

Wendy-

You've taken a setting and created a plot around it. The cold isolation of a coastal island is similar to the life you've described for Muriel. She began as a spinsterish lady who was lifted out of her isolation to become a necessary part of a difficult family. She did the job, but her reward was a slap in the face. Now she is alone again with some decisions to make.

All that is fine. For me, there were some problems with the presentation. Here we go:

- 1. In the first 5 pages we, the readers, have to sort out Manny, Barnaby, Tony, Todd, Matt, and Kathy. Then there's Mirabelle – in my mind, she's the clearest one of the bunch.*
- 2. I found confusion in the homes that they were living in. It might just be me.*
- 3. There's the info overload that deals with the past. It's not the where we are, it's the when we are. If you could reorganize the chronology a bit, it might help.*
- 4. Then there's the biggest problem here. Other than Mirabelle, we meet none of the characters. Successful authors present the characters so we, the readers, get to know and understand them, and not just hear about them through a distant narration. Slow down and let the characters live with actions and dialogue. Give us some scenes with Muriel interacting with her husband, the kids, the people in town. So far, your characters have potential. They need to inflate to three dimensions.*

You have a lot to think about, but it will be worth it.

Keep with this project. It has promise.

Enjoy your characters and let them live

Good luck

Dave

Summary: death of husband leads middle aged woman to change the direction of her life

(Given this summary, I immediately think, "This has been done a million times." That said, let's see how you can use your writing chops to throw a unique insight into this well used plot line.)

When Muriel Perriera was fifty eight, her husband Manny, mayor of Shallow Bay, dropped dead in front of a crowd in the Elks hall. Once the shock wore off and Manny's kids went back to their own lives, Muriel took stock of her life and decided that suicide was an option. Without Manny, life was not worth living.

The kids, all five of them, were *his* kids, not hers, and couldn't care less if she lived or died. Muriel would have liked to get a job, and had once been head librarian in town, but those days were long in the past. While Manny had been mayor, one of the town departments would have taken her on, if they could have gotten past the issue of nepotism, but not now. She was old news.

Her phone seldom rang, condolence letters had dwindled, and everyone's attention was on the new mayor. Manny's kids had disappeared. Even her favorite, Barnaby, had gone back to his landscaping business. Now that the rainy days of May had caused her grass to shoot up, where was Barnaby? He'd always taken care of the lawn, now a tangled, weedy mess. She would have to get out the lawn mower and hedge trimmer and do the work herself.

Muriel realized that if she was going to kill herself, she'd have to see a lawyer about drawing up a will. She'd leave her house to the Historical Society. Her antique gem, high on the bluff overlooking the harbor, was worth a fortune in today's real estate market. If Manny's kids thought she'd leave the house to them, they should think again. *(Maybe something about the legal ownership of the house. The kids are entitled to half, I think. Later, suggested that there is a larger house. Manny's?)*

Muriel made herself a cup of tea and thought back to the early days of her life with Manny. His first wife had died and left him with the five kids. A grandmother, and then an aunt, had stepped in, and when they had left for their more peaceful lives, Manny went looking for a wife. She had to be mature, with no kids of her own, and a woman born and bred on the island of Shallow Bay, because she had to understand the ways of Islanders. People who lived on this cold little island off the coast of New England *(Maybe more specific. Off the coast of Maine?)* were a peculiar breed, difficult to define, and his wife had to be one of them. Finally, she had to have

the broad back and the hefty shoulders of a workhorse *(To do what? Raise the kids? Farm chores? Vague but important detail.)*

Muriel Peyton fit the bill. He found her standing behind the circulation desk in the library. She was taking no nonsense from a group of adolescent boys that, to his surprise, included his own sons, Tony and Todd, who were snickering over pictures of naked women in a National Geographic magazine. Manny knew right away that Muriel was just what he needed.

