

JULIE

LITERARY NOVEL EXCERPT: A SOLDIER'S MEMORIAL BY JACK HITCHNER

I RECOMMEND OLD FRIEND FROM FAR AWAY: THE PRACTICE OF WRITING MEMOIR BY NATALIE GOLDBERG.

Summary: Told through multiple narrators over three days in November, *A Soldier's Memorial* illustrates the effects of World II, the Korean War, Vietnam, and the War on Terror on three generations of an American family, the Schylers of Lorrence, New Jersey.

Part I: November 9

The Schylers

Home Front: 1945 - 1952

My dad,
A Corporal Philip Schyler, 30 years of age, returned to the port of Philadelphia via

Portsmouth, England, late September 1945. He was then transferred for evaluation and treatment at South Jersey Veterans Hospital at Colonie Glen, ¹⁰ten miles from our home in Lorrence.

^{established on p. 2 in dialogue} I, Garreth, his son, was four that fall; too young to be permitted inside the red brick facility for troubled veterans; too young to be permitted within the wrought-iron-fenced hospital grounds. I shook hands with my father for the first time on a mild October afternoon.

My mother accompanied Dad across the lawn to the fence. Their shoes scuffed oak and maple leaves like so many scarred knuckles and hands. My mother, Grace Schyler, seemed calm as she walked with Dad in a kind of casual repose, her hand on his arm the way she had appeared in their wedding picture framed on the living room wall of my grandparents' house.

^{When read slowly one hears "side"} Granddad Warren stood ^{next to} beside me on the sidewalk outside the fence; white elastic bands looped the elbows of his ubiquitous white shirt; black suspenders held his navy blue trousers in

Make more personal.
Dad's physique
compare to dad on TV or in movie or book.

KZ change SYN word choice

word choice

When read slowly one hears "side" 3x - change!

word choice

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place. My grandmother, whom I called Shazu (my toddler's pronunciation of 'Grandmother' continued throughout my childhood into adulthood) had remained at home.

Shazu had kept her back turned to my mother when she had said, "I'll take care of things here, Grace. You tell Philip I'm thinking of him."

My mother had shaken her head as if she did not agree with my grandmother's reason for not wanting to visit Dad.

Now she seemed calm as she brushed back her brown hair above her ears and kissed my father lightly on the cheek. She stepped back as Dad approached the fence.

His khaki pants nearly covered his sneakers when he reached out to me through the iron bars. "Hi there, Garreth. Good to see you, son." To Granddad, he said, "Hello, Joe. Thank you for bringing him."

"He wanted to come, Phil."

The palm of my father's left hand felt warm, rough. He hefted my hand as if he was testing it. A milky white substance coated a corner of his mouth. He wiped away the white liquid with his left arm before he spoke again. "I missed you," he said, kneeling on one knee on the grass and still holding my hand.

Having had no clear memory of my father before he had shipped out to Europe, spring 1944, I squinted at his face. He smiled, a sad apologetic smile, his teeth yellow. "Wish I could be out there with you, little man." He turned his head, covered his mouth with his arm, and coughed, a loose phlegmy sound. When he looked at me again, his eyes brimmed with tears.

Granddad put his hand on my shoulder. In a kind voice he asked me, "You want to say something to your dad?"

Combine some of these #s.

Describe G's emotions. 1944, I squinted at his face. He smiled, a sad apologetic smile, his teeth yellow. "Wish I could be out there with you, little man." He turned his head, covered his mouth with his arm, and coughed, a loose phlegmy sound. When he looked at me again, his eyes brimmed with tears.

word choice

reword

settling?

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"I saw your picture in the newspaper," I said, recalling my father's stern military visage front page of the Lorrence Weekly Reporter, our local newspaper: "HOMETOWN SOLDIER RETURNS FROM THE WAR."

Dad cleared his throat again. "Be a good boy for Mom and Granddad and Shazu. Help take care of things. I'll be home soon's I can."

"When?" I asked, ^{ADVERB}

He stood, taller, it seemed, than minutes ago when I had first seen him, even taller than the fence. ^{Dad's manner - words or physical gesture?}

Why so fast?

"We better go back inside," my mother said to him; the way she had reminded me to put toys away and get ready for bed.

