

The excerpt below is a composite of the kinds of errors that are typically found in a manuscript.

The same excerpt has been edited three times, beginning with the most basic, least intensive copyedit and ending with a substantive edit. These are the changes I would make; another editor would make different changes. Most times there is no one right way to copyedit a sentence.

Editing results will vary according to the state of the original manuscript. The more errors there are to begin with, the more likely it is that errors will be missed during editing.

The “style” in “spelling, punctuation, grammar, and style” refers to guidelines for handling numbers (when to spell out, etc.), commas (whether a comma is required for three or more items in a series, etc.), and the like.

Deleted text is marked with a ~~strike-through~~. Inserted text is marked with an underscore. Queries to the author, which are often inserted as comments, are inserted inline here so they can be easily viewed.

## Original (a made-up excerpt from a nonexistent manuscript)

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Before more than 15 minutes past the golden orb sank below the sky. The lanky student waving toward me with serious looks that appears more like glares to me.. The half-round section of light craweled along the stucco walls with ivy growling up them, the light came one. I wondered, “ Whats up Binky”?

He closed his mouth, not wanting to discuss any thing, because some thing was botheringhim.I follow behind him and enter his dorm after him. Making a shrill noise from a hinge that needs lubrication, I closed the door with a sliht bang.

With tan walls and a corkboard with divots on it slowly flaking away near the top, the steam from the microwave scratched the paint away. He bends over with his legs bent and pucks up a plastic grocery bag poking out with some thing inside. He was hardly able to state, “I have something to give you! “.

Surprising me with a gift he bought for me one month prior to my birthday, I smirk ,”Thank-you”.

## 1. Copyedit for spelling, punctuation, grammar, and style

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### Changes showing

Before more than ~~15~~fifteen minutes ~~past~~had passed the golden orb sank below the sky. The lanky student ~~waving~~waved toward me with serious looks that ~~appears~~appeared more like glares to me.- The half-round section- of light ~~craweled~~crawled along the ~~stueo~~stucco walls with ivy ~~growling~~growing up them as; the light came ~~one~~on.

I wondered, “-What’s up, Binky-?”

—He closed his mouth, not wanting to discuss ~~any thing~~anything; because ~~some things~~something was bothering him. I followed ed behind him and entered ed his dorm after him.

~~Making a shrill noise from a hinge that needs lubrication,~~ I closed the door with a ~~slit~~ slight bang and a shrill noise from a hinge that needed lubrication.

~~With~~ The room had tan walls and a corkboard with divots ~~—~~ on it slowly flaking away near the top, ~~the~~ The steam from the microwave ~~scratched~~ was wearing the paint away. He ~~bends~~ bent over with his legs bent and

~~pucks~~ picked up a plastic grocery bag poking out with ~~some things~~ something inside. He was hardly able to state, “I have something to give you!” ~~“~~.

~~Surprising me~~ Surprised with a gift he bought for me one month prior to my birthday, I smirked ~~,~~ “Thank ~~\_~~ you.” ~~”~~.

### Changes accepted

Before more than fifteen minutes had passed the golden orb sank below the sky. The lanky student waved toward me with serious looks that appeared more like glares to me. The half-round section of light crawled along the stucco walls with ivy growing up them as the light came on.

I wondered, “What’s up, Binky?”

He closed his mouth, not wanting to discuss anything because something was bothering him. I followed behind him and entered his dorm after him. I closed the door with a slight bang and a shrill noise from a hinge that needed lubrication.

The room had tan walls and a corkboard with divots on it slowly flaking away near the top. The steam from the microwave was wearing the paint away. He bent over with his legs bent and picked up a plastic grocery bag poking out with something inside. He was hardly able to state, “I have something to give you!”

Surprised with a gift he bought for me one month prior to my birthday, I smirked, “Thank you.”

## 2. Copyedit for spelling, punctuation, grammar, and style; query author regarding word usage and discrepancies in plot, setting, or character development

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### Changes showing

Before more than ~~15~~ fifteen minutes ~~past~~ had passed the golden orb sank below the sky. The lanky student ~~waving~~ waved toward me with serious looks that ~~appears~~ appeared more like

glares to me. [[AU: “Lanky student” sounds distant and not like something the viewpoint character would think. Also, this sentence might work better at the end of the paragraph.]] The half-round section- of light ~~crawled~~crawled along the ~~stueo~~-stucco walls with ivy ~~growing~~growing up them as; the light came ~~one~~on.

I wondered, “-What’s up, Binky-?” [[AU: Is “wonder” — to feel curiosity — the correct word? Is the viewpoint character thinking or speaking?]]

