

Susan

NOVEL EXCERPT (YOUNG ADULT): *LICORICE* BY RIA

Summary: 1995. An innocent will enter the dark wood. Two lost souls will meet. Love will grow. Obsession will flower. Innocence will give way to experience. And one of them will make an impossible choice. All because of Licorice.

"Make every sentence an event."
-Dave

~~The beginning for me, the end for her, a story I cannot tell. Because I love her almost as much as I hate myself, I will try.~~

Comment [s1]: Too vague

Licorice rescued me, in all the ways that matter. She had everything possible and it all fell apart because of me.

The downfall, the end.

The night before I left home, I stood staring at myself in the mirror. Nothing that I saw, I recognized. A stranger stared back at me. The stranger looked wrong, like everything about me.

My hair spiked out in all directions, like a freeze-frame of an explosion, white as mouse fur. ~~The skin above and behind my ears pink and tender as the feet of the same mouse, raw and aching.~~

I had wanted to burn myself away.

I looked like a wreck, I looked like chaos, with so many emotions inside me that I did not know what I felt.

If no one could recognize me, I wanted it that way.

It could help me hide.

Susan

NOVEL EXCERPT (YOUNG ADULT): *LICORICE* BY RIA

The change had taken time and effort; it had taken patience and work. A bottle of hydrogen peroxide and a paper packet of Clairol bleach full of powdery with an odor so sharp even I could smell it. A wooden spoon and a Pyrex bowl. Old work gloves from a wooden shelf in the basement, dirty from gardening. Saran Wrap for my head and a towel.

After I had poured out the hydrogen peroxide and bleach and mixed them, I had covered my hair with the white goop which I made. Carefully, scared of it even touching my eyes, an eyelash, even.

Making sure I did not touch skin, though not sure enough.

The mixture had spread all over my hair, freshly cut, cool and strange. I wrapped the Saran Wrap around my head. (Do you have any idea of the difficulty of tearing it off in a hurry?)

And I wrapped the towel around my head and took the things into my room down the hall and put them under my bed. So I could put away later.

I did not think about the one thing in the medicine cabinet shelf. Not once did I think of that at all.

Comment [s2]: Good. I like this as an opening sentence, actually. See note at bottom of next pag

Lying down on my bed in the dark, I waited for the mixture to work. It made a sparkling first and then began to seethe and stung as it ate away the layer of color off each strand of hair.

Comment [s3]: ?

Because I wanted the process to work, I endured the pain. I curled up, like a comma.

I had done it wrong; I had put the mixture too close to my scalp. The skin of my scalp ached like sunburn and other parts, hurting raw.

Out of ignorance, my mistake. Because I had never done this before, I had never done anything. 16 years old and I knew nothing. Even I knew it.

NOVEL EXCERPT (YOUNG ADULT): *LICORICE* BY RIA

I ran my head under the bathtub faucet, quickly, wincing as the cold water touched the burnt places, and again as I rubbed the mixture with the towel. My hair had a whitish yellow color like sulfur.

And then I rubbed Manic Panic brand Virgin Snow toner from a squat little jar, through and over my straw hair, winced again, rinsed all over again.

Stared, then, at the face I saw.

Me yet not myself.

Hair, short, as long as my ear and curling at the tips and white, like I said.

Further down, my eyebrows, still dark, curving up and down like a cartoon of birds in the sky. My eyes, more green than blue. My nose, aquiline with nostrils which flare.

The whole of my face makes an oval. My chin does not stick out far.

Below my long neck the rest of my body begin. Shoulders not very broad, average for a girl, narrow for a boy. The same goes for my height. Small for a boy, average for a girl.

I do not have a curvy figure or a stocky figure or gangly. My body does not retain muscle or a lot of fat.

And I looked 12 years old.

Having stared at myself, I snapped off the light, out of fear. Medusa the snake-haired Gorgon had died when Jason the Argonaut showed her own face to her, reflected in his shield.

The horror of her own face had turn her into stone.

Fear could turn you to stone, so you never moved, so you never dared. Fear of fear made me move.

I turned out the light and went downstairs. Still, I did not think about what I had left on the medicine cabinet shelf.

I'm not sure if this is imp. or not, but if it is important, lea it and basically remove almost all of the dying details.

Comment [s4]: good

Comment [s5]: So far, I like these references to the medicine cabinet. Done well. But I think the re of it can be shortened quite a bit. You could even start it off with "I did not think about what I had le on the medicine cabinet," and the dying of the hai could be referred to but not elaborated on.

