

PROLOGUE

"If I had known any of that! If I had even read into one of those stupid blogs!!! Why the fuck didn't I just can some goddamn vegetables?" These are the thoughts that kept her up now.

No longer is it "did I switch the laundry? Is tomorrow my volunteer day?"

Her husband awake next to her keeping an eye out for thieves or worse. Her only living child lay in between them. Why do I think that way she thought. Why can't I hold onto hope that she is alive? Perhaps she thought its better if she is gone.

Gone from this world. Gone from the days they live and maybe she died that first night with only memories in her head of a wonderful life. That is the only thing she hopes for now.

Maybe she died with fear or the feel of betrayal. Betrayal from a mother whose love was not strong enough to break down that wall of men. A father whose arms were not strong enough to stop the shields. A sister whose screams were so loud that no other thought could enter the brain. A scream that will haunt Rachel for the rest of her life. The rest of her very short life.

As Rachel lay there she began to think what she thought every night for the last 8 months. She would think of her new life as a form of punishment. If she had just been nicer to the school bus driver even though she wouldn't let Lexi sit with her first grade friend because she was in Kindergarten. Perhaps they wouldn't be here right now. How insane she was being.

As if one snide remark not being made could have changed the entire collapse of the world. But

- good tension
- vague but scary situation
- good contrast

Ed

* Tenses: if this is present, use all present tense. If past, use past. I'm assuming past.

* why are these thoughts in quotes, none of the rest are.

* dangerous starting on the lowest note.

* This is not Facebook. One "!" is enough.

* Use grammar check & believe it.

NOVEL EXCERPT (DYSTOPIAN): BY LEAH MERCURIO

it wasn't just one remark and it wasn't really the problem. And anyway didn't she have the right to be insane?

It was all the not knowing, the wishes and dreams. The whys and the hows. And the ~~the~~ why didn't I's. That ^{was} what kept Rachel awake at night. Not the fear, not the sounds, not even the fact that her ^{sister} 8-year-old daughter, her baby was laying somewhere hundreds of miles away in a pile of death.

It was the regret. All of the things she wanted to do differently all of the amends she wanted to make and all of the life her family was never allowed to live. That is what kept her awake praying for the lord to just come and take her and let her atone for all of her sins and most importantly see her baby girl once more.

Dave turned to her "are you awake?" he whispered. She didn't want to answer but she did.

named! → "yes"

→ "ok get on your feet slowly" he said even softer and without turning this time.

Rachel did as she was told. She could feel his back against hers rising up from the ground at the same pace and could instantly tell he was trying to protect their daughter. -how? * -can't picture

From what? Her mind raced, her eyes searched, it was dark, there was nothing. But then her mind slowed, she heard Gabby's laughter that silly little voice so far away. She closed her eyes for only a second. Then she heard Dave speak.

"Leave all the gear, grab the bag of guns. Ill throw Lexi on my back and we head in the direction your facing. Do you understand?"

Rachel nodded her head, she was so close to Dave he barely had to speak for her to know what he was saying.

NOVEL EXCERPT (DYSTOPIAN): BY LEAH MERCURIO

She stood ^{there} frozen. What was happening? Didn't she just hear her baby? Shouldn't her maternal instinct be to run in that direction? Why wasn't she moving? What was wrong with her?

And then she felt it.

Dave spun around and threw their daughter on his back.

In less than a second she had the guns and a back pack on her and she was running.

Running through a street she had never seen before running down an alley with no end. Running until she was supposed to stop.

Her daughter hanging onto her dad so tightly but not saying a word. Her long braid whipping behind her as if it might just let her take flight. They were all running, Running from what she still didn't know.

What she did was just keep her feet moving until they were supposed to stop. As she did ^{it's} her mind wandered, her thoughts drifted. She thought back to a time when life was what she ^{hard to believe she would recall all this while running for her life} thought was tough.

It was before Dave had started his business and they were still renting before they bought the house.

~~Or~~ the pain that came when she thought of the house was almost unbearable.

They were a one-car family, and on days when the girls had pre-school they would all have to wake up extra early and drive Dave to the job site. Rachel was such a bitch, back then.

She would complain that it was unfair to drag the kids out at 5:30 in the morning when they had school that day. She would give him such a hard time until he almost killed himself working 80-hour weeks to be able to afford two cars.

