



Sample Proofread

"I highly recommend Blue Pen books for editing and proofreading your book! Victoria Griffin and her talented staff will bring out the very best in your story!"

— Anthea T. Piscarik

The Years In Between

The Miriam Chronicles, Book 2

Part I

In The Beginning

(1956)

Commented [C1]: Anthea,

I'm so glad I got the chance to work on your proofread, because THE YEARS IN BETWEEN will stick with me for a very long time. You've done wonderful work, from research to story-weaving.

Common corrections made include:

- Dialogue punctuation errors
- Missing commas
- Misspellings
- Unnecessary capitalization
- Errors in verb tense
- Formatting of movies, books, songs, albums, periodicals, and foreign words

All corrections have been made according to the *Chicago Manual of Style* and Merriam-Webster.

Chapter 1 – Hall Pass

Lori Hopkins heard the news from her grandmother. Her best friend, Joy, was found lifeless from a deadly tornado. The same one that killed Lori’s mom and dad.

“Why’d you wait to tell me?” Lori asked, her voice strained. “Why?” She pictured Joy with her corkscrew curls and apple cheeks bounding up the steps of the fallout shelter decorated for Christmas.

Lottie Mitchell’s hands rested on the steering wheel. She stared ahead for a minute and caught glimpses of students filing through Lubbock High’s multi-arched walkway. The majestic bell tower and red tile roof gave the impression of a church complex instead of school grounds. Slowly, Lottie turned toward her fourteen-year-old granddaughter. Strawberry blond hair, thick and wavy, framed a heart-shaped, lightly freckled face. Her refined features, upturned nose, hazel-colored eyes, all reminders of loss, the loss of her own daughter, Miriam Hopkins—Lori’s mom.

“You were in shock. The doctor said not to mention Joy’s death right away. Wait a few days.” Three weeks had passed since Lottie had arrived at the scene that devastated five ranch homes. In a heart-stopping moment, Lottie had believed she’d lost all of her family—her daughter, Miriam, her son-in-law, Tom, and Lori. Until she’d remembered Lori’s treasured hideaway and had raced down the stairs to find her asleep.

“But she said goodbye and went home,” Lori pleaded. From the car window, she stared down at a widened crack in the school’s cement sidewalk. Her thoughts turned back to that fateful day. December 18, 1955. Joy’s words echoed through her mind. *“It looks fab, Lori, really fab. Don’t stay down here too long...”*

Every day since, Lori had relived the carnage she’d witnessed when she’d emerged from the shelter. And there had been no word of Joy’s death. Until three days later.

Lottie lifted her hands from the steering wheel and crossed her arms. She repeated the story she’d retold in the last few weeks. “And your mom invited her to stay for dinner. I’m sorry, sweetheart.”

“You should’ve told me right away! You’re a coward!” Lori slammed the car door and made quick strides to the school’s front entrance, ignoring the stares and waves from the other students. *Joy is dead, Joy is dead. Joy is dead.* The silent words repeated and wrapped like

Commented [C2]: A trick to determining whether or not you need these commas is to ask how many **best friends**, for example, Lori has. We are going to assume she only has one, and because of that, Joy’s name here is additional information rather than clarifying information, because those familiar with Lori would know the best friend is Joy without being told.

On the flip side, if Lori mentioned **her friend** Joy, we would assume Joy isn’t her only friend, which means no commas, as the name would be clarifying information and vital in understanding the text.

tentacles, squeezing, suffocating her heart and soul. Even so, tears were beyond her, a lifetime of them spilled in the last three weeks.

The school counselor, Gladys Whitcomb, released Lori from a perfunctory meeting and a vital signs check from Annie, the school nurse.

“I can escort you to your homeroom, Lori,” Mrs. Whitcomb said.

“I’m okay,” Lori insisted.

“Well then, let me give you a hall pass.”

“Why do I need a pass? The bell didn’t ring.” Lori hugged her books. Her shield.

“It’s a special pass. You can use it to leave any of your classes today, this week. No one will question you.” Her voice quivered. “We’re here for you, Lori. If you feel an urge to leave, go and see Miss Annie.”

“Can I leave now? I’ll be late.” She left the counselor’s office, flooded with memories of Joy. The flash of a pink woolen skirt on the shelter stairs. The Star of David and chain against a white angora sweater. And the kindest eyes in all of Texas if not east of the Mississippi.