NOVEL EXCERPT (YOUNG ADULT): *LICORICE* BY RIA

In the kitchen, lights still off, I cleaned off the bowl and the wooden spoon and dried them with the faded blue-green terrycloth towel. The kitchen looks like an ordinary kitchen. The house looks like an ordinary house, neither cluttered and messy or spotless and strict.

~~I did not belong in it.~~

Comment [s6]: I don't think you need this line; the previous line sort of indicates that.

After, I put the old gardening gloves back on their wooden shelves in the basement.

The backpack, packed and full, waited for me on the floor of my bedroom. So I joined it.

We had a plan. ~~Me, I mean,~~ me and my co-conspirator. It had started ~~to evolve~~ a month ~~ago~~ and gotten to the stage where I could not turn back or back down.

I had to trust her, because I had no courage of my own.

~~The past week, I had spent pa~~cking and unpacking. ~~until it~~ had become automatic and mechanical.

The backpack had a change of clothes in it, a notebook and a pen. A tube of toothpaste and a pale yellow traveller's toothbrush with a folding handle. A black plastic wallet with an ID card I had made myself. I placed the wallet there.

The ticket, too, in an unsealed envelope opened up, examined, a hundred times.

Lastly, the book, so carefully chosen, the one, ~~out of of all of them on my shelves,~~ I could not bear to leave behind.

example of how to look for redundant

Comment [s7]: "carefully-chosen" implies the next phrase

All the while, my heart beat forcefully and rapidly. It oppressed me like a bully. My brain and my heart... neither of them let me alone long enough for me to think.

Comment [s8]: You mean, every time you packed?

No one persecutes me more than me.

Comment [s9]: I'd have to think about this, but think you need to somehow combine these two sentences.

The kids at school whose stares last too long, even they could not hate me as much as I hate myself.

Not even my mother and father and their expectations for me.

NOVEL EXCERPT (YOUNG ADULT): LICORICE BY RIA

My parents stare and smile, stare and smile. Or rather my mother smiles and my father tries to remember to do it, with a faraway look on his face.

Comment [s10]: good

~~Stare and smile and understand nothing or maybe they understood everything.~~

~~Never~~Neither lets on what they think or feel.

↳ redundant

Always they touched the world with the long sugar tongs of politeness.

Comment [s11]: watch your tense throughout the story

I had to get away.

~~For a week, like I said, I had done practice runs. Now~~ I took up the backpack up and went downstairs.

↳ redundant

I had to run or else face the full darkness of the truth.

Formatted: Highlight

The nearer I approached, the farther away it got. The darkness of it grew. The vagueness of it made it more awful. So I could only escape by turning my back.

Formatted: Highlight

?

Fear. I knew fear.

People sometimes specialize in emotions. They know all about curiosity or pride. I knew fear.

The way Licorice knows about bravery and courage. She would act and never look back.

Licorice, who I had not yet met, who I did not even know of, but who I would meet so very soon.

A few people can do anything. They must look down on people like us and see us as we sometimes see us, small and ordinary.

We must pay that price for not making ourselves great. ~~We get, in return, safety.~~

My mom and dad had ordinary all over them, ordinary lives, except they did not seem to care. My mother, on purpose, because she chose it, to stay with my father. My father because he

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could see no other way. Maybe they knew they had no choice. Maybe no one has a choice, whether to make yourself great or to stay small.

I thought I knew that I could not escape. I just wanted to pretend. If I could pretend then maybe I could make it real.

If nothing else, I would know at least that I had tried.

I slipped out the back door and then around to the front and out onto the dark street outside. I left, this time, for real. Never, I thought, to return.

My fear walked with me.

You have a good start to a story here, and several lines that are good. But I think it would have more of an impact if you cut quite a bit of this out. We'd still understand the message, and you'd keep the story moving. Try going back and cutting out anything that repeats what you already said, and see how you like it. I think it will flow much better. Also, you might consider just giving hints and having her think a lot of these thoughts as she heads toward her destination, whatever that is.

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The beginning for me, the end for her, a story I cannot tell. Because I love her almost as much as I hate myself, I will try.

But
^

Licorice rescued me, in all the ways that matter. She had everything possible and it all fell apart because of me.

The downfall, the end.

The night before I left home, I stood staring at myself in the mirror. Nothing that I saw, I recognized. A stranger stared back at me. The stranger looked wrong, like everything about me.

My hair spiked out in all directions, like a freeze-frame of an explosion, white as mouse fur. The skin above and behind my ears pink and tender as the feet of the same mouse, raw and aching.

I had wanted to burn myself away.

I looked like a wreck, I looked like chaos, with so many emotions inside me that I did not know what I felt.

If no one could recognize me, I wanted it that way.

