As she stared at the motionless body before her Claire Ricrant took a seat. When she was younger Claire’s father gave her some advice that she now began turning over in her mind. “The worst feeling in the world,” he had said, looking down at through his glasses, “is when something you love lets you down. When it stops being what it was originally and becomes something you hate. The problem is that now you have a gaping hole where that thing used to be. You’ll come realize that you have to let go of your beloved as you remember it so that you can deal with the malformed and twisted remains of what it has become.” Claire hoped to God that that wasn’t true.

There was something remarkable and almost funny about the events of that day. It was remarkable partially insofar that she’d managed to get herself thrown through a pane of glass and flatten two wooden trestles in the landing but mostly because that was not the worst part of her day. In hindsight she wouldn’t even place it second on the list but she was getting ahead of herself. She should go back to the beginning.

The day had started out normally enough for Claire. Her sister had barged into her room and dragged her out of bed before going on an epically long rant during which Claire managed to take in the words ‘noon’, ‘company’ and ‘dinner’ through her hangover. Though that was all she needed to understand the situation. Nicole was always melodramatic when it came to other people visiting them so the lecture wasn’t out of place. As her sister left the room Claire heard her sister say the first truly valid thing of the day “You smell like a dumpster. Take a shower.”

After peeling her sister’s dress from her body and taking a shower, Claire scrounged herself up some toothpaste and a comb. At least she was hygienic now. Mom would be proud. She may have to burn the dress, though. Dad wouldn’t be. To her great surprise Claire had actually managed to get some serious studying done for a few hours before their company turned up and with it, the end of her peace.

[Insert love of self/ sister conflict here – need to establish and drive home Claire’s narcissism here]

The thing to understand, Claire had mused as the doorbell rang, about Nicole’s friends was that they were mostly hipster wannabe artists who had sticks shoved precisely one-inch too far up their asses. Okay, maybe that one was blatant but it was still true. She was required by familial law to love her sibling but not the idiots that her sibling associated with.

**[So where is the conflict between Claire and Nicole? And what happened to the company that arrived – Claire and Nikki get into a massive argument but over what?]**

The first thing that came back to her, when she recounted her tale to the police, was the ceiling, the sight of the vertical lines running parallel to one another transfixed her gaze. She remembered thinking that their depth was changing as she scanned from one side of the room to the other. “Elevated” she said under her breath. The ceiling was elevated from right to left. If she drew a horizontal line from the one side then she’d get a quasi-triangle when she hit the other one. She didn’t remember what broke her reverie but once she moved, the broken glass alerted her to the gravity of the situation.

The second thing Claire remembered was the pain. Once it hit her, it hit her like a train determined to split her head open. She could feel the blood oozing from the back of her skull, gluing her hair together in a God-awful, sticky amalgam of crimson and mahogany. Running a hand through her mane she felt the broken glass tricking out and onto the floor. The next thing that came back to her was what Claire defined as the second worst part of her day. She'd been handed an ass-kicking of note and had had Nicole thrown at her before they both went through the glass table. Once again the remarkability was found when the events were placed in context. As Claire regained her focus, she came to realize that she was the only one in the room.

**[Heavy handed – need to show the readers that Claire is remorseful, not tell them]**

If the eyes were the window to the soul then Claire wondered what kind of abyss she’d be staring into when she found the sad sack of humanity that had done this them both. She wondered what the hell Nicole had ever done to deserve meeting him. Claire knew she was a bitch, but her sister wasn’t. It made her angry just to think about. She sat up, trying not to pass out again, and made her way out of the room.

Claire remembered being both indignant and offended when she rounded the corner and saw him. She remembered thinking that the man was a caricature. A human grizzly bear, hyped up on something and tripping balls on something else. She had been about to raise her voice at him when her mind had snapped to attention and her fist unclenched. She knew this man. She didn’t know how he had found her or where he was from but Claire knew that she had met this man before. She knew that his being here could only be because of her. As if to answer her question he spoke for the first time “Nice place you got here sweet lips.” before crossing the room towards her.

Claire stared at the intruder in their house and felt the weight of the world crashing down on her shoulders. She remembered that she had stared at him as she’d opened the door that evening. He’d clocked her straight after saying “Pizza” but for those two seconds she’d been bemused. Who was she kidding? She hadn’t been paying him any attention, she’d been too busy arguing with her sister. She’d absent mindedly given him half a chance through her negligence and now Nikki was paying for it. Her reaction to him had been somewhere between horror and flat-out rage. When she saw what he had done to her sister, however, Claire truly lost it. She threw herself at him, hoping to take out an eye or something.

Claire remembered waking up for a second time to find Nicole strewn across the couch, an open gash on her head dripping blood into a puddle. That led her to the worst part, the fact that this was all her fault. The fact that her only sister lay beaten and bloodied because of some guy Claire had probably met when she was drunk. She sat up a second time and reached for a phone.

With respect to her father, the worst feeling in the world was the realization that Claire had truly failed someone she loved. She realized that now there was a hole where Nicole’s trust and faith in her used to be. Ultimately, she had to accept that there is nothing in the world that she could do to change what she had done.

Looking up at the clock on the hospital wall, Claire saw the minute hand crawl past twelve. “Thank God” she said out loud before taking her sister’s hand and preparing for the rest of the night. She didn’t know what her sister would say when she woke but Claire just gripped Nikki’s hand tighter and hoped that there would be at least one opportunity to say that she loved her.

**Paul Cupido**

*Notes*

Claire’s arc should be one where she places the love for her sister over the love she has for herself and her own exploits. Need to show her relationship with her sister and show that they do actually love each other. The plot: Nikki needs to be missing when Claire wakes up, sending the latter into a panic about where she may be. What happens when the company comes over? There is a fall out between the two straight afterwards which leads to a screaming match.

Maybe want to refactor the opening to be more in line with the Great Gatsby. I could also change the ending to be more in line with the ending of that book as well.

Claire should know the person who attacks the house and robs them blind – gives out her home address stupidly. There needs to be a falling out between Claire and Nicole, possibly surrounding the party that Claire went to last night or the contempt that Claire has for anything that doesn’t relate to her interests.