She was forty three at the time, an old maid by Island standards, and they married quickly. *(How old is he?)* She rolled up her sleeves and went to work to bring order to the chaotic Perreira household. She'd already known Barnaby, the youngest at age seven. Barnaby loved the library, and he'd spent many a cold Saturday afternoon there, huddled over a stack of picture books. When Muriel became his stepmother, he climbed onto her lap, a picture book in his hands. The poor, mother-starved little boy loved Muriel, and Muriel loved him. *(Seven-year-old climbing on her lap with a picture book? Seems odd. Is the kid intellectually disadvantaged?)*

Did she already own the house? Did they move in? Did she accept the responsibility of raising all the kids? Was there a pre-nup? All this needs to be hacked out.)

Not so with the other kids. Matt, fifteen, began to hang out with a bad crowd. Sullen, angry Matt, when not in school, was at someone else's house, and when he had to be home, he walked under a black cloud. Muriel taught him how to cook, and when he was a few years older, a high end seafood restaurant took him on. Tony and Todd, the eleven year old twins, were a handful, sassy and rude and running all over the island looking for trouble. When Muriel tried to rein them in, they shouted, "You're not our mother! You can't tell us what to do!"

"We'll see about that," Muriel had answered.

She turned them into Tom Sawyer boys and put them to work painting the shed. There was never an end to the work that needed to be done on Manny's house, and her list of chores kept the boys busy.

Spoiled Kathy, Manny's thirteen year old princess, was Muriel's biggest challenge. No stepmother on earth could ever meet her own mother's level of beauty, patience and understanding. Muriel had overheard Kathy say to her cousin, "If Dad had to get married again, why did he have to pick that ugly old stick? She's even *older* than him!"

Older, yes, but only by two years.

Muriel set down rules, established order, and Manny backed her up every time. He'd fallen in love with his new wife, much to his surprise.

Months went by and soon Barnaby had slid off Muriel's lap, never to return. He became a cub scout and entered the world of boys, a place far more exciting than the land of picture books and fairy tales.

After five years of battles, Kathy married Michael Gomes, and was gone. Peace reigned.

When all the kids had grown up and left, Manny had sold his house and they'd moved into Muriel's small, historic home up on the bluff. Now Manny was gone, too, and she was right back where she'd started, alone, but without a job, without even a family.

Where were they all? Where was Barnaby? *(I'm getting confused with all the names coming and going. I thought they were living in her house. Now she's back in her own house. after Manny sold his house.)*

Muriel was a believer in life after death. She knew Manny awaited her on the other side. It was up to her to take that crucial step: A sip of rat poison? Jump off the bluff? An overdose of something or other? What did it matter?

A knock on the door, and there stood Mirabelle Lewis, island busybody, snoop and, as Manny had once put it, *up to no good*.

She stepped (*barged, uninvited?*) into the house. "Hello, dear, just wondering how you're doing."

They had known one another since their high school days, but they had never been friends. Mirabelle had run with a fast crowd, and had never given Muriel a second look until years passed and Muriel married the mayor.

Mirabelle made herself comfortable on the couch, and her eyes swept over the room, taking in the old beams, the paneled walls and the charming corner cupboards, all witnesses to generations of Peytons for nearly two hundred fifty years.

"What are your plans, dear?" Mirabelle asked. "Are you going to stay on here? This house must be a lot of work for you. You know, there are some lovely condos down on Water Street. I should think, at your age, you'd want to be closer to the shops."

She's up to something.

Mirabelle's husband Gus was in real estate. He'd sent his wife to test the waters, looking for a listing. This was not a social call. (More interesting to let us hear the meeting and the obvious subterfuge would come out.)

"I'm staying right here, Mirabelle. I'm the same age as you, in case you've forgotten. We ~~went through high school together, remember?~~ (*Not necessary. You've already told us this face.*) Are you ready to live near the shops?"

"Well, no, of course not. I just thought..."

She (*Muriel or Mirabelle?*) repositioned herself on the couch.

“What fun we had back then, in high school,” she (*Muriel or Mirabelle?*) went on. “Too bad we can’t recapture those days.”

Those days had not been fun for Muriel, and there was nothing to recapture. While Mirabelle had been out on the beach with Gus, having sex behind a sand dune, no doubt, and drinking beer, she’d spent her time buried in books.