It could help me hide.

no idea if this is a girl or boy

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After I had poured out the hydrogen peroxide and bleach and mixed them, I had covered my hair with the white goop ^{that} which I made. Carefully, scared of it even touching my eyes, an eyelash, even.

Making sure I did not touch skin, though not sure enough.

The mixture had spread all over my hair, freshly cut, cool and strange. I wrapped the Saran Wrap around my head. (Do you have any idea of the difficulty of tearing it off in a hurry?) And I wrapped the towel around my head and took the things into my room down the hall and put them under my bed. So I could put away later.

I did not think about the one thing in the medicine cabinet shelf. Not once did I think of that at all.

Lying down on my bed in the dark I waited for the mixture to work. It made a sparkling first and then began to seethe and sting as it ate away the layer of color off each strand of hair.

Because I wanted the process to work, I endured the pain. I curled up, like a comma.

I had done it wrong, I had put the mixture too close to my scalp. The skin of my scalp ached like sunburn and other parts hurting raw.

Out of ignorance, my mistake. Because I had never done this before, I had never done anything. 16 years old and I knew nothing. Even I knew it.

I think, after you establish the scene in the past, you might not use all the "heads"

whisper

6

that

try to find a better word

then hid?

bottle?

every?

hurting

✓

NOVEL EXCERPT (YOUNG ADULT): *LICORICE* BY RIA

transition

I ran my head under the bathtub faucet, quickly, wincing as the cold water touched the burnt places, ^{then} again as I rubbed ^{my head} the mixture with the towel. My hair had a whitish-yellow color like sulfur. ① ②

And then I rubbed Manic Panic ~~brand~~ Virgin Snow toner from a squat little jar, through and over my straw hair, winced again, rinsed all over again.

Stared, then, at the face I saw.

Me yet not myself.

Hair, short, as long as my ear and curling at the tips and white, like I said.

Further down, my eyebrows, still dark, curving up and down like a cartoon of birds in the sky. My eyes, more green than blue. My nose, aquiline with ^{necessary} [nostrils which flare.]

The whole of my face makes an oval. My chin does not stick out far.

Below my long neck the rest of my body begin^s. Shoulders not very broad, average for a girl, narrow for a boy. The same goes for my height. Small for a boy, average for a girl.

still don't know SMF I do not have a curvy figure or a stocky figure or gangly. My body does not retain muscle or a lot of fat.

And I looked 12 years old.

Having stared at myself, I snapped off the light, out of fear. Medusa ^③ the snake-haired Gorgon ^④ had died when Jason the Argonaut showed her own face to her, reflected in his shield.

The horror of her own face had turn^{ed} her into stone.

Fear could turn you to stone, [✓] so you never moved, [✓] so you never dared. Fear of fear made me move. *It was fear a fear that made me move*

I turned out the light and went downstairs. Still, I did not think about what I had left on the medicine cabinet shelf.

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I did not belong in it.

After, I put the old gardening gloves back on their wooden shelves in the basement.

The backpack, packed and full, waited for me on the floor of my bedroom. So I joined it.

We had a plan. Me, I mean, and my co-conspirator. It had started to evolve a month ago and gotten to the stage where I could not turn back or back down.

I had to trust her because I had no courage of my own. *she doesn't recognize her own courage*

The past week, I had spent packing and unpacking, until it had become automatic and mechanical.

The backpack had a change of clothes in it, a notebook and a pen. A tube of toothpaste and a pale yellow traveller's toothbrush with a folding handle. A black plastic wallet with an ID card I had made myself. I placed the wallet there.

The ticket, too, in an unsealed envelope opened up, examined, a hundred times.

Lastly the book, so carefully chosen, the one, out of all of them on my shelves, I could not bear to leave behind. ✓

All the while, my heart beat forcefully and rapidly. It oppressed me like a bully. My brain and my heart... neither of them let me alone long enough for me to think.

No one persecutes me more than me.

The kids at school whose stares last too long, even they could not hate me as much as I hate myself.

Not even my mother and father and their expectations for me.

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Stare and smile and understand nothing or maybe they understood everything. Never let on what they think or feel. ^{They}

Always they touched the world with the long sugar tongs of politeness. ✓

I had to get away.

For a week, like I said, I had done practice runs. Now I took up the backpack up and went downstairs.

I had to run or else face the full darkness of the truth.

The nearer I approached, the farther away it got. The darkness of it grew. The vagueness of it made it more awful. So I could only escape by turning my back.

Fear. I knew fear.

People sometimes specialize in emotions. They know all about curiosity or pride. I knew fear.

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Licorice who I had not yet met, who I did not even know of, but who I would meet so very soon.

A few people can do anything. They must look down on people like us and see us as we sometimes see us, small and ordinary.

