

SAMPLE CONTENT EDIT

Chapter 1 *Joyce Parker*

[Redacted]

...just needed to be stirred up.

Commented [HU1]: SETTING – Somewhere in the beginning of this chapter, you should mention something about the family business/hair salon that everyone works in. You refer to it several times, without the reader having any idea what you're referring to. Once again, its distracting for the reader to have to try and 'figure out' what's going on...

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“Hmm. Joyce, your dressing looks different,” Glory said, knowing for a fact I had not made the dressing.

Commented [HU2]: Why does she refer to her mother by first name? I inserted a snippet of setting on page XX...

“I made the dressing,” Frannie spoke up, falling right into Glory's trap.

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Glory scooped some dressing onto her plate. “Umm... What's wrong with it?”

Commented [HU3]: When I notice the same word or phrase used on the same page, I'm going to highlight both, and delete one. Just want to point it out so you can train your eye to catch them. ☺

“Ain't nothing wrong with my dressing.”

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“Looks as though you got a little carried away with the sage,” Glory said. “It's green.”

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“It is not green!”

“This is definitely green.” Glory said, staring at it.

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“Well, you sure put some on your plate.”

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“I didn't want to be rude.”

“Shut up, Glory,” I said.

“What? I didn't say it wouldn't be tasty, I just said it was green.”

“Well, what did you make?” Frannie asked Glory, looking around the table.

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“Exactly what you see me making now—*my plate*.” Someone at the table snickered but I wasn’t exactly sure who.

Frannie was still huffing. “That’s what I thought.”

“Oh, don't act as if I can't cook,” Glory said, knowing that no one would argue with that. She passed the dressing to Wendell.

“Whether you can or can't, you didn't. *And that's my point.*”

I spooned mashed potatoes onto my plate as my eldest and youngest daughters bickered across the table. A peaceful Thanksgiving with my family was obviously asking too much; it just wasn't a Parker gathering unless Frick and Frack were at each other's throats. Sanita, my middle daughter that we affectionately called Sweetie, watched quietly as Glory and Francine tore into each other. Wendell, my only son, had long ago learned to tune out his sisters' drama, and paid them no mind.

I sat at the head of the dining room table, the matriarch of the family. To my right was my mother, Grandma Francine; Sweetie and her boys, Bryce and Anthony; and Frannie, her husband Michael, and their three children, Mikie, Brandon and Ericka. Glory and her boyfriend of the month, LaRone, were to my left, along with Wendell and his daughter Sydney. My widowed and childless sister, Jeanette, sat across from me at the other end of the table.

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Commented [HU4]: I wouldn't italicize this... Italics is usually for internal thought, not dialogue.

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Deleted: A peaceful Thanksgiving with my family was obviously asking too much. Not only was a fight not surprising, it was expected. Sanita, my middle daughter that we affectionately called Sweetie, watched as her two sisters, Glory and Francine, verbally tore into each other. And I just thought to myself, it just wasn't a Parker gathering unless Frick and Frack were at each other's throats. This time, instead of it being over a not so friendly game of spades or charades, it all started around the dinner table when all of the platters and serving dishes were being passed around. ¶

I sat at the head of the table with my family surrounding me. To my right was my mother, Grandma Francine; Sweetie and her boys, Bryce and Anthony; my youngest daughter, Francine, and her husband Michael along with their three children, Mikie, Brandon and Ericka. ¶ Glory and her boyfriend of the month, LaRone, were to my left; my widowed and childless sister, Jeanette was on the other end of the table. Across from them were Wendell and his daughter Sydney.

Wendell plopped some dressing onto his plate, and then onto Sydney's. *Both a y'all shut up. Can't neither one of you cook.*

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"Where's the gravy?" Glory asked, looking at the liquid that sat in the gravy boat.

LaRone picked it up and handed it to her. "Here you go," he said, eager to ease the mounting tension between the two sisters. He looked amazed that no one seemed to be affected by the bickering.

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Glory swirled the greasy goop around and then sat it back on the table. *I know that ain't the gravy.*

Commented [HU5]: Once again, I wouldn't italicize dialogue, but that is a stylistic difference – not necessarily wrong...