She held Dad's arm and leaned her head against his shoulder again as they walked through the leaves toward a building with wire-covered windows.

Which window was Dad's?

That night when ^{later that evening} I asked my mother as she put me to bed, she said, "Dad's room's on the other side."

Change 1.

That meeting with my father was my first clear memory of him: the man who would later teach me how to jab a punching bag; the man who would be my catcher in warm-ups in my grandparents' backyard; and, the man ^{who} ~~tried~~ ^{or} ~~to~~ ^{who would try} to stab one of my Babe Ruth team coaches with a screwdriver.

Philip Schyler arrived home to our small hometown of Lorrence, New Jersey by Thanksgiving, 1945. No band to rouse "For he's a jolly good fellow," no local newspaper

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Break UP into #s

reporter to inquire "How does it feel to be home again, Corporal?" No cheering welcome-home party to greet the returning soldier at my grandparents' white clapboard, black-shuttered house at 122 Crestview Avenue Saturday afternoon before the holiday. (My parents did not own a house; they had lived with my grandparents since before I was born). No kids my age, no teenage cousins among invited guests. Adults only: a handful of overcoat-wearing neighbors, my grandparents' brothers and sisters, and my father's two brothers who made it known to Shazu their preference for bourbon shots and beer instead of ^{the} soda, tea, and coffee she served from the dining room sideboard (~~"Anything stronger for this occasion, Mizz. Warren?"~~). No one asked questions about combat Dad had witnessed in France and Germany; no one asked about the concentration camp his battalion had liberated in Poland; no one asked about his hospitalization at Colonie Glen, and no one uttered the expression "shell shock."

Add: Just stand. Fall in snow (to soldier and

I was my parents' only child and the only grandchild of Shazu and Granddad; a boy who wondered if snow flurries beyond the windows would snow-pack heavy enough to make a snowman; a boy old enough to complain but not rebel against my party outfit of gray flannel knickers, white shirt, and red and black bow tie. I stood by and watched and listened as relatives and friends shook his hand and patted him on the back.

"Good to see you again, Phil."

Everyone greeted him.

"Thanks. Good to be home." Instead of full army dress of creased trousers, woolen jacket with corporal stripes on the sleeve of his right arm, and marksmanship and European Theater medals on the left breast pocket, Dad favored unmilitary black trousers, white shirt, and blue and white striped tie loose at the collar. In a close-lipped smile, he shook hands, accepted hugs, and sipped tea my mother had poured for him.

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He was bombarded by questions.

^ "What comes next?" "What'll you do now, Phil?" "Going to take some time off, are you?" "Might be a good idea to let the stores know you're home. They'll need help between now and Christmas. Wear your uniform. That'll impress'em."

Delete 1 "e

Philip Schyler was not interested in impressing people. Not yet. "Not sure. I'll see," he replied.

Why so formal? => Dad

"Maybe catch an Eagles game?"

"Maybe..."

He answered questions, made small talk about the holidays and the possibility of snow before Thanksgiving. He offered "We're not sure yet, we'll see," to invitations from his two brothers to visit their families after Christmas. Philip Schyler stood apart from the people who came to see him and wish him well. A man just under six foot, medium weight, complexion hospital pale, and black hair neat and parted on the left. A man who looked at the walls and furniture of my grandparents' house as if the wallpaper pattern of leaves and vines contained nothing of interest; as if the chairs and tables were obstacles to avoid; as if the guests' voices were pitched a tone too loud, too happy... Couldn't you just keep it down a little for God's sake?

"How you doin', Garreth? You havin' a good time, all these people?" Dad asked after he poured warm cocoa for me in the kitchen.

toward end of party?

"Yeah."

"You remember your aunts and uncles? They bein' good to you?"

"Yeah."

"All right. You let me know if they're not bein' good. Granddad and I'll take care of

move postscript

em."

The gathering ended as snow flurries abated...

If you mention this, then add snow falling on p. 4.

Describe how Dad's demeanor shifts from speaking with adults to addressing Garreth.

I'm curious to hear the other narrators' voices. Keep going!

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DAVG

This a very, very good opening. The writing is elegantly neat, simple and sophisticated, but carries the weight of explosions and trauma with it. I read it without stumble or pause, which is very odd for me. I can find no weakness in these brief few pages. The real complement I can give is, I'm very curious to see further developments of this believably tender and real story.