She smiled at the thought of carrying both the girls out of bed and into the warmed-up car with their blankets and pillows and dollies and stuffys. How stupid it was that Rachel made them

NOVEL EXCERPT (DYSTOPIAN): BY LEAH MERCURIO

take

have all of those things for a 30 minute car ride! Then she said a quick thank you to the lord,
thank you for making us pros at running through the dark while holding our sleeping kids. ✓

Although only Dave was holding a child. Rachel was holding a bag of guns and some food. She
was no longer a mother she was a survivor.

The list of the many things she has survived was about to come to an end... had

huh?
- because she's not going to survive?
- or because no more things are
going to threaten her?

Jenn's Comments

PROLOGUE - *Why does the story need a prologue?*

"If I had known any of that! If I had even read into one of those stupid blogs! Why the fuck didn't I just can some goddamn vegetables?" These are the thoughts that kept her up now. No longer is it, "Did I switch the laundry? Is tomorrow my volunteer day?"

Be consistent with verb tense

Her husband ^{was} awake next to her keeping an eye out for ^{thieves} thief's or worse. Her only living child lay in between them. Why do I think that way, ["]she thought. "Why cant I hold onto hope that she is alive? Perhaps ["]she thought ["]its better if she is gone."

Name her

Gone from this world. Gone from the days they live, and maybe she died that first night

with only memories in her head of a wonderful life. That is the only thing ^{she} hopes for now.

Which "she" are you referring to? Mom or daughter?

Maybe she died with fear or the ^{feeling} feel of betrayal. Betrayal from ^a a mother whose love was not strong enough to break down that ^{- scary} wall of men. A father whose arms were not strong enough

would it really be her love that was not strong enough?

to stop the shields. A sister whose screams were so loud that no other thought could enter the brain. A scream that will haunt Rachel for the rest of her life. The rest of her very short life.

As Rachel laid there, she began to ^{think} think what she thought every night for the last ^{right} 8 months. She would ^{think} think of her new life as a form of punishment. If she had just been nicer to the school bus driver even though she wouldn't let Lexi sit with her first grade friend because

were they police or rapists?

who is Lexi, the daughter who died?

Is Rachel the mom or the other daughter?

she was in Kindergarten. Perhaps they wouldn't be here right now. How insane she was being.

uh?

As if one snide remark not being made could have changed the entire collapse of the world. But,

are these 3 "she" referring to 3 different people?

NOVEL EXCERPT (DYSTOPIAN): BY LEAH MERCURIO

- Her emotional problem (inner) or the world problem (outer)

it wasn't just one remark, and it wasn't really the problem. And anyway, didn't she have the right to be insane?

It was all the not knowing, the wishes and dreams. The whys and the hows. And the why didn't I's. That is what kept Rachel awake at night. Not the fear, not the sounds, not even the fact that her 6 year old daughter, her baby was laying somewhere hundreds of miles away in a pile of death.

It was the regret. All of the things she wanted to do differently all of the amends she wanted to make and all of the life her family was never allowed to live. That is what kept her awake praying for the lord to just come and take her, and let her atone for all of her sins and most importantly see her baby girl once more.

Dave turned to her. "Are you awake?" he whispered. She didn't want to answer but she did.

"yes?"

"Ok get on your feet slowly," he said even softer and without turning this time.

Rachel did as she was told. She ~~could feel~~ felt his back against hers rising up from the ground at the same pace and could instantly tell he was trying to protect their daughter.

From what? Her mind raced, her eyes searched. It was dark ~~there was nothing.~~ But then her mind slowed she heard Gabby's laughter that silly little voice so far away. She closed her eyes for ~~only~~ a second. Then she heard Dave speak.

"Leave all the gear grab the bag of guns. I'll throw Lexi on my back and we head in the direction you're facing. Do you understand?"

Rachel nodded ~~her head,~~ she was so close to Dave he barely had to speak for her to know what he was saying.

great to see your characters Add's depth.

intend when a speaker changes.

- How could she tell?

Who is Gabby?

At this point you should let the reader know the setting. Are they in a house, in a tent, outside in the woods?

Right now I'm more confused than intrigued.

NOVEL EXCERPT (DYSTOPIAN): BY LEAH MERCURIO

she asks herself a lot of questions. Too many.

She stood there frozen. What was happening. Didn't she just hear her baby? Shouldn't her maternal instinct be to run in that direction? Why wasn't she moving? What was wrong with her?
and then she felt it. *felt what?*

Dave spun around and threw their daughter on his back.