The fuse had been reignited.

"I see you got your clown suit on today, Glory." Frannie picked up the gravy boat and spooned out the matter that had settled to the bottom. "...just needed to be stirred up." After pouring gravy on every morsel of food she had on her plate, she handed it to her husband, Michael, who hesitated and then poured a dab on his mashed potatoes.

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"First of all—"

And here we go. Once someone had been "first of all" it was officially a fight. *This time, instead of it being over a not so friendly game of spades or charades, it all started around the dinner table when all of the platters and serving dishes were being passed around.*

Commented [HU6]: I broke this onto another line, because its awkward to have Joyce's internal thought in the middle of someone else's dialogue.

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Frannie turned to secure Ericka's bib as she sat in her high chair.

"You're the only one here without kids; you should've been the one

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helping Mama with Thanksgiving dinner. It's just like a niggah to not do any of the work, but do all of the complaining."

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Just as Glory was opening her mouth to rebut, Michael tried to hijack the conversation, "Hey man," he said to Wendell, "how is the school coming together up in Kansas City?"

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I was relieved.

"It's going really well," Wendell replied, "Why don't you come up and see for yourself,"

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"We should all go and check it out," I chimed in, all too happy to change the course of the conversation. After all, we did have a guest.

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Commented [HU7]: Or, "all too happy with the subject change" Says basically the same thing with fewer words.

"Why don't you think about becoming an instructor?" Wendell asked me.

Wendell had recently started a cosmetology school in Kansas City that he was trying to get off the ground. He knew I'd been holding on to an instructor's license for years, but had never put it to any use. He'd been dropping hints for months about me returning to the classroom.

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"I'm too old fashioned for these young kids today. Besides, I don't know if I have the patience." I stood over my grandson, Anthony piling more macaroni and cheese and turkey onto his plate because he likes to eat.

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"Your experience is exactly what makes you so valuable. It's what's missing from this new generation of hairstylists. They don't want to hear about the basics like finger waves and roller placements. They just want

to jump up and slap a ponytail on somebody and charge 'em eighty dollars.”

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“Hey, I spent fourteen hours behind the chair yesterday. Please tell me we are not getting ready to talk hair all day,” Glory said.

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“I know that's right. And I have to turn around and work again tomorrow,” Sweetie added. “Pass me the rolls please, Aunt Jeanette.”

Commented [HU9]: If you mention something about the family business earlier in the chapter, this exchange has better context. As its written, it takes a minute to figure out what they're talking about.

“You're not hitting the mall with me and Glo tomorrow?” Frannie asked.

“I should be done by noon. I can catch up to y'all then.”

“By noon all the bargains will be gone,” Glory said.

Deleted: “Oh well, I can't afford to take off.”

“I can't imagine any bargain worth fighting those crowds,” LaRone said. Struggling to find his place, he wanted to join the conversation. I could tell he had been trying to find a comfortable fit since he'd arrived and Glory hadn't exactly made it easy for him.

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“Man, you must not have any women in your family. They live for those crowds and fighting over crap,” Michael said.

Aunt Jeanette passed the rolls to Sweetie. “Not all women, You couldn't pay me to get out there tomorrow. That's why I finished my Christmas shopping way back in September.”

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“I finished mine, too.” Glory said. “But I still want to be in the thick of it. Frannie you better be ready when I come to pick you up. Ain't no CP time tomorrow. Six A.M. Grandma, you need us to pick you up anything?”

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“Just a little wrapping paper if you get a chance.”

I gazed around the room at each one of my children, and the amazing feast before us. Things hadn't been easy for me but I certainly felt blessed. I'd done my best raising them without their fathers. At least I could say with confidence that I had been a better mother to them than my own mother had been to me.

Looking past the platter of sliced turkey, the basket of homemade dinner rolls and a dish of cornbread dressing I lovingly watched my family. I gaze around the room at each one of my children knowing that I understood that a person could only give what they had unless they made a conscious effort. And since my father loved me so thoroughly I had plenty of love and affection to give to my own.