—He closed his mouth, not wanting to discuss ~~-any thing~~anything, because ~~some~~things~~something~~ was bothering him. [[AU: It sounds like his mouth is always open. Also, the viewpoint character can’t really know what he wants. OK to rephrase? “He kept his mouth closed, apparently bothered and not wanting to discuss anything.”]] I followed behind him and entered his dorm after him. ~~Making a shrill noise from a hinge that needs lubrucation~~, I closed the door with a ~~shht~~-slight bang and a shrill noise from a hinge that needed lubrication.

~~With~~-The room had tan walls and a corkboard with divots—— on it slowly flaking away near the top. [[AU: Unclear. What is flaking away, the divots only or the entire corkboard?]], ~~the~~ The steam from the microwave ~~seratched~~-was wearing the paint away. [[AU: Unclear what paint is being worn away.]]— He ~~bends~~-bent over with his legs bent and

~~pueks~~picked up a plastic grocery bag poking out with ~~some things~~something inside. [[AU: OK to rephrase? “He bent over and picked up a plastic grocery bag whose contents poked out.”]] He was hardly able to state, “I have something to give you.!” “-[[AU: How does the viewpoint character know he’s barely able to speak?]]

~~Surprising me~~Surprised with a gift he bought for me one month prior to my birthday, I smirked~~;~~ “-Thank -you-.” [[AU: Is “smirked” — to say or express in an affected or smug manner — the correct word? ]]

#### Queries answered by author and changes accepted

Before more than fifteen minutes had passed the golden orb sank below the sky. The half-round section of light crawled along the stucco walls with ivy growing up them as the light came on. The lanky student waved toward me with serious looks that appeared more like glares to me.

I asked, “What’s up, Binky?”

He kept his mouth closed, apparently bothered and not wanting to discuss anything. I followed and entered his dorm after him. I closed the door with a slight bang and a shrill noise from a hinge that needed lubrication.

The room had tan walls and a corkboard with divots on it slowly flaking away from the wall near the ceiling. The steam from the microwave was wearing the paint away on the shelf above it. He bent over and picked up a plastic grocery bag whose contents poked out. He was hardly able to state, because he had tears in his eyes, “I have something to give you.”

Surprised with a gift he bought for me one month prior to my birthday, I said, “Thank you.”

### 3. Copyedit plus substantive edit to remove passive voice, ambiguous references, awkward transitions, and wordiness

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#### Changes showing

~~Within~~~~Before more than 15~~ fifteen minutes ~~past,~~ the golden orb sank below the ~~sky~~horizon.  
~~The lanky student waving toward me with serious looks that appears more like glares to me.~~  
 The ~~half-round section of~~semicircular light ~~eraweled~~crawled along the ~~ivy-covered~~ ~~stueo~~ stucco walls ~~with ivy growing up them as;~~ the streetlight came ~~one~~on. He waved his lanky arm at me, his gaze so serious I thought at first he was glaring.

I ~~wondered~~asked, “-What’s up, Binky?”

~~—He didn’t speak, apparently bothered by something he didn’t want to discuss. He closed his mouth, not wanting to discuss any thing, because some thing was bothering him. I followed behind him and enter his dorm after him into the dorm. Making a shrill noise from a hinge that needs lubrueation,~~ I closed the door with a ~~slitt~~ slight bang and a shrill noise from an unoiiled hinge.

~~With~~ All four walls were painted a drab tan. ~~On one wall, tan walls and~~ a corkboard covered with divots ~~— on it slowly flaking away coming unglued~~ near the ~~top~~ceiling. A stand in front of another wall held a microwave. the ~~The the paint away~~ on the shelf above it had bubbled where steam rose from the microwave. ~~steam from the microwave scratched the paint away.~~ **[[AU: Are changes to room description accurate?]]**

He ~~bends~~ bent over ~~with his legs bent~~ and

~~pueks~~ picked up a plastic grocery bag ~~poking out with some thing inside~~ that bulged. ~~He was hardly able to state,~~ Choked with tears, he said, “I have something to- give you.!” **[[AU: OK?]]**

~~Surprising me~~ Surprised ~~with a gift he bought for me one month prior to~~ because my birthday was still a month away, I ~~smirksaid,~~ ,” “Thank -you.”

**Changes accepted**

Within fifteen minutes, the golden orb sank below the horizon. The semicircular light crawled along the ivy-covered stucco walls as the streetlight came on. He waved his lanky arm at me, his gaze so serious I thought at first he was glaring.

I asked, “What’s up, Binky?”

He didn’t speak, apparently bothered by something he didn’t want to discuss. I followed him into the dorm. I closed the door with a slight bang and a shrill noise from an unoiled hinge.

All four walls were painted a drab tan. On one wall, a corkboard covered with divots was coming unglued near the ceiling. A stand in front of another wall held a microwave. The paint on the shelf above it had bubbled where steam rose from the microwave.

He bent and picked up a plastic grocery bag that bulged. Choked with tears, he said, “I have something to give you.”

Surprised because my birthday was still a month away, I said, “Thank you.”