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My mom and dad had ordinary all over them, ordinary lives, except they did not seem to care. My mother, on purpose, because she chose it, to stay with my father. My father because he

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Jenni's Comments

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The downfall, the end.

The night before I left home, I stood staring at myself in the mirror, ^{and recognized} ~~Nothing that I saw, I~~ ^{nothing,} ~~recognized.~~ A stranger stared back at me. The stranger looked wrong, like everything about me.

My hair spiked out in all directions, like a ^{freeze-frame} ~~freeze frame~~ of an explosion, white as mouse fur. The skin ^{around} ~~above and behind~~ my ears ^{like} pink and tender as the feet of the same mouse, ~~raw and~~ ~~aching.~~

→ these say the same thing - picture.

I had wanted to burn myself away.

~~I looked like a wreck,~~ I looked like chaos, with so many emotions inside me that I did not know what I felt.

If no one could recognize me, I wanted it that way.

It could help me hide.

NOVEL EXCERPT (YOUNG ADULT): LICORICE BY RIA

those say the same thing. Pick one.

The change had taken time and effort, it had taken patience and work. A bottle of hydrogen peroxide and a ~~paper~~ packet of Clairol bleach full of powdery with an odor so sharp even I could smell it. A wooden spoon and a Pyrex bowl; ~~old work gloves~~ *dirty garden* from a ~~wooden~~ shelf in the basement, ~~dirty from gardening~~; Saran Wrap for my head and a towel.

After I had poured ~~out~~ the hydrogen peroxide and bleach and mixed them, I had covered my hair with the white goop which I made. ~~Carefully~~, scared of it ~~even~~ touching my eyes, an eyelash, even.

is something wrong with sense smell?
Making sure ~~I~~ *it* did not touch skin, though not sure enough.

The mixture had spread all over my hair, freshly cut, cool and strange. I wrapped the Saran Wrap around my head. (Do you have any idea of the difficulty of tearing it off in a hurry?)

~~And~~ I wrapped the towel around my head and took the things into my room down the hall and put them under my bed, ~~so~~ *them* I could put away later.

I did not think about the one thing in the medicine cabinet shelf. Not once did I think of that at all.

Lying down on my bed in the dark I waited for the mixture to work. It made a sparkling first and then began to seethe and stung as it ate away the layer of color ~~off~~ *from* each strand of hair.

Because I wanted the process to work, I endured the pain. I curled up, like a comma.

I had done it wrong. I had put the mixture too close to my scalp. The skin of my scalp ~~ached like sunburn and other parts, hurting raw.~~ *Scorched a*

~~Out of ignorance, my mistake. Because~~ I had never done this before, I had never done anything. ~~16~~ *Sixteen* years old and I knew nothing. Even I knew ~~it~~ *that*.

You have a whole page dedicated to bleaching her hair. Is this that important to the story?

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And then I rubbed Manic Panic brand Virgin Snow toner from a squat little jar, through and over my straw hair, winced again, rinsed all over again.

I ^s stared, then, at the face ^{in the mirror} I ~~saw~~.

Me yet not ^{me} myself. ^{White, short hair, clipped to my ears} Hair, short, as long as my ear and curling ^{at} at the tips and white, like I said.

Further down, ^M my eyebrows, still dark, curving up and down like a cartoon of birds in the sky. My eyes, more green than blue. My nose, aquiline with nostrils which flare.

The whole of my face makes an oval. My chin does not stick out far.

^{obvious} ~~Below my long neck the rest of my body begins;~~ Shoulders not very broad, average for a girl, narrow for a boy. The same goes for my height. Small for a boy, average for a girl.

I do not have a curvy figure or a stocky figure or gangly. My body does not retain muscle or a lot of fat.

And I looked ^{twelve} 12 years old.

You're jumping between present + past tense. Stay consistent.

^{After ins} Having stared ^{ins} at myself, I snapped off the light, out of fear. ~~Medusa the snake-haired Gorgon had died when Jason the Argonaut showed her own face to her, reflected in his shield.~~ ^{Perseus}

The horror of her own face had turn her into stone.

Fear could turn you to stone, so you never moved, so you never dared. Fear of fear made me move.

Medusa, the snake-haired gorgon, was killed by her own reflection. Perseus had used his shield to reflect her image -

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The light is already off.

I turned out the light and went downstairs. Still, I did not think about what I had left on the medicine cabinet shelf.

In the kitchen, ~~lights still off~~, I cleaned off the bowl and the wooden spoon and dried them with the faded blue-green terrycloth towel. The kitchen looks like an ordinary kitchen. The house looks like an ordinary house, neither cluttered and messy or spotless and strict.