Is this a full novel? Or is it a short story? In my estimation it could go either way.

Great work.!!

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Part I: November 9

1

The Schylers

Home Front: 1945 - 1952

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My mother accompanied Dad across the lawn to the fence. Their shoes scuffed oak and maple leaves like so many scarred knuckles and hands. My mother, Grace Schyler, seemed calm as she walked with Dad in a kind of casual repose, her hand on his arm the way she had appeared in their wedding picture framed on the living room wall of my grandparents' house. *(nice)*

Granddad Warren stood beside me on the sidewalk outside the fence; white elastic bands looped the elbows of his ubiquitous white shirt; black suspenders held his navy blue trousers in place. My grandmother, whom I called Shazu (my toddler's pronunciation of 'Grandmother' continued throughout my childhood into adulthood) had remained at home.

Shazu had kept her back turned to my mother when she had said, "I'll take care of things here, Grace. You tell Philip I'm thinking of him."

My mother had shaken her head as if she did not agree with my grandmother's reason for not wanting to visit Dad.

Now she seemed calm as she brushed back her brown hair above her ears and kissed my father lightly on the cheek. She stepped back as Dad approached the fence.

His khaki pants nearly covered his sneakers when he reached out to me through the iron bars. "Hi there, Garreth. Good to see you, son." To Granddad, he said, "Hello, Joe. Thank you for bringing him."

"He wanted to come, Phil."

The palm of my father's left hand felt warm, rough. He hefted my hand as if he was testing it. A milky white substance coated a corner of his mouth. He wiped away the white liquid with his left arm before he spoke again. "I missed you," he said, kneeling on one knee on the grass and still holding my hand.

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Granddad put his hand on my shoulder. In a kind voice he asked me, "You want to say something to your dad?"

"I saw your picture in the newspaper," I said, recalling my father's stern military visage front page of the Lorrence Weekly Reporter, our local newspaper: "HOMETOWN SOLDIER RETURNS FROM THE WAR."

Dad cleared his throat again. "Be a good boy for Mom and Granddad and Shazu. Help take care of things. I'll be home soon's I can."

"When?" I asked. (*perfect. This non-answer speaks volumes*)

He stood, taller, it seemed, than minutes ago when I had first seen him, even taller than the fence.

"We better go back inside," my mother said to him; the way she had reminded me to put toys away and get ready for bed.

She held Dad's arm and leaned her head against his shoulder again as they walked through the leaves toward a building with wire-covered windows.

Which window was Dad's?

That night when I asked my mother as she put me to bed, she said, "Dad's room's on the other side."

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grandparents' backyard; and, the man tried to stab one of my Babe Ruth team coaches with a screwdriver. *(Really strong paragraph)*

Philip Schyler arrived home to our small hometown of Lorrence, New Jersey by Thanksgiving, 1945. No band to rouse "For he's a jolly good fellow," no local newspaper reporter to inquire "How does it feel to be home again, Corporal?" No cheering welcome-home party to greet the returning soldier at my grandparents' white clapboard, black-shuttered house at 122 Crestview Avenue Saturday afternoon before the holiday (My parents did not own a house; they had lived with my grandparents since before I was born). No kids my age, no teenage cousins among invited guests. Adults only: a handful of overcoat-wearing neighbors, my grandparents' brothers and sisters, and my father's two brothers who made it known to Shazu their preference for bourbon shots and beer instead of soda, tea, and coffee she served from the dining room sideboard ("Anything stronger for this occasion, Mizz. Warren?"). No one asked questions about combat Dad had witnessed in France and Germany; no one asked about the concentration camp his battalion had liberated in Poland; no one asked about his hospitalization at Colonie Glen, and no one uttered the expression "shell shock." *(Another great paragraph)*

I was my parents' only child and the only grandchild of Shazu and Granddad; a boy who wondered if snow flurries beyond the windows would snow-pack heavy enough to make a snowman; a boy old enough to complain but not rebel against my party outfit of gray flannel knickers, white shirt, and red and black bow tie. I stood by and watched and listened as relatives and friends shook his hand and patted him on the back.

"Good to see you again, Phil."