In less than a second she had the guns and a back pack on her and she was running. Running through a street she had never seen before running down an alley with no end. Running until she was supposed to stop.

Her daughter *Lexi hung* onto her dad so tightly but *didn't say* not saying a word. Her long braid whipping *ed* behind her as if it might just let her take flight. They were all running. Running from what she still didn't know.

-you already stated this

What she did was ~~just~~ keep her feet moving until they were supposed to stop. As she did this her mind wandered her thoughts drifted. She thought back to a time when life was what she *considered* thought was tough.

watch the word echo

It was before Dave had started his business and they were still renting before they bought the house.

Oh the pain that came when she thought of the house was almost unbearable.

They were a one car family and on days when the girls had pre-school they would all have to wake up extra early and drive Dave to the job site. Rachel was such a bitch, back then. She would complain that it was unfair to drag the kids out at 5:30 in the morning when they had school that day. She would give him such a hard time until he almost killed himself working 80 *hour* weeks to be able to afford two cars.

hour

She smiled at the thought of carrying both the girls out of bed and into the warmed up car with their blankets and pillows and dollys and stuffys. How stupid it was that Rachel made them

spellings

NOVEL EXCERPT (DYSTOPIAN): BY LEAH MERCURIO

^{take} ~~have~~ all of those things for a 30 minute car ride. Then she said a quick thank you to the lord, thank you for making us ^{pro's} at running through the dark while holding our sleeping kids.

Although only Dave was holding a child. Rachel was holding a bag of guns and some food. She was no longer a mother, ^{just} she was a survivor.

The list of the many things she ^{had} has survived was about to come to an end...

She wasn't a mother any more?

The story is good. I love "end of the world" stories. Great tension with a mom & lost daughter.

It needs some tightening but it's an interesting first draft.

JULIE

NOVEL EXCERPT (DYSTOPIAN): BY LEAH MERCURIO

Establish time
ex. After World War III
After the meteor hit
After the smurfs gained world domination

Why not Chapter 1?
How does chapter 1 start?
And, where?

PROLOGUE

Any of what? Elaborate.

7 necessary: "If I had known any of that! If I had even read into one of those stupid blogs!!! Why the fuck didn't I just can some goddamn vegetables?" These are the thoughts that kept her up now.

No longer is it did I switch the laundry, is tomorrow my volunteer day?"....

Her husband awake next to her, keeping an eye out for thieves or worse. Her only living child lay in between them. Why do I think that way she thought. Why can I hold onto hope that she is alive? Perhaps she thought it's better if she is gone. ambiguous

possibly

What happened to the other(s)?

Gone from this world. Gone from the days they live and maybe she died that first night - with only memories in her head of a wonderful life. That is the only thing she hopes for now.

of fight? fire? attack? invasion

Maybe she died with fear or the feel of betrayal. Betrayal from A mother whose love was not strong enough to break down that wall of men. A father whose arms were not strong enough to stop the shields. A sister whose screams were so loud that no other thought could enter her brain. A scream that will haunt Rachel for the rest of her life. The rest of her very short life.

As Rachel lay there she began to think what she thought every night for the last 8 eight months. She would think of her new life as a form of punishment. If she had just been nicer to the school bus driver even though she wouldn't let Lexi sit with her first-grade friend because she was in Kindergarten. Perhaps they wouldn't be here right now. How insane she was being.

Why?

As if one snide remark not being made could have changed the entire collapse of the world. But,

Who? Where is here?

Describe the incident.

necessary:

name

provide example

plural vs. singular

x2
few more details

JULIE

NOVEL EXCERPT (DYSTOPIAN): BY LEAH MERCURIO

it wasn't just one remark and it wasn't really the problem. And anyway didn't she have the right to be insane?

It was all the not knowing, the wishes and dreams. The whys, and the hows, and the the why didn't I's. That is what kept Rachel awake at night. Not the fear, not the sounds, not even the fact that her 6 year old daughter, her baby was laying somewhere hundreds of miles away in a pile of death.

combine

word choice

possibly

It was the regret. All of the things she wanted to do differently, all of the amends she wanted to make and all of the life her family was never allowed to live. That is what kept her awake, praying for the lord to just come and take her and let her atone for all of her sins and most importantly see her baby girl once more.

em dash

Dave turned to her, "Are you awake?" he whispered. She didn't want to answer but she did.