I did not belong in it. I was not ordinary.

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The ticket, too, in an unsealed envelope opened up, examined, a hundred times.

Lastly the book, so carefully chosen, the one, out of all of them on my shelves, I could not bear to leave behind.

All the while, my heart beat forcefully and rapidly. It oppressed me like a bully. My brain and my heart... neither of them let me alone long enough for me to think.

No one persecutes me more than me.

Still her
much pla
Get on w.
Story the

watch verb tenses

dark

not

(courage for what?)

passive voice

plane?
bus?
movie?

I had the

(what book was it?)

NOVEL EXCERPT (YOUNG ADULT): LICORICE BY RIA

Why do they stare?

The kids at school whose stares last too long, even they could not hate me as much as I hate myself.

Not even my mother and father and their expectations for me.

My parents stare and smile, ~~stare and smile~~. Or rather my mother smiles and my father tries to remember to do it, with a faraway look on his face.

Stare and smile and understand nothing or maybe they understood everything, never letting on what they think or feel. about me.

Always they touched ~~at~~ the world with the long sugar tongs of politeness.

I had to get away. - why?

For a week, like I said, I had done practice runs. Now I ~~took up~~ ^{grabbed} the backpack ~~up~~ and went downstairs.

I had to run or else face the full darkness of the truth. - which is what?

The nearer I approached, the farther away it got. The darkness of it grew. The vagueness of it made it more awful. So I could only escape by turning my back.

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The way Licorice knows about bravery and courage. She would act and never look back.

Licorice who I had not yet met, who I did not even know of, but who I would meet so very soon.

A few people can do anything. They must look down on people like us and see us as we sometimes see ourselves small and ordinary.

What does the character fear?

You need to name "it" at this point. I can't sympathize with this character since I'm 5 pages in + know nothing about the problem.

So Licorice isn't the co-conspirator?

Page 5 of 6 If the character sees him/herself as ordinary then why does she say she didn't belong in the ordinary kitchen?

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We must pay that price for not making ourselves great. ^{the price is} ~~We get, in return,~~ safety.

My mom and dad had ordinary all over them, ordinary lives, except they did not seem to care. My mother, on purpose, because she chose it, ^{stayed} ~~to stay~~ with my father. My father because he ^{accepted ordinary} ~~because he~~ ^{couldn't see another} ~~could see no other~~ way. Maybe they knew they had no choice. Maybe no one has ^{the} ~~a~~ choice ^{whether} to make yourself great or to stay small.

I thought I ~~knew that~~ I could not escape. I just wanted to pretend. If I could pretend then maybe I could make it real.

But it wasn't real, so I ran.

If nothing else, I would know at least that I had tried.

I slipped out the back door and ~~then around to the front and~~ out onto the dark street ~~outside~~. I left, this time, for real, ^{with no plan to return.} ~~Never, I thought, to return~~

My fear walked with me.

You need to state what your character is running from. You may be trying to create mystery but it's alienating the reader. Let us in on the problem so we can care about what happens.

JULIE

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JULIE

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run-on

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nose trouble?

After I had poured out the hydrogen peroxide and bleach and mixed them, I had covered my hair with the white goop ^{that} which I made. Carefully, scared of it even touching my eyes, an eyelash, even.

Making sure I did not touch skin, though not sure enough.

The mixture had spread all over my hair, freshly cut, cool and strange. I wrapped the Saran Wrap around my head. (Do you have any idea of the difficulty of tearing it off in a hurry?)

2x

And I wrapped the towel around my head and took the things into my room down the hall and put them under my bed. So I could put ^{them} away later.

I did not think about the one thing in the medicine cabinet shelf. Not once did I think of that at all.

?

Lying down on my bed in the dark I waited for the mixture to work. It made a sparkling first and then began to seethe[?] and stung as it ate away the layer of color off each strand of hair.

Open window for ventilation.

Because I wanted the process to work, I endured the pain. I curled up, like a comma.

✓

I had done it wrong, I had put the mixture too close to my scalp. The skin of my scalp ached like sunburn and other parts, hurting raw.

scalp = skin

Out of ignorance, my mistake. Because I had never done this before, I had never done anything. 16 years old and I knew nothing. Even I knew it.

JULIE

NOVEL EXCERPT (YOUNG ADULT): *LICORICE* BY RIA

I ran my head under the bathtub faucet, quickly, wincing as the cold water touched the burnt places, again as I rubbed the mixture with the towel. My hair had a whitish yellow color like sulfur.

And then I rubbed Manic Panic brand Virgin Snow toner from a squat little jar, through and over my straw hair, winced again, rinsed all over again.