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"Thanks. Good to be home." Instead of full army dress of creased trousers, woolen jacket with corporal stripes on the sleeve of his right arm, and marksmanship and European Theater medals on the left breast pocket, Dad favored unmilitary black trousers, white shirt, and blue and white striped tie loose at the collar. In a close-lipped smile, he shook hands, accepted hugs, and sipped tea my mother had poured for him.

"What comes next?" "What'll you do now, Phil?" "Going to take some time off, are you?" "Might be a good idea to let the stores know you're home. They'll need help between now and Christmas. Wear your uniform. That'll impress'em."

Philip Schyler was not interested in impressing people. Not yet. "Not sure. I'll see," he replied.

"Maybe catch an Eagles game?"

"Maybe..."

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"Yeah."

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“You remember your aunts and uncles? They bein’ good to you?”

“Yeah.”

“All right. You let me know if they’re not bein’ good. Granddad and I’ll take care of em.”

The gathering ended as snow flurries abated...

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Jenn's Comments

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Part I: November 9

1

The Schylers

Home Front: 1945 - 1952

Corporal Philip Schyler, ^{thirty}~~20~~ years of age, returned to the port of Philadelphia via Portsmouth, England late September 1945. He was then transferred for evaluation and treatment at South Jersey Veterans Hospital at Colonie Glen, ten miles from our home in Lorrence.

I, Garreth, his son, was four that fall; too young to be permitted inside the red brick facility for troubled veterans; too young to be permitted within the wrought-iron-fenced hospital grounds. (I shook hands with my father for the first time on a mild October afternoon. ^{-This would be a great first line})

My mother accompanied Dad across the lawn to the fence. Their shoes scuffed oak and maple leaves like so many scarred knuckles and hands. My mother, Grace Schyler, seemed calm as she walked with Dad in a ~~kind of~~ casual repose, her hand on his arm the way she had appeared in their wedding picture framed on the living room wall of my grandparents' house.

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"He wanted to come, Phil."

The palm of my father's left hand felt warm, rough. He hefted my hand as if he was testing it. A milky white substance coated a corner of his mouth. He wiped away the white liquid ~~with his left arm~~ before he spoke again. "I missed you," he said, kneeling ~~on one knee~~ on the grass and still holding my hand. *He wiped away the liquid with his left arm while still shaking with his left hand?*

Having had no clear memory of my father ~~before~~ *since* he had shipped out to Europe, spring 1944, I squinted at his face. He smiled, a sad apologetic smile, his teeth yellow. "Wish I could be out there with you, little man." He turned his head, covered his mouth with his arm, and coughed, a loose phlegmy sound. When he looked at me again, his eyes brimmed with tears.

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"When?" I asked.

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"We better go back inside," my mother said to him; the way she ~~had~~ reminded me to put toys away and get ready for bed.

She held Dad's arm and leaned her head against his shoulder ~~again~~ as they walked through the leaves toward a building with wire-covered windows.

Which window was Dad's? ^{-italics}

That night, when I asked my mother as she put me to bed, she said, "Dad's room's on the other side."

That meeting with my father was my first clear memory of him; the man who would later teach me how to jab a punching bag; the man who would be my catcher in warm-ups in my grandparents' backyard; and ~~x~~ ^{who} the man tried to stab one of my Babe Ruth team coaches with a screwdriver.

Good
Wow!

Philip Schyler arrived home to our small hometown of Lorrence, New Jersey by Thanksgiving, 1945. No band to rouse "For he's a jolly good fellow."; no local newspaper

You use the semicolon for other related things. Why not here!

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"How you doin', Garreth? You havin' a good time, all these people?" Dad asked after he poured warm cocoa for me in the kitchen.

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"All right. You let me know if they're not bein' good. Granddad and I'll take care of 'em."

The gathering ended as snow flurries abated.

They don't contain anything of interest do they?

- Was it elated flurry in

- Who is asking the dad or the son?

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Ed

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I was my parents' only child and the only grandchild of Shazu and Granddad; a boy who wondered if snow flurries beyond the windows would snow-pack heavy enough to make a snowman; a boy old enough to complain but not rebel against my party outfit of gray flannel knickers, white shirt, and red and black bow tie. I stood by and watched and listened as relatives and friends shook his hand and patted him on the back.

"Good to see you again, Phil."