Indent] "yes"

Indent] "Get on your feet slowly," he said even softer and without turning this time.

Rachel did as she was told. She could feel his back against hers rising up from the ground at the same pace and could instantly tell he was trying to protect their daughter.

Where is the girl not between them

From what? Her mind raced her eyes searched it was dark there was nothing. But then her mind slowed she heard Gabby's laughter that silly little voice so far away. She closed her eyes for only a second. Then she heard Dave speak.

rate? word choice

run-on (R.O.)

R.O. only or 6-year-old?

"Leave all the gear grab the bag of guns. I'll throw Lexi on my back and we head in the direction you're facing. Do you understand?"

well

Rachel nodded her head, she was so close to Dave, he barely had to speak for her to know what he was saying.

you're

R.O.

that

JULIE

NOVEL EXCERPT (DYSTOPIAN): BY LEAH MERCURIO

- there?
625 why?

homophone

She stood ^{FR}there frozen. What was happening? Didn't she just hear her baby? Shouldn't her maternal instinct be to run in that direction? Why wasn't she moving? What was wrong with her?

And then she felt it.

Dave spun around and threw their daughter on his back.

In which direction?
Did he indicate or point?

running K2

In less than a second she had the guns and a back pack on her and she was running.

R.O. Running through a street she had never seen before running down an alley with no end. Running until she was supposed to stop.

- where?
ambiguous

Her daughter hanging onto her dad so tightly but not saying a word. Her long braid

running K2

whipping behind her as if it might just let her take flight. They were all running, running from what she still didn't know.

- How would she know?

What she did was just keep her feet moving until they were supposed to stop. As she did

R.O. redundant choose one

this her mind wandered her thoughts drifted. She thought back to a time when life was what she thought was tough.

reword elaborate.

What business?

It was before Dave had started his business and they were still renting before they bought the house.

WRAP

Oh, the pain that came when she thought of the house was almost unbearable.

Why?

They were a one-car family and on days when the girls had pre-school they would all have to wake up extra early and drive Dave to the job site. Rachel was such a bitch back then. She would complain that it was unfair to drag the kids out at 5:30 in the morning when they had school that day. She would give him such a hard time until he almost killed himself working 80+ hr weeks to be able to afford two cars.

No good mom.

hour

She smiled at the thought of carrying both the girls out of bed and into the warmed up car with their blankets, and pillows, and dollys, and stuffys. How stupid it was that Rachel made them

snazles? sippy cups? choose one

JULIE

NOVEL EXCERPT (DYSTOPIAN): BY LEAH MERCURIO

good mom

have all of those things for a 30-minute car ride! Then she said a quick thank you to the lord, thank you for making us pros at running through the dark while holding our sleeping kids.

kid?

Although only Dave was holding a child. Rachel was holding a bag of guns and some food. She was no longer a mother she was a survivor.

not only... but also
If she doesn't survive, we're without a main character.

The list of the many things she has survived was about to come to an end...

List them.

THIS HAS POTENTIAL TO BE A POWERFUL DYSTOPIAN PIECE.
IT NEEDS CLARIFICATION AND ELABORATION IN CERTAIN AREAS.
CAREFUL WITH HOMOPHONES, PUNCTUATION, AND RUN-ONS.

DAVE

Good framework for a story. Try to
put into order & avoid repetition
I'd like to see the revision
PROLOGUE

"If I had known any of that! If I had even read into one of those stupid blogs!!! Why the fuck didn't I just can some goddamn vegetables?" (These are the thoughts that kept her up now. No longer is it "Did I switch the laundry? Is tomorrow my volunteer day?"...)

Her husband ^{was} awake, next to her, keeping an eye out for thieves or worse. Her only living child lay in between them. Why do I think that way? she thought. Why can't I hold onto hope that she is alive? Perhaps, she thought, it's better if she is gone.

Gone from this world. Gone from the days they live and maybe she died that first night with only memories in her head of a wonderful life. That is the only thing she hopes for now.

Maybe she died with fear, or the feel of betrayal. Betrayal from ^{ins} (A) mother whose love was not strong enough to break down that wall of men, A father whose arms were not strong enough to stop the [?] shields, A sister whose screams were so loud that no other thought could enter the brain, A scream that will haunt Rachel for the rest of her life. The rest of her very short life.