Stared, then, at the face I saw.

Me yet not myself.

Hair, short, as long as my ear and curling at the tips and white, like I said.

Further down, my eyebrows, still dark, curving up and down like a cartoon of birds in the sky. My eyes, more green than blue. My nose, aquiline with nostrils which flare.

The whole of my face makes an oval. My chin does not stick out far.

Below my long neck the rest of my body begin. Shoulders not very broad, average for a girl, narrow for a boy. The same goes for my height. Small for a boy, average for a girl.

I do not have a curvy figure or a stocky figure or gangly. My body does not retain muscle or a lot of fat.

And I looked 12 years old.

Having stared at myself, I snapped off the light, out of fear. Medusa, the snake-haired Gorgon had died when Jason the Argonaut showed her own face to her, reflected in his shield.

The horror of her own face had turn her into stone.

Fear could turn you to stone, so you never moved, so you never dared. Fear of fear made me move.

I turned out the light and went downstairs. Still, I did not think about what I had left on the medicine cabinet shelf.

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NOVEL EXCERPT (YOUNG ADULT): *LICORICE* BY RIA

important? In the kitchen, lights still off, I cleaned off the bowl and the wooden spoon and dried them with the faded blue-green terrycloth towel. The kitchen looks like an ordinary kitchen. The house looks like an ordinary house, neither cluttered and messy or spotless and strict.

I did not belong in it.

After, I put the old gardening gloves back on their wooden shelves in the basement.

The backpack, packed and full, waited for me on the floor of my bedroom. So I joined it.

We had a plan. Me, I mean, and my co-conspirator. It had started to evolve a month ago and gotten to the stage where I could not turn back or back down. Choose 1.

antecedent? I had to trust her because I had no courage of my own.

The past week, I had spent packing and unpacking, until it had become automatic and mechanical.

The backpack had a change of clothes in it, a notebook and a pen. A tube of toothpaste and a pale yellow traveller's toothbrush with a folding handle. A black plastic wallet with an ID card I had made myself. I placed the wallet there. Where?

The ticket, too, in an unsealed envelope opened up, examined, a hundred times.

Lastly the book, so carefully chosen, the one, out of of all of them on my shelves, I could not bear to leave behind.

All the while, my heart beat forcefully and rapidly. It oppressed me like a bully. My brain and my heart... neither of them let me alone long enough for me to think.

No one persecutes me more than me.

The kids at school whose stares last too long, even they could not hate me as much as I hate myself.

Not even my mother and father and their expectations for me.

JULIE

NOVEL EXCERPT (YOUNG ADULT): *LICORICE* BY RIA

My parents stare and smile, stare and smile. Or rather my mother smiles and my father tries to remember to do it, with a faraway look on his face.

Stare and smile and understand nothing or maybe they understood everything. Never let on what they think or feel.

Always they touched the world with the long sugar tongs of politeness.

I had to get away.

slung the backpack over my shoulder

For a week, like I said, I had done practice runs. Now I took up the backpack up and went downstairs.

I had to run or else face the full darkness of the truth.

The nearer I approached, the farther away it got. The darkness of it grew. The vagueness of it made it more awful. So I could only escape by turning my back.

Fear. I knew fear.

People sometimes specialize in emotions. They know all about curiosity or pride. I knew fear.

The way Licorice knows about bravery and courage. She would act and never look back.

Licorice who I had not yet met, who I did not even know of, but who I would meet so very soon.

↑!
singular before now plural?

A few people can do anything. They must look down on people like us and see us as we sometimes see us, small and ordinary.

We must pay that price for not making ourselves great. We get, in return, safety.

My mom and dad had ordinary all over them, ordinary lives, except they did not seem to care. My mother, on purpose, because she chose it, to stay with my father. My father because he

JULIE

NOVEL EXCERPT (YOUNG ADULT): *LICORICE* BY RIA

could see no other way. Maybe they knew they had no choice. Maybe no one has a choice, whether to make yourself great or to stay small.

I thought I knew that I could not escape. I just wanted to pretend. If I could pretend then maybe I could make it real.

] ?!

If nothing else, I would know at least that I had tried.

I slipped out the back door and then around to the front and out onto the dark street outside. I left, this time, for real. Never, I thought, to return.

My fear walked with me.

I AM INTRIGUED BY YOUR PROTAGONIST. PERHAPS IT WOULD HELP IF YOU DESCRIBED WHAT SHE LOOKED LIKE BEFORE HER HAIR CUT AND BLEACH JOB. - WHAT SHE SAW IN THE MIRROR

AND, IF SHE'S 16, TELL US WHERE MOM AND DAD ARE AS SHE'S BLEACHING HER HAIR AND PACKING TO RUN AWAY.