Mirabelle got up to leave. “Well, I won’t keep you. I’m glad to see you’re doing so well. We all miss Manny, a terrible loss for the island, and for you. But you have his sons, and I’m sure Kathy is a comfort.”

~~Huh! If she only knew she hadn’t seen Kathy since Manny’s funeral.~~ (*No need to reiterate.*)

After Mirabelle left, Muriel sat down to give the suicide idea further thought. A picture took root in her head: Mirabelle at her funeral telling everyone she’d been the last person to sit in the Peyton living room, and how depressed poor Muriel had seemed, what good friends they had been.

She could not let that happen, and then she heard Manny.

Whoa, girl! Don’t let Mirabelle Lewis put one over on you! Fight!

She would fight. Manny was back, but he wasn’t ready for her. There were things she had to do. The current librarian was only twenty three and had a husband in the Coast Guard, so she’d be moving on soon enough. She, Muriel, would take some courses on the mainland this summer, brush up on the new technology that had come to libraries during those fifteen years she’d been gone, taking care of Manny and his kids.

Then she heard a familiar rumble coming from her yard, and she looked out the window. Her heart swelled, for here was Barnaby, starting up the lawn mower.

~~END~~ (*Hopefully, not the end*)

Sue

SHORT STORY: WHERE'S BARNABY? BY WENDY SHEEHAN

Summary: death of husband leads middle-middle-aged woman to change the direction of her life

When Muriel Perriera was fifty eight, her husband Manny, mayor of Shallow Bay, dropped dead in front of a crowd in the Elks ~~hall~~ Hall. Once the shock wore off and Manny's kids went back to their own lives, Muriel took stock of her life and decided that suicide was an option. Without Manny, life was not worth living.

✓ good opening sentence

Comment [s1]: Does she miss him? Is she sad? She says life isn't worth living without him, but there's no emotion here, just matter-of-fact that he's dead.

The kids, all five of them, were ~~his~~ kids, not hers, and they couldn't care less if she lived or died. Muriel would have liked to get a job, and had once been head librarian in town, but those days were long in the past. While Manny had been mayor, one of the town departments would have taken her on, if they could have gotten past the issue of nepotism, but not now. She was old news.

Comment [s2]: Why?

Comment [s3]: She was old news, or she no longer had any connections to get a job?

Her phone seldom rang, condolence letters had dwindled, and everyone's attention was on the new mayor. Manny's kids had disappeared. Even her favorite, Barnaby, had gone back to his landscaping business. Now that the rainy days of May had caused her grass to shoot up, where was Barnaby? He'd always been her favorite, and with his landscaping business and all, had taken care of the her lawn, — now a tangled, weedy mess. She would have to get drag out the lawn mower and hedge trimmer and do the work herself.

Muriel realized that if she was going to kill herself, she'd have to see a lawyer about drawing up a will. She'd leave her house to the Historical Society. Her antique gem, high on the

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Muriel made herself a cup of tea and thought back to the early days of her life with Manny. His first wife had died and left him with the five kids. A grandmother, and then an aunt, had stepped in, and when they had left for their more peaceful lives, Manny went looking for a wife. She had to be mature, with no kids of her own, and a woman born and bred on the island of Shallow Bay, because she had to understand the ways of Islanders. People who lived on this cold little island off the coast of New England were a peculiar breed, difficult to define, and his wife had to be one of them. Finally, she had to have the broad back and the hefty shoulders of a workhorse.

Comment [s4]: Need to be more specific.

Muriel Peyton fit the bill. He found her standing behind the circulation desk in the library. She was taking no nonsense from a group of adolescent boys that, to his surprise, included his own sons, Tony and Todd, who were snickering over pictures of naked women in a National Geographic magazine. Manny knew right away that Muriel was just what he needed.

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Comment [s5]: How did she know that?