As Rachel ⁱⁿ laid there, she began to think what she thought every night for the last 8 months. She would think of her new life as a form of punishment. If she had just been nicer to the school bus driver, even though she wouldn't let Lexi sit with her first grade friend because she was in Kindergarten, perhaps they wouldn't be here right now. How insane she was being? As if

NOVEL EXCERPT (DYSTOPIAN): BY LEAH MERCURIO

DAVE

one snide remark not ~~being~~ made could have changed the entire collapse of the world. ^B But it wasn't just one remark and it wasn't really the problem. And anyway, didn't she have the right to be insane?

Repete

It was all the not knowing, the wishes and dreams. The whys and the hows. And the the why didn't I's. That is what kept Rachel awake at night. Not the fear, not the sounds, not even the fact that her 6 year old daughter, her baby was laying somewhere hundreds of miles away in a pile of death. - CHRISLY

Repete

It was the regret. All of the things she wanted to do differently all of the amends she wanted to make and all of the life her family was never allowed to live. That is what kept her awake, praying for the lord to just come and take her and let her atone for all of her sins and most importantly see her baby girl once more.

Dave turned to her, "Are you awake?" he whispered. ^D She didn't want to answer but she did.

"Yes."

"Ok get on your feet slowly" he said even softer and without turning this time.

EXPAND

Rachel did as she was told. She could feel his back against hers rising up from the ground at the same pace and could instantly tell he was trying to protect their daughter.

From what? Her mind raced her eyes searched ^I it was dark ^I there was nothing. But then, her mind slowed she heard ^G gabby's laughter, that silly little voice so far away. She closed her eyes for only a second. ^P Then she heard ^D Dave speak.

→ "Leave all the gear, ^G grab the bag of guns. I'll throw Lexi on my back and we head in the direction ^{you're} your facing. Do you understand?"

NOVEL EXCERPT (DYSTOPIAN): BY LEAH MERCURIO

DAVE

Rachel nodded her head, she was so close to ^{have} he barely had to speak for her to know what he was saying.

She stood ^{there} ~~there~~ frozen. What was happening? Didn't she just hear her baby? Shouldn't her maternal instinct be to run in that direction? Why wasn't she moving? What was wrong with her, and then she felt it. ^{what?}

Dave spun around and ^{strapped, lifted} ~~threw~~ their daughter on his back

In less than a second she had the guns and a back pack on her ^{and} she was running. ~~Running~~ through a street she had never seen before running down an alley with no end. Running until she was supposed to stop.

Her daughter ^{was} hanging onto her dad ~~so~~ tightly, but not saying a word, Her long braid whipping behind her as if it might just let her take flight. They were all running, Running from what she still didn't know. ^{HUH?}

What she did was just ^{kept} keep her feet moving until they were supposed to stop. As she did this her mind wandered, her thoughts ~~drifted~~ ^{drifted}. She thought back to a time when life was what she thought was tough. ^{Repete}

It was before Dave had started his business and they were still renting before they bought the house.

Oh, the pain that came when she thought of the house ^{hanging} was almost unbearable.

They were a one car family and on days when the girls had pre-school, they would all have to wake up extra early and drive Dave to the job site. Rachel was such a bitch, back then. She would complain that it was unfair to drag the kids out at 5:30 in the morning when they had

Please don't be coy she knows the streets

DAVE NOVEL EXCERPT (DYSTOPIAN): BY LEAH MERCURIO

school that day. She would give him such a hard time until he almost killed himself working 80
hour
or weeks to be able to afford two cars,

She smiled at the thought of carrying both the girls out of bed and into the warmed up car
with their blankets and pillows and dollys and stuffys. How stupid it was that Rachel made them
have all of those things for a 30 minute car ride! Then she said a quick thank you to the lord,
thank you for making us pro's at running through the dark while holding our sleeping kids.

Although only Dave was holding a child. Rachel was holding a bag of guns and some food. She
was no longer a mother, she was a survivor.

The list of the many things she has survived was about to come to an end...
OK-

Many they summatized ERRORS
distinct from the story -
Many Repetitions of the same elements
Running -
Better before
where are they going?

If this dystopia is so bad the Reader
Needs to understand why it is so bad so
we can cheer them on in their Race for survival.
we need to know why Mom is so bad so
All these elements need to be developed &
Not just thrown out for the
Reader to digest -

dystopian

PROLOGUE

"If I had known any of that! If I had even read into one of those stupid blogs!!! Why the fuck didn't I just can some goddamn vegetables?" ~~These are the thoughts that kept her up now.~~ No longer ~~is-was~~ it, "~~did-Did~~ I switch the laundry,? Is tomorrow my volunteer day?"....