I watched Wendell tend to his daughter and wondered what was really going on with him. A few months ago he had come to me, elated and overjoyed, announcing he was going to propose marriage to a woman he'd fathered a daughter with. I could tell he was in love, and maybe even for the first time. Wendell had been involved with so many women over the years, but as far as I knew, he'd never given his heart to any of them. As a small boy he showed a keen interest in the opposite sex and drew females to him of every age. But love was another story. When he turned thirty I was afraid he would never settle down and have his own family because he never focused on any one woman in particular.

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Commented [HU10]: I would replace this paragraph with the one I wrote above...

Deleted: things hadn't been easy for me but I certainly felt blessed. ¶ I'd done my best raising them without their fathers. I rested with the pleasure of knowing I had been a better mother to them than my own mother had been to me.

Commented [HU11]: I'd delete this. Mentioning her Dad at this point just adds to the character clutter in this scene.

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Wendell was now over forty and Naomi was the only name that I heard on more than one occasion.

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Commented [HU15]: These two sentences say essentially the same thing. Delete one.

Deleted: And I'd only met her briefly once or twice.

I wondered if my example as a woman conditioned Wendell's womanizing ways. I hated thinking like that but the truth was difficult to face. I was so happy for him the day he burst into the house showing me a ring and talking of marriage. But since then he'd said nothing. I wanted to ask, but figured he'd tell me when he was ready.

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I was certain that whatever pain Wendell felt over Naomi, Sydney made up for it. She was definitely the best thing that ever happened to him. Like any mother, I just wanted him to be happy. I also wanted to know that I'd raised a gracious man with his manhood secure and intact, even if he'd never had any real examples of that around him.

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Glory was strikingly beautiful and statuesque—but also the daughter from hell. I loved her and most of the time I even liked her, but there were times when I wanted to slap a muzzle on that mouth of hers. Times like right now. She was always jeering Frannie and provoking arguments. Unfortunately, Frannie still hadn't learned how to ignore her like the rest of us had.

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Glory had a creative spirit and possessed a special gift for mixing products. She'd been conjuring up creams and conditioners for hair and skin, since she was a little girl, and would sit in the bathroom for hours putting things together pretending that she was making the latest problem-solving agent for the modern woman.

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That wasn't her only specialty. Glory was also a man-eater. She had very little respect for men, so she used them for sex and then threw them out like trash. I wondered if that was my fault, too. I hadn't exactly set the best example.

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Sweetie was a true middle child. The friction between Glory and Frannie had always overshadowed her, and she was used to sitting quietly in the background while her sisters battled. I often worried about Sweetie's passiveness—she was overly trusting in relationships that never worked out. She seemed to always be looking for love. Like me, she never had a problem getting a man. Keeping one was the issue.

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Deleted: in light of the strong personalities of the other two. Also I was concerned that Sweetie was following in my footsteps when it came to men and children.¶
She had been overly trusting in relationships. She'd been in many that failed and she seemed to always be looking for love. Like me, she never had a problem getting a man but keeping one was the issue.

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Bryce's father, Steve, turned out to be abusive. After several interventions from Wendell, Glory and Frannie, Steve stopped coming around. It left Bryce minus a father, but it kept Sweetie safe. Not long after, Keith showed up and tried to take over where Steve left off. Not only did he want to be Bryce's father, he wanted to be Sweetie's as well. He bossed her around, and did whatever he could to humiliate her in front of others. That went on for a year until she became pregnant with his baby. During her sixth month, Keith abruptly stopped coming around.

Frannie was the baby. She'd been married for seven years and seemed to have every reason to be happy, but I'm not sure she really was. Michael, a great addition to our family, was a good husband to her.

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Since she was busy being a wife and mother of three, she only worked one or two days a week at the shop. She seemed content in her role as housewife, but I worry about her, too. She had her sisters fooled, acting like she had it all together—but I knew better.

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Commented [HU16]: You should end this scene with Sweetie, to make a smoother transition into the next chapter. I suggest moving the Frannie paragraph up.

Editor's Note: The end of this chapter needs some work. You definitely should end with Sweetie, not Frannie, since the next chapter is in Sweetie's POV. You might also want to weave in some mention of Sweetie going out later with Robyn, so that when we move to the next chapter, the reader realizes its occurring later that night...