She was forty three at the time, never married — an old maid by Island standards, and they married quickly. She rolled up her sleeves and went to work to bring order to the chaotic Perreira household. She'd already known Barnaby, the youngest at age seven, from the many. Barnaby loved the library, and he'd spent many a cold Saturday afternoons he'd spent there, huddled over a stack of picture books. When Muriel became his stepmother, he climbed onto her lap every night, a picture book in his hands. The poor, mother-starved little boy loved Muriel, and Muriel loved him.

Comment [s6]: By anyone's standards, really

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Comment [s7]: Several sentences beginning with "she"-vary sentence structure

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Not so with the other kids. Matt, fifteen, began to hang out with a bad crowd, avoiding home whenever possible, walking under a black cloud when he was there. Sullen, angry Matt,

Comment [s8]: I know this must've been hard for her, but at the same time, probably a common reaction for a teenager who's lost his mother.

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when not in school, was at someone else's house, and when he had to be home, he walked under a black cloud. Muriel taught him how to cook, to try to keep him out of trouble, and when he was a few years older, a high end seafood restaurant took him on. Tony and Todd, the eleven-eleven-year-year-old twins, were a handful, sassy and rude and running all over the island looking for trouble. When Muriel tried to rein them in, they shouted, "You're not our mother! You can't tell us what to do!"

"We'll see about that," Muriel had answered.

She turned them into Tom Sawyer boys and put them to work painting the shed. There was never an end to the work that needed to be done on Manny's house, and her list of chores kept the boys busy.

Spoiled Kathy, Manny's thirteen-thirteen-year-year-old princess, was Muriel's biggest challenge. No stepmother on earth could ever meet her own mother's level of beauty, patience, and understanding. Muriel had overheard Kathy say to her cousin, "If Dad had to get married again, why did he have to pick that ugly old stick? She's even *older* than him!"

Older, yes, but only by two years.

Muriel set down rules, established order, and Manny backed her up every time. He'd fallen in love with his new wife, much to his surprise. *Pov*

Months went by, and soon Barnaby had slid off Muriel's lap, never to return. He became a cub scout and entered the world of boys, a place far more exciting than the land of picture books and fairy tales.

After five years of battles, Kathy married Michael Gomes, and was gone. Peace reigned.

Comment [s9]: Did it keep him out of trouble? Did he get better? Did it help pull them together?

Comment [s20]: I think we need a better description of the house before this, enough to understand why the house required so much work.

SHORT STORY: WHERE'S BARNABY? BY WENDY SHEEHAN

When all the kids had grown up and left, Manny had sold his house and they'd moved into Muriel's small, historic home up on the bluff. Now Manny was gone, too, and she was right back where she'd started, alone, but without a job, without even a family.

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A knock on the door, and there stood Mirabelle Lewis, island busybody, snoop and, as Manny had once put it, *always up to no good*.

She Mirabelle stepped into the house. "Hello, dear, just wondering how you're doing."

They had known one another since their high school days, but they had never been friends. Mirabelle had run with a fast crowd, and had never given Muriel a second look until years had passed, and Muriel had married Manny, the mayor Mayor.

Mirabelle made herself comfortable on the couch, and her eyes swept over the room, taking in the old beams, the paneled walls, and the charming corner cupboards, all witnesses to generations of Peytons for nearly two hundred and fifty years.

"What are your plans, dear?" Mirabelle asked. "Are you going to stay on here? This house must be a lot of work for you. You know, there are some lovely condos down on Water Street. I should think, at your age, you'd want to be closer to the shops."

She's up to something.

Mirabelle's husband Gus was in real estate. He'd sent his wife to test the waters, looking for a listing. This was not a social call.

Comment [s11]: Think of a better adjective.

Comment [s12]: Again, there's no emotion to lead us to believe that she really loved Manny and misses him.

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SHORT STORY: WHERE'S BARNABY? BY WENDY SHEEHAN

"I'm staying right here, Mirabelle. I'm the same age as you, in case you've forgotten. We went through high school together, remember? Are you ready to live near the shops?"

"Well, no, of course not. I just thought..."

She repositioned herself on the couch.

"What fun we had back then, in high school," she went on. "Too bad we can't recapture those days."