Lori clutched her textbooks stuffed with term papers and old homework assignments. The empty hallway widened until the walls disappeared. She felt faint, ready to collapse. Blood-pulsing sounds filled her eardrums, competing with distant, muffled voices from classrooms.

The final morning bell rang, sharp, loud, alarming. Lori’s books tumbled onto the floor. With no one in sight, she scrambled for her belongings and considered rushing out the nearest exit. Instead, she lumbered to her homeroom. Nothing seemed real, until she knocked on her homeroom door.

Mr. Dugan, her secret crush teacher, looked timeworn, less dreamy. He filled the threshold like a gatekeeper and tilted his head of receding blond hair. “Lori, did you get our card?”

She vaguely remembered the card filled with thirty signatures and well wishes of her classmates. “Yes, Mr. Dugan. Thank you.” The heat of embarrassment rose in her neck and cheeks.

He moved aside, and she entered the classroom. A white paper banner with brush-stroked blue letters, *Welcome Back Lori!* blocked double windows. A chorus of rising students echoed the sentiment. And the tears didn’t stream, though they hotly scorched her insides.

Commented [C3]: Not capped in this context per Merriam-Webster.

Commented [C4]: You have a few options here. As with anything, consistency is key. I generally recommend going with the gender-neutral adjective (no E) to ensure consistency, but you show a preference for the E spelling. In this case, the E should only be used in reference to female characters, as is the convention. I’ve corrected throughout.

Commented [C5]: A comma is needed before a coordinating conjunction that joins two independent clauses.

Commented [C6]: The formatting for “written” material is inconsistent across the manuscript. Double quotes, single quotes, double quotes + italics, and single quotes + italics are all used. Because of this, I am going to standardize the way I do for all of my line edit clients, which is simply going with italics only. This makes a nice differentiation between verbal dialogue and written material, especially when they appear in the same paragraph. The exception will be when the material is quoted from another source, such as the Bible. We’ll keep the quotes then.

Mr. Dugan gestured to an empty desk in the middle of the room.

Lori's eyes darted about as she avoided the direct stares of familiar faces. Her mouth trembled with attempts at a smile. She slid into the desk chair and folded her hands in her lap.

Jane Patterson, a tiny slip of a person with eyes like blue pools, sat behind Lori. She placed a hand on Lori's shoulder and whispered in her ear. "Hi, kiddo. Glad you're back."

Lori soldiered her sorrow, pasted a fake smile, and turned to Jane. "Thanks."

Mr. Dugan began his lesson. "In the years following World War II, Italy and the rest of Europe rebuilt its economy."

Lori cracked open a notebook and copied words from the chalkboard. *Peace Treaty of 1947. End of Fascism.* Each minute of lecturing seemed like an hour. She wanted to scream and rush out the door. Lori glanced halfway across the room at Joy's desk, now occupied by Gerald Wilkins. He slouched. Lori watched him, and he saluted her, as if recognizing a wounded warrior. *He understands.* Now fatherless, motherless, at least she wouldn't be friendless.

She copied more words and dates. All meaningless. A note made its way down a line of surreptitious hands. The last student, Abigail Jenkins, tossed it into the fold of Lori's notebook. No one turned to acknowledge the team effort. Lori stared at the creased paper and mustered up courage to open it. *Everything happens for a reason. You'll know why some day. Be strong. Gerald.*

Lori was incensed, wounded by Gerald's words. *I thought he understood! Is he making me the butt of a cruel joke?* Her parents dead. Her best friend dead. *For a reason?* Lori, dazed and humiliated, felt more alone in that moment than she had in the days following the storm.

The hell pass! She raised her hand.

Mr. Dugan was in mid-sentence. "Yes, Lori?"

"I'd like to be excused."

"Of course. Would you like someone to go with you?" Mr. Dugan's concern made Lori anxious.

"No, that's okay." She kept her tone light, but her cheeks burned with resentment from the note she clutched.

Lori gathered her books and quietly shut the door behind her. The hallway that had widened earlier closed in, the walls so narrow, she sensed herself pushing between them. *What is happening to me?* She rushed down the corridor and banged on the nurse's door.

Commented [C7]: One word.

Any words changed from two to one or vice versa are in accordance with Merriam-Webster.