"Thanks. Good to be home." Instead of full army dress of creased trousers, woolen jacket with corporal stripes on the sleeve of his right arm, and marksmanship and European Theater medals on the left breast pocket, Dad favored unmilitary black trousers, white shirt, and blue and white striped tie loose at the collar. In a close-lipped smile, he shook hands, accepted hugs, and sipped tea my mother had poured for him.

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“What comes next?” “What’ll you do now, Phil?” “Going to take some time off, are you?” “Might be a good idea to let the stores know you’re home. They’ll need help between now and Christmas. Wear your uniform. That’ll impress’em.”

Philip Schyler was not interested in impressing people. Not yet. “Not sure. I’ll see,” he replied.

“Maybe catch an Eagles game?”

“Maybe...”

He answered questions, made small talk about the holidays and the possibility of snow before Thanksgiving. He offered “We’re not sure yet, we’ll see,” to invitations from his two brothers to visit their families after Christmas. Philip Schyler stood apart from the people who came to see him and wish him well. A man just under six foot, medium weight, complexion hospital pale, and black hair neat and parted on the left. A man who looked at the walls and furniture of my grandparents’ house as if the wallpaper pattern of leaves and vines contained nothing of interest; as if the chairs and tables were obstacles to avoid; as if the guests’ voices were pitched a tone too loud, too happy...Couldn’t you just keep it down a little for God’s sake?

“How you doin’, Garreth? You havin’ a good time, all these people?” Dad asked after he poured warm cocoa for me in the kitchen.

“Yeah.”

“You remember your aunts and uncles? They bein’ good to you?”

“Yeah.”

“All right. You let me know if they’re not bein’ good. Granddad and I’ll take care of em.”

The gathering ended as snow flurries abated...

Susan

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remember to post name
of book about PTSD

Summary: Told through multiple narrators over three days in November, A Soldier's Memorial illustrates the effects of World War II, the Korean War, Vietnam, and the War on Terror on three generations of an American family, the Schylers of Lorrence, New Jersey.

Part I: November 9

1

Comment [s1]: Is this chapter number?

The Schylers

Home Front: 1945 - 1952

- my Dad

Corporal Philip Schyler, 30 years of age, returned to the port of Philadelphia via Portsmouth, England late September 1945. He was then transferred for evaluation and treatment at South Jersey Veterans Hospital at Colonie Glen, ten miles from our home in Lorrence.

I, ^{was four years old,} ~~Garrett, his son, was four that fall;~~ too young to be permitted inside the red brick

facility for troubled veterans; ~~too young to be permitted within the wrought-iron-fenced hospital grounds.~~ I shook hands with my father for the first time on a mild October afternoon.

Comment [s2]: Meaning it's the first time he's met his father?

My mother accompanied Dad across the lawn to the fence. Their shoes scuffed oak and maple leaves like so many scarred knuckles and hands. My mother, Grace Schyler, seemed calm as she walked with Dad in a kind of casual repose, her hand on his arm the way she had appeared in their wedding picture framed on the living room wall of my grandparents' house.

Comment [s3]: This sentence needs to come later. I'm a little confused at the beginning with the scene. Have Garrett waiting. He watches his mother and father come toward him through the fence. If you move this sentence it will clear it up.

Granddad Warren stood beside me on the sidewalk outside the fence; white elastic bands looped the elbows of his ubiquitous white shirt; black suspenders held his navy blue trousers in

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place. My grandmother, whom I called Shazu (~~my toddler's pronunciation of 'Grandmother'~~
~~continued throughout my childhood into adulthood~~) had remained at home.

Comment [s4]: On mother's side or father's?

Shazu had kept her back turned to my mother when she ~~had~~ said, "I'll take care of things here, Grace. You tell Philip I'm thinking of him."

My mother had shaken her head as if she did not agree with my grandmother's ~~reason-for not wanting to visit Dad~~ decision.

Now she seemed calm as she brushed back her brown hair above her ears and kissed my father lightly on the cheek. She stepped back as Dad approached the fence.

Comment [s5]: What's the boy thinking as his father walks toward them? What else does he observe about his father that's different than what he used to look like? Has he ever met his father before this?

His khaki pants nearly covered his sneakers when he reached out to me through the iron bars. "Hi there, Garreth. Good to see you, son." To Granddad, he said, "Hello, Joe. Thank you for bringing him."