Those days had not been fun for Muriel, and there was nothing to recapture. While Mirabelle had been out on the beach with Gus, having sex behind a sand dune, no doubt, and drinking beer, she'd ~~Muriel had~~ spent her time buried in books.

Mirabelle got up to leave. "Well, I won't keep you. I'm glad to see you're doing so well. We all miss Manny, a terrible loss for the island, and for you. But you have his sons, and I'm sure Kathy is a comfort."

~~HuhHa!~~ If she only knew she hadn't seen Kathy since Manny's funeral.

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~~She could not let that happen, and then~~ Then she heard Manny.

Whoa, girl! Don't let Mirabelle Lewis put one over on you! Fight!

She would fight. Manny was back, but he wasn't ready for her. There were things she had to do. The current librarian ~~was only twenty three and~~ had a husband in the Coast Guard, so she'd be moving on soon enough. She, Muriel, would take some courses on the mainland this

Comment [s13]: I'm not sure this conversation adds to the story. Perhaps a conversation with one of the kids would make more sense.

Comment [s14]: I don't quite buy this yet. I think more has to happen for her to decide not to quit suicide. I think a scene with one of the kids, who we already "meet" in the story, would be more meaningful.

Comment [s15]: Irrelevant, I think

SHORT STORY: WHERE'S BARNABY? BY WENDY SHEEHAN

summer, brush up on the new technology that had come to libraries during those fifteen years she'd been gone, taking care of Manny and his kids.

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END

I like your story. I'd like to see more "show" rather than "tell." Maybe pick one of the scenes and make it into a dialogue. In fact, if you did that, you could bring out a lot of this backstory in the dialogue. It would bring the reader in more.

- ① - She wants to commit suicide, but I don't ~~feel~~ ~~enough~~ feel that enough emotion or anything that had happened to make her want to do that.
- ② dialogue -> w/ one of the kids; use this to introduce some of what you tell in the story. would allow you to show more instead of telling.

Jenni's Feedback

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She had a taste of love,
and now it's gone
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it.

Comment [PHS IS1]: Good first paragraph.

Comment [PHS IS2]: How old were they when she married Manny? Did she raise them? Or were they older when she married their father?

Comment [PHS IS3]: Isn't a mayor's wife kinda like the first-lady of the town? Wouldn't she be volunteering and doing community service in the town? How big of a town is Shallow Bay?

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Comment [PHS IS4]: Move this detail up, but be careful starting with too much back story

Comment [PHS IS5]: Their relationship sounds like a business arrangement. Maybe have them actually fall in love t makes Manny's death more emotional, and her connection with Barnaby stronger.

SHORT STORY: WHERE'S BARNABY? BY WENDY SHEEHAN

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Comment [PHS IS6]: Is this the same antique house mentioned above? Did he live there with his first wife?

Comment [PHS IS7]: Did Muriel love him? Why not have them actually be in love from the start?

Comment [PHS IS8]: But did he see her as his mother?

SHORT STORY: WHERE'S BARNABY? BY WENDY SHEEHAN

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"Well, no, of course not. I just thought..."

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Comment [PHS IS9]: What would be quicker and less painful?

Comment [PHS IS10]: Consider renaming this character. Her name sounds too much like Muriel.

SHORT STORY: WHERE'S BARNABY? BY WENDY SHEEHAN

“What fun we had back then, in high school,” she went on. “Too bad we can’t recapture those days.”

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Then she heard a familiar rumble coming from her yard, and she looked out the window. Her heart swelled, for here was Barnaby, starting up the lawn mower.

END

Comment [PHS IS11]: Is this a strong enough reason to want to go on living? I think Barnaby showing up to mow the lawn is a better reason to inspire her to live.

Comment [PHS IS12]: Sweet.

JULIE

SHORT STORY: WHERE'S BARNABY? BY WENDY SHEEHAN

Change title - Gives away too much - Reader almost expects ending.