Her husband awake next to her, keeping an eye out for thief's, or worse. Her only living child lay ~~in-between~~ them. Why do I think that way? ~~she-Rachel~~ thought. Why can't I hold onto hope that ~~she is Gabby's~~ alive? Perhaps, she thought, it's better if she is gone.

Gone from this world. Gone from the days they live ~~now. For the thousandth time,~~ Rachel wondered if Gabby had ~~and-maybe-she~~ died that ~~first-night~~ with ~~only~~ memories in her head of a wonderful life. ~~That is the only thing she hopes for now.~~

~~But it wasn't that simple.~~ Maybe ~~she-Rachel's daughter~~ died ~~with-in~~ fear, or ~~the-worse,~~ with the ~~feel-pain~~ of betrayal. Betrayal from ~~a-A~~ mother whose love was not strong enough to break down that wall of men. A father whose arms were not strong enough to stop the shields. ~~A~~ sister whose screams were so loud that no other thought could enter the brain. ~~A-s~~ Scream that ~~will-would~~ haunt Rachel for the rest of her life. [The rest of her very short life.

As Rachel ~~laid-lay~~ there, she began to think what she thought every night for the last 8 months. She would ~~think~~ of her new life as a form of punishment. If she had just been nicer to the school bus driver even though she wouldn't let Lexi sit with her first grade friend because

Comment [s1]: I don't mind profanity, but since it's not used after this, I don't think you need it here. The character doesn't generally swear after this.

Comment [s2]: You don't need "these are the thoughts..." because in the next sentence, with the sentence "Her husband awake next to her," we know that Rachel is awake.

Comment [s3]: Her, or Their?

Comment [s4]: Tell us they're on the floor (I didn't know this until the next page.)

Comment [s5]: Use her child's actual name; that's how Rachel would think of her

Comment [s6]: You need a transition between these two sentences. Perhaps a thought as to what life is like now, which would also give you the opportunity to provide a hook to the reader-a hint as to what society is like now, a hint as to what they're running from, or why.

Comment [s7]: Punctuation[commas, in this case] is important, especially for sentences like this one.

Comment [s8]: Is 'she' Rachel, or her daughter? Hard to figure out what this pronoun refers to

Comment [s9]: It wasn't clear to me that Rachel was thinking of her daughter-inserting this text helps

Comment [s10]: Always one space between sentences, not two.

Comment [s11]: Good sentence

Comment [s12]: good

NOVEL EXCERPT: ? by LEAH MERCURIO

she was in Kindergarten. Perhaps they wouldn't be here right now. How insane she was being-!
As if ~~one-erasing one~~ snide remark ~~not-being-made~~ could have changed the entire collapse of the world. ~~but~~ But it wasn't just one remark, and it wasn't really the problem. And anyway, didn't she have the right to be insane?

Comment [s13]: What wasn't the problem?

It was all the not knowing, the wishes and dreams. The whys and the hows. And the ~~the~~ why didn't I's. That ~~-is~~ what kept Rachel awake at night. Not the fear, not the sounds, not even the fact that her ~~6-six-year-year-old~~ daughter, ~~-~~ her ~~baby-baby~~ - was laying somewhere hundreds of miles away in a pile of death.

It was the regret. All of the things she wanted to do differently, all of the amends she wanted to make, and all of the life her family was never allowed to live. That is what kept her awake praying for the ~~lord-Lord~~ to just come and take her and let her atone for all of her sins. ~~A~~ and most importantly, see her baby girl once ~~more~~.

stream of thoughts

Dave turned to her,

~~A~~ "are you awake?" he whispered.

She didn't want to answer, but she did. "yes ~~Yes~~."

Comment [s14]: Up to here is all back story-information that the reader probably doesn't need all at once. I think you should start here ("Dave turned to her"), more or less, and then introduce Rachel's thoughts as she and her family go on the run.

~~ok-Okay~~, get on your feet slowly, ~~he-said~~ He spoke even softer ~~this time~~, and without turning ~~this time~~. (~~when did he turn away?~~)

Comment [s15]: I like this part-his manner of speaking to her tells us right away that he's angry with her, or doesn't respect her.

