



EMILY BROWN

PROFESSIONAL AND
TECHNICAL WRITER

Dear Alyssa,

Thank you for sharing your short story, “Working Hands” with me. Your story was simply wonderful, it highlighted the disconnect that some parents feel with their children if they choose a career path they don’t necessarily like. I enjoyed that the story was told from the perspective of the disappointed parent, most of the time you see these kinds of stories told from the child’s perspective which gets boring and trope-y after a while. Overall, Here are a list of the edits I’ve made:

- spelling,
- grammar,
- formatting mistakes,
- word choice,
- sentence structure,
- narrative description vs. internal and external dialogue, and
- the ending.

As for the surface level edits, there were a few spelling errors that you will see in my track changes. There were a few grammatical errors that you’ll also find in my track changes. You listed a few different newspaper publications and, according to *Words into Type*, they should be italicized—check page 140 for more details.

There was a bit of an issue with word choice in your manuscript. At the beginning, you used the phrase “digitized flip clock”, which left me confused. Did you mean a flip phone or something else? Some clarification here would be great because I felt that the word usage was a little too high-brow for the kind of character Earnest is. Another word change I wanted to make was when Earnest didn’t know what an Americano is and, speaking as a barista, I offered a few different suggestions for drinks most customers need explanations on—most people know what Americanos are. The last issue I had with your word choice was during your coffee scene. You used words/phrases like: “beverage of choice”, “chalice”, and “his chosen supplier of coffee”. While this is not necessarily bad, I just think that it’s not realistic word choice and that simplifying the words down to “dark roast”, “cup”, and “vending machine” like I suggested in my edits, would make the narrative voice flow more easily and sound more realistic.

Next, I would like to talk about the issues with your sentence structure. One sentence I felt needed rewording, was when you were describing the Starbucks logo. I felt that the original language you used was over-complicating the vagueness you wanted to be with the description, so I just simplified it a little. Everyone knows what the Starbucks logo looks like, so the vague language you used originally was only adding to the complexity of your wording and not much else. The next sentence I took issue with was because I felt it wasn't realistic; when you mentioned Earnest's grey hairs turning more white at the thought of his son's profession. By saying "he thought he could feel his grey hairs turning more stark white" sounds more realistic than your original description. The last sentence I urge you to consider revising was this: "He had to his father that Wheaton was a town with memories he'd much rather forget." What does this mean? Are you saying that Ben wanted to forget his father all together? I cannot make much suggestion for rewording until I know the intent of this sentence.

Let's move onto the narrative descriptions of your story. While they are done very well and they reveal to us many things about your character, I think it would be interesting if we could get inside his head a little more. He is clearly a very smart man, and smart people tend to talk to themselves. I think that adding a little internal/external dialogue would add another layer to this story that you haven't yet explored. For instance, you could have Earnest talking disgruntled to himself about Hillary Clinton's book and that she should be in prison by now (he seems like a republican). You could also have him thinking to himself about how much he loves his dark brew, even though it reminded him of the time Ben said he'd never take over the family business over coffee one morning. I think that you do a really good job of telling us who Walt is, but I think it would be more beneficial for you to *show* us who he is. I don't think this story lacks detail in any way, I would just like to see Walt interact with more people and/or with himself so that we can see how disgruntled he is by the liberal newspapers and things like that. The conversation he had with Kole was great, it humanized a very unlikeable character and made us sympathize a little with him. I know we are not supposed to really be "rooting for" or liking Walt's character, but I think that one or two more interactions like those could really add something more to your story here.


The last suggestion I have for you, which is really actually a question, is this: was that the whole story? The ending left me wanting more. If that is the ending, I *do* think works as is but I wanted to see Ben and Earnest's reconciliation. Or perhaps, maybe a little more of a nudge in the direction of a reconciliation. I think right now, it works and you can see that it is heading in that route but I think it could use just a little *more*. I like the vagueness because you are allowed to create your own ending to the story, but I want to know how *you* think it ends. I would almost

want to see you create a nod in the direction you personally want the story to go in, because I think the story would do better to end on a more conclusive, open ended ending.

I hope you take these edits into consideration and that we can work on this together more. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at any time via email, emilybrown2@svsu.edu, phone, 989.714.8287, or in person.

Sincerely,

Emily Brown



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