WHEN DO WE FIND OUT WHAT'S IN THE MEDICINE CABINET?

Turn off the lights. Gently close or slam the door.

NOVEL EXCERPT (YOUNG ADULT): *LICORICE* BY RIA

DJVE

The beginning of this story contains some very important situations and actions. They seem to be more important to the author than to the reader. We read the first few pages and sense the desperation, the need for a physical change, no matter the cost or the pain. We read this and cannot commiserate with the protagonist because we have no idea of the cause of this desperation. The actions come of as a list of disconnected actions. If you are to gather the reading audience, you have to allow us into the causative action that happened before we joined the story.

You don't have to give up everything right away, but you have to trickle some of the reason that this scene is taking place.

I have no doubt that there is a very good stream of action, but you must let us in on the causation.

Summary: 1995. An innocent will enter the dark wood. Two lost souls will meet. Love will grow. Obsession will flower. Innocence will give way to experience. And one of them will make an impossible choice. All because of Licorice.

The beginning for me, the end for her, a story I cannot tell. Because I love her almost as much as I hate myself, I will try. *Interesting first line. Draws interest.*

Licorice rescued me(,) in all the ways that matter. She had everything possible and it all fell apart because of me. *Overdone second line following the first. See if you can combine the two. Needs a rewrite here. Licorice is a major player here.*

The downfall, the end. *Third line too much. Just begin the story.*

The night before I left home, I stood staring at myself in the mirror. Nothing that I saw, I recognized. A stranger stared back at me. **The stranger looked wrong, like everything about me.** *Delete. Repeated comments*

My hair spiked out in all directions, like a freeze-frame of an explosion, white as mouse fur. The skin above and behind my ears pink and tender as the feet of the same mouse, raw and aching.

NOVEL EXCERPT (YOUNG ADULT): *LICORICE* BY RIA

I had wanted to burn myself away.

I looked like a wreck, I looked like chaos, with so many emotions inside me that I did not know what I felt. *Here you're telling us that there is something seriously wrong. Telling, not showing.*

If no one could recognize me, I wanted it that way.

It could help me hide. *Seeking anonymity, okay. Why?*

The change (*in what. Too vague to carry the immediate concern*) had taken time and effort, it had taken patience and work. A bottle of hydrogen peroxide and a paper packet of Clairol bleach full of powdery (*powdery what?*) with an odor so sharp even I could smell it (*why was it unusual that you could smell it. Important to the story?*). A wooden spoon and a Pyrex bowl. Old work gloves from a wooden shelf in the basement, dirty from gardening. Saran Wrap for my head and a towel.

After I had poured out the hydrogen peroxide and bleach and mixed them, I had covered my hair with the white goop **which I made** (*peroxide and bleach? No need to say you made it. Otherwise, if it is a different white goop, where did it come from?*). Carefully (*carefully what? Spread it on? Be specific with your actions.*), scared of it even touching my eyes, an eyelash, even.

Making sure I did not touch skin, **though not sure enough.** *Again, don't be too coy. Just say what happened or you'll confuse your reader.*

The mixture had spread all over my hair, freshly cut, cool and strange. I wrapped the Saran Wrap around my head. (Do you have any idea of the difficulty of tearing it off in a hurry?)

And I wrapped the towel around my head and took the things into my room down the hall and put them under my bed. So I could put *them* away later.

NOVEL EXCERPT (YOUNG ADULT): *LICORICE* BY RIA

I did not think about the one thing in the medicine cabinet shelf. Not once did I think of that at all. *Again, don't be too coy. Is the 'one thing' important? Why not let us in?*

Lying down on my bed in the dark I waited for the mixture to work. It made a sparkling *(a sparkling what?)* first and then ~~began to~~ *(delete)* seethed and stung *(stung what? Scalp? Eyes? What?)* as it ate away the layer of color off each strand of hair.

Because I wanted the process to work, I endured the pain. I curled up(,) like a comma.

I had done it wrong, I had put the mixture too close to my scalp. The skin of my scalp ached like sunburn and other parts, hurting raw. *(This sentence is a mess. Try rewording)*

Out of ignorance, my mistake. Because I had never done this before, I had never done anything. 16 years old and I knew nothing. Even I knew it. *(Delete the sentence but put the age in somewhere else.)*

I ran my head under the bathtub faucet, quickly, wincing as the cold water touched the burnt places, again as I rubbed the mixture with the towel. *(Odd reference. Rubbing the mixture as opposed to drying her hair?)* My hair had a whitish yellow color like sulfur.