Summary: death of husband leads middle aged woman to change the direction of her life

When Muriel Perriera was fifty eight, her husband Manny, mayor of Shallow Bay, dropped dead in front of a crowd in the Elks hall. Once the shock wore off and Manny's kids went back to their own lives, Muriel took stock of her life and decided that suicide was an option. Without Manny, life was not worth living.

Too short!
Discuss his d.
her reaction
his friends
kids' interest
the wake
etc.

Why? {

~~The kids~~, all five of ^{his} them, were his kids, not hers, and couldn't care less if she lived or died. Muriel would have liked to get a job, and had once been head librarian in town, but those days were long in the past. While Manny had been mayor, one of the town departments would have taken her on, if they could have gotten past the issue of nepotism, but not now. She was old news.

- Really!

How much time has passed?

Her phone seldom rang, condolence letters had dwindled, and everyone's attention was on the new mayor. Manny's kids had disappeared. Even her favorite, Barnaby, had gone back to his landscaping business. Now that the rainy days of May had caused her grass to shoot up, where was Barnaby? He'd always taken care of the lawn, now a tangled, weedy mess. She would have to get out the lawn mower and hedge trimmer and do the work herself.

Muriel realized that if she was going to kill herself, she'd have to see a lawyer about drawing up a will. She'd leave her house to the Historical Society. Her antique gem, high on the

But, insurance wouldn't pay out if suicide.

JULIE

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bluff overlooking the harbor, was worth a fortune in today's real estate market. If Manny's kids thought she'd leave the house to them, they should think again.

selfish!

Muriel made herself a cup of tea and thought back to the early days of her life with Manny. His first wife had died and left him with the five kids. A grandmother, and then an aunt, had stepped in, and when they had left for their more peaceful lives, Manny went looking for a wife. She had to be mature, with no kids of her own, and a woman born and bred on the island of Shallow Bay, because she had to understand the ways of Islanders. People who lived on this cold little island off the coast of New England were a peculiar breed, difficult to define, and his wife had to be one of them. Finally, she had to have the broad back and the hefty shoulders of a workhorse. Why? To help with the farm? manual labor?

Muriel Peyton fit the bill. He found her standing behind the circulation desk in the library. She was taking no nonsense from a group of adolescent boys that, to his surprise, included his own sons, Tony and Todd, who were snickering over pictures of naked women in a National Geographic magazine. Manny knew right away that Muriel was just what he needed.

She was forty three at the time, an old maid by Island standards, and they married quickly. She rolled up her sleeves and went to work to bring order to the chaotic Perreira household. She'd already known Barnaby, the youngest at age seven. Barnaby loved the library, and he'd spent many a cold Saturday afternoon there, huddled over a stack of picture books. When Muriel became his stepmother, he climbed onto her lap, a picture book in his hands. The poor, mother-starved little boy loved Muriel, and Muriel loved him.

Not so with the other kids. Matt, fifteen, began to hang out with a bad crowd. Sullen, angry Matt, when not in school, was at someone else's house, and when he had to be home, he walked under a black cloud. Muriel taught him how to cook, and when he was a few years older,

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Did he keep his job?
a high-end seafood restaurant took him on. Tony and Todd, the eleven-year-old twins, were a handful, sassy and rude and running all over the island looking for trouble. When Muriel tried to rein them in, they shouted, "You're not our mother! You can't tell us what to do!"

"We'll see about that," Muriel had answered.

is dupes/victims
She turned them into Tom Sawyer boys and put them to work painting the shed. There was never an end to the work that needed to be done on Manny's house, and her list of chores kept the boys busy.

Spoiled Kathy, Manny's thirteen-year-old princess, was Muriel's biggest challenge. No stepmother on earth could ever meet her own mother's level of beauty, patience and understanding. Muriel had overheard Kathy say to her cousin, "If Dad had to get married again, why did he have to pick that ugly old stick? She's even older than him!"

Older, yes, but only by two years.

Muriel set down rules, established order, and Manny backed her up every time. He'd fallen in love with his new wife, much to his surprise.

Months went by and soon Barnaby had slid off Muriel's lap, never to return. He became a cub scout and entered the world of boys, a place far more exciting than the land of picture books and fairy tales.