"He wanted to come, Phil."

The palm of my father's left hand felt warm, rough. He hefted my hand as if he was testing it. A milky white substance coated a corner of his mouth. He wiped away the white liquid with his left arm before he spoke again.

→ Does Garreth wonder what it is?

"I missed you," he said, kneeling on one knee on the grass, ~~and~~ still holding my hand.

Having had no clear memory of my father before he had shipped out to Europe, ~~in the~~ spring of 1944, I squinted at his face.

Comment [s6]: Tell us this earlier

He smiled, a sad apologetic smile, his teeth yellow. "Wish I could be out there with you, little man." He turned his head, covered his mouth with his arm, and coughed, a loose phlegmy sound. When he looked at me again, his eyes brimmed with tears. ✓ good

Granddad put his hand on my shoulder. In a kind voice he asked me, "You want to say something to your dad?"

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"I saw your picture in the newspaper," I said, recalling my father's stern military visage
on the front page of the Lorrence Weekly Reporter, our local newspaper: "HOMETOWN
SOLDIER RETURNS FROM THE WAR."

Dad cleared his throat again. "Be a good boy for Mom and Granddad and Shazu. Help
take care of things. I'll be home soon's I can."

"When?" I asked.

He stood, taller, it seemed, than minutes ago when I had first seen him, even taller than
the fence.

"We better go back inside," my mother said to him; the way she had reminded me to put
toys away and get ready for bed.

She held Dad's arm and leaned her head against his shoulder again as they walked
lumbered? Need better word than "walked" through the leaves toward a building with wire-
covered windows. *shuffled?*

Which window was Dad's?

That night, when I asked my mother as she put me to bed, she said, "Dad's room's on the
other side."

That meeting with my father was my first clear memory of him: the man who would later
teach me how to jab a punching bag; the man who would be my catcher in warm-ups in my
grandparents' backyard; and, the man who tried to stab one of my Babe Ruth team coaches with
a screwdriver.

Comment [s7]: This is an important moment, for
him to be thinking of his father in the hospital. Make
this into a conversation and show/tell us what he's
thinking and feeling through his words and body
language.

✓ good

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to be with us for

Comment [58]: This is confusing, to jump back in time with no break from the previous section. Or maybe there's a small break, but it's not enough. Were the last two pages a prologue? Otherwise it seems like you're starting the story all over again.

Philip Schyler arrived home to our small hometown of Lorrence, New Jersey by Thanksgiving, 1945. No band to rouse "For he's a jolly good fellow," no local newspaper reporter to inquire "How does it feel to be home again, Corporal?" No cheering welcome-home party to greet the returning soldier at my grandparents' white clapboard, black-shuttered house at 122 Crestview Avenue Saturday afternoon before the holiday (My parents did not own a house; they had lived with my grandparents since before I was born). No kids my age, no teenage cousins among invited guests. Adults only: a handful of overcoat-wearing neighbors, my grandparents' brothers and sisters, and my father's two brothers, who made it known to Shazu their preference for bourbon shots and beer instead of soda, tea, and coffee she served from the dining room sideboard ("Anything stronger for this occasion, Mizz. Warren?"). No one asked questions about combat Dad had witnessed in France and Germany; no one asked about the concentration camp his battalion had liberated in Poland; no one asked about his hospitalization at Colonie Glen, and no one uttered the expression "shell shock." ✓good

good job w/ showing his isolation

I liked this, too.

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→ opinion of that?

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"Yeah."

"You remember your aunts and uncles? They bein' good to you?"

"Yeah."

Comment [s9]: Watch usage of this word

> so it's not Thanksgiving
prev. page -> can't tell
what kind of an eve
this is

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“All right. You let me know if they’re not bein’ good. Granddad and I’ll take care of em.”

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I like the story. I’m not sure who’s telling it, though; Garreth’s voice isn’t that of a child’s. I’d have to think that one out. I think you need to re-organize this beginning section to fall chronologically, or make it obvious that you’re starting with the moment he sees his father, and then backtrack. Expand the sections a bit, instead of summarizing. A scene such as Thanksgiving should be drawn out so that we can experience each moment that the father is experiencing. Also, if this is from Garreth’s point of view, interject what he’s thinking as he narrates the story. The writing is good. I’d be interested in reading more.