And then I rubbed Manic Panic brand Virgin Snow toner from a squat little jar, through and over my straw hair, winced again, *(probably delete this one.)* rinsed all over again.

Stared, then, *(delete)* at the face I saw.

Me yet not myself.

Hair, short, ~~as long as~~ *(delete) down to* my ear and curling at the tips ~~(and white, like I said:)~~ *don't say it twice*

Further down, my eyebrows, still dark, curving up and down like a cartoon of birds in the sky. My eyes, more green than blue. My nose, aquiline with *flaring* nostrils ~~which flare~~.

The whole of my face makes an oval. My chin does not stick out far.

NOVEL EXCERPT (YOUNG ADULT): *LICORICE* BY RIA

~~Below my long neck the rest of my body begin.~~ Shoulders *are* not very broad, average for a girl, narrow for a boy. The same goes for my height. ~~Small for a boy, average for a girl.~~

I do not have a curvy figure or a stocky figure or gangly. My body does not retain muscle or a lot of fat. *Please, don't tell us what it doesn't have. Identify what it does have.*

And I looked 12 years old.

Having stared at myself, I snapped off the light, out of fear. Medusa the snake-haired Gorgon had died when Jason the Argonaut showed her own face to her, reflected in his shield.

The horror of her own face had turn her into stone.

Fear could turn you to stone, so you never moved, so you never dared. Fear of fear made me move.

I turned out the light and went downstairs. Still, I did not think about what I had left on the medicine cabinet shelf.

In the kitchen, lights still off, I cleaned off the bowl and the wooden spoon and dried them with the faded blue-green terrycloth towel. The kitchen ~~looks~~ *looked* like an ordinary kitchen. The house looks like an ordinary house, neither cluttered and messy or spotless and strict.

I did not belong in it.

After *cleaning up*, I put the old gardening gloves back on their wooden shelves in the basement.

The backpack, packed and full, waited for me on the floor of my bedroom. So I joined it.

We had a plan. Me, I mean, and my co-conspirator. It had started to evolve a month *ago* and gotten to the stage where I could not turn back or back down.

I had to trust her because I had no courage of my own.

NOVEL EXCERPT (YOUNG ADULT): *LICORICE* BY RIA

The past week, I had spent packing and unpacking, until it had become automatic and mechanical.

The backpack had a change of clothes in it, a notebook and a pen. A tube of toothpaste and a pale yellow traveller's toothbrush with a folding handle. A black plastic wallet with an ID card I had made myself. I placed the wallet there.

The ticket, too, in an unsealed envelope opened up, examined, a hundred times.

Lastly the book, so carefully chosen, the one, out of all of them on my shelves, I could not bear to leave behind.

All the while, my heart beat forcefully and rapidly. It oppressed me like a bully. My brain and my heart... neither of them let me alone long enough for me to think.

No one persecutes me more than me. *Stop whining. It adds nothing to the story.*

The kids at school whose stares last too long, even they could not hate me as much as I hate myself. *Not a sentence and whining again.*

Not even my mother and father and their expectations for me. *Not a sentence.*

My parents stare and smile, stare and smile. Or rather my mother smiles and my father tries to remember to do it, with a faraway look on his face.

Stare and smile and understand nothing or maybe they understood everything. Never let on what they think or feel.

Always they touched the world with the long sugar tongs of politeness. *Nice sentence*

I had to get away. *from...*

For a week, like I said, I had done practice runs. Now I took up the backpack up and went downstairs.

NOVEL EXCERPT (YOUNG ADULT): LICORICE BY RIA

I had to run or else face the full darkness of the truth. *In order for this kind of sentence to have any impact, the reader needs to know what you're referring to. What truth?*

The nearer I approached, the farther away it got. The darkness of it grew. The vagueness of it made it more awful. So I could only escape by turning my back.

Fear. I knew fear.

People sometimes specialize in emotions. They know all about curiosity or pride. I knew fear.

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My mom and dad had ordinary all over them, ordinary lives, except they did not seem to care. My mother, on purpose, because she chose it, to stay with my father. My father because he could see no other way. Maybe they knew they had no choice. Maybe no one has a choice, whether to make yourself great or to stay small.

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I slipped out the back door and then around to the front and out onto the dark street outside. I left, this time, for real. Never, I thought, to return.

NOVEL EXCERPT (YOUNG ADULT): LICORICE BY RIA

My fear walked with me.

This is a long unsubstantiated rant. Please, let the reader understand why there is so much turmoil in the character. What is special about the mom and dad that would elicit such angst. I hope it's not the typical teenager whining how the world is terrible and no one understands me. There has to be a hook that separates this from all the other hormone fuelled teenage complaining stories.