After five years of battles, Kathy married Michael Gomes, and was gone. Peace reigned.

When all the kids had grown up and left, Manny had sold his house and they'd moved into Muriel's small, historic home up on the bluff. Now Manny was gone, too, and she was right back where she'd started, alone, but without a job, without even a family.

Where were they all? Where was Barnaby?

battles with Muriel?
battles of being to young to marry
Did she have to get married?

JULIE

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If she believed then = dishonor death would lead her to the OTHER after-death destination

Muriel was a believer in life after death. She knew Manny awaited her on the other side. It was up to her to take that crucial step: A sip of rat poison? Jump off the bluff? An overdose of something or other? What did it matter?

A knock on the door, and there stood Mirabelle Lewis, island busybody, snoop and, as Manny had once put it, *up to no good*.

Why did Muriel know the door?

She stepped into the house. "Hello, dear, just wondering how you're doing."

They had known ~~one another~~ ^{each} since their high school days, but they had never been friends. Mirabelle had run with a fast crowd, and had never given Muriel a second look until years passed and Muriel married the mayor.

Mirabelle made herself comfortable on the couch, and her eyes swept over the room, taking in the old beams, the paneled walls and the charming corner cupboards, all witnesses to generations of Peytons for nearly two hundred fifty years.

"What are your plans, dear?" Mirabelle asked. "Are you going to stay on here? This house must be a lot of work for you. You know, there are some lovely condos down on Water Street. I should think, at your age, you'd want to be closer to the shops."

SB is NOT that old!

She's up to something.

Mirabelle's husband Gus was in real estate. He'd sent his wife to test the waters, looking for a listing. This was not a social call. "Why are you really here, Mirabelle?"

"I'm staying right here, Mirabelle. I'm the same age as you, in case you've forgotten. We went through high school together, remember? Are *you* ready to live near the shops?"

"Well, no, of course not. I just thought..."

She repositioned herself on the couch.

JULIE

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"What fun we had back then, in high school," she went on. "Too bad we can't recapture those days."

Those days had not been fun for Muriel, and there was nothing to recapture. While Mirabelle had been out on the beach with Gus, having sex behind a sand dune, no doubt, and drinking beer, she'd spent her time buried in books.

Mirabelle got up to leave. "Well, I won't keep you. I'm glad to see you're doing so well. We all miss Manny, a terrible loss for the island, and for you. But you have his sons, and I'm sure Kathy is a comfort."

Huh! If she only knew she hadn't seen Kathy since Manny's funeral.

After Mirabelle left, Muriel sat down to give the suicide idea further thought. A picture took root in her head: Mirabelle at her funeral telling everyone she'd been the last person to sit in the Peyton living room, and how depressed poor Muriel had seemed, what good friends they had been.

She could not let that happen, and then she heard Manny.

Whoa, girl! Don't let Mirabelle Lewis put one over on you! Fight!

She would fight. Manny was back, but he wasn't ready for her. There were things she had to do. The current librarian was only twenty three and had a husband in the Coast Guard, so she'd be moving on soon enough. She, Muriel, would take some courses on the mainland this summer, brush up on the new technology that had come to libraries during those fifteen years she'd been gone, taking care of Manny and his kids.

Then she heard a familiar rumble coming from her yard, and she looked out the window.

Her heart swelled, for here was Barnaby, starting up the lawn mower.

PHew! BUT...
DOES MURIEL HAVE FRIENDS? END RELATIVES? HOBBIES?

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Ed

Summary: death of husband leads middle-aged woman to change the direction of her

life

Very clean!
*meaning error-free

first line

grainiest
a good?

what kind of event

This is all telling
for a moment
that it
has
been
immortal
in the
present?

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- plunge us into pain + despair, so the rescue is a surprise and a welcome
- in real time: a series of events from her day
- nothing about Manny in this
- why is his kiss so hard?
- keep us in her head + her experience

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they would have to

*present:
action starts
here*

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Is she thinking best thing? The 3rd person discussion who's in way from he v1

you need to define it!

why?

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how long

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