Rachel did as she was told. She could feel his back against hers, rising up from the ground at the same pace, and could instantly tell he was trying to protect their daughter.

Comment [s16]: How?

From what? Her mind raced, her eyes searched ~~outside~~, -! It was dark; there was nothing ~~to see~~. But then her mind slowed, ~~S~~-she heard ~~gabby's-Gabby's~~ laughter - that silly little voice - so far away. She closed her eyes for only a second. Then she heard ~~dave-Dave~~ speak.

Comment [s17]: Give us some description of their surroundings, of what they were wearing, what they looked like. Were they dressed to go on the run? Was their daughter sleeping?

NOVEL EXCERPT: ? by LEAH MERCURIO

“Leave all the gear, grab the bag of guns. I’ll throw Lexi on my back, and we’ll head in the direction you’re facing. Do you understand?”

Comment [s18]: Why didn't she know what was about to happen?

Rachel nodded her head, she was so close to Dave-Dave; he barely had to speak for her to know what he was saying.

Comment [s19]: Meaning that he was whispering?

She stood there, frozen. What was happening? Didn't she just hear her baby? Shouldn't her maternal instinct compel her to run in that direction? Why wasn't she moving? What was wrong with her?

And then she felt it.

Comment [s20]: Felt what?

Dave spun around and threw their daughter on his back.

In less than a second, she had the guns and a back-pack on her, and she was running.

Running through a street she had never seen before, running down an alley with no end.

Running until she was supposed to stop.

Her daughter hanging onto her Dad so tightly, but not saying a word. Her long braid whipping behind her as if it might just let her take flight. They were all running, Running from what, she still didn't know.

What she did was just keep her feet moving until they were supposed to stop. As she did this her mind wandered her thoughts drifted. She thought back to a time when life was what she thought was tough.

It was before Dave had started his business and they were still renting before they bought the house.

Oh the pain that came when she thought of the house was almost unbearable.

They were had been? a one car family, and on days when the girls had pre-school, they would all have to wake up extra early and drive Dave to the job site. Rachel was had been such a

Comment [s21]: having a hard time with tenses throughout

NOVEL EXCERPT: ? by LEAH MERCURIO

bitch, back then. She would complain that it was unfair to drag the kids out at 5:30 in the morning when they had school that day. She would give him such a hard time until he finally relented, almost ~~killed-killing~~ himself working those 80 hour weeks, until they'd been able to buy their second car, to be able to afford two cars, .

She smiled at the thought of carrying both the girls out of bed and into the warmed warmed-up car with their blankets-blankets and pillows and dollies-dollies and stuffys. How stupid it was that Rachel made-let them have all of those things for a 30 minute car ride! Then she said a quick thank you to the lordLord, thank you for making us-them_pro's-pros at running through the dark while holding our-their sleeping kids.

ExceptAlthough only Dave was holding a child. Rachel was holding a bag of guns and some food. She was no longer a mother; she was a survivor.

The list of the many things she has survived was about to come to an end...

My main notes:

stream of thoughts

1. Punctuation is very important. It guides the reader through your sentences, and prevents the reader from getting frustrated. I'm guessing this is an early draft, but you'll want to go back and concentrate just on punctuation. *The Elements of Style*, by Strunk & White (posted on the Writer's Infusion website within the Resources\Writing Tools link) is a great resource for this.
2. I think this scene would be more powerful if it was mostly an action scene, with Rachel's thoughts interwoven into their escape. I'd like to see a description of their surroundings, of what they're wearing (if it's different than clothes from today, or if the clothing indicates that they are poor, or used to have money), of what's going on around them. Are they being quiet? Who might be watching, or

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listening? Are they meeting anyone else? Did they leave a car behind? Do they have any food? Where are they headed? This escape is a good opportunity to provide setting and to give us Rachel's thoughts as they do so. Show us the stakes.

3. Earlier in the prologue, it's mentioned that Rachel "would think of her new life as a form of punishment." But then when they're leaving, she has no idea why or where they're going. If she has no idea that they're leaving, then she needs to question what they're doing.

4. We should know that she's lost a daughter, and that she's heading toward an unknown. I'd keep that.

5. After the prologue, when you start with chapter 1, I think it should take place in the present (the present as it pertains to the book-assuming that the prologue takes place in the past). Any back story from that point forward should be interwoven into the story. Go right into what's happening now. Keeps the reader engaged.

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The Pile of Death

prologue - key