. I guess he's kind of cute with those piggy-like ears and whiskery face. He nuzzles my leg, wanting a pat. I ignore him, so he insists.

"Yeah, okay. I'm not there yet, pal."

He trots off again, then stops a few metres away, cocking his head. It's now I hear what's distracted him – the deep thud of hoofs on turf.

I jump to my feet, but the soldiers are upon me before I get a chance to run. I'd only break my ankle for sure in the tangle of the undergrowth anyway. I resign myself to their scrutiny.

"What have we here?" the first soldier says.

I squint up at him, taking in his appearance. "Just out for a stroll, sir." I emphasise the "sir".

"Name?"

"Jo Carter."

"ID?" he asks.

As I reach for my wallet in my back pocket, the second soldier puts his hand on his gun. I freeze. "Just reaching for my ID," I tell them.

Consider using the senses to help create a more immersive scene. Also, since he strained his ankle the previous day, perhaps mention that he's picking his way carefully so as not to do more damage?

"Dusky" relates to colour. Perhaps include some other senses here: the smell of the forest, the feel of dampness or dryness of the air.

In the previous chapter, the couple had a discussion about "mine" and "ours", so Jo might use and emphasise the word *our* here, instead of "the" to show he's taken notice of Kate's feelings.

Language. This feels like an affectation. Jo has never referred to his mother as "mamma" before

This feels somewhat misogynistic and cliché. Consider if you want your protagonist to be a likeable character who respects his wife (and women in general), or to sound like a character from the 1950s.

This is a moment of high tension and needs to be stretched a little. Can you describe him scrabbling up from the grass, the sight of the two beasts galloping towards him. Do the horses stand over him to intimidate him? What are the soldiers wearing? What sort of weapons do they have?

Perhaps a description, simile or metaphor here to give the reader a feel for this character's persona?

Can you give some context as to why he does this and what meaning it carries for him? Has he had run-ins with authorities prior to this?

You don't need a dialogue tag here; however, you could make better use of it by adding something like: I speak slowly and clearly so these luddites don't panic and start a shooting spree. This tells us more about the character's personality and that he knows these soldiers are trigger happy.