

To: [REDACTED]  
From: [REDACTED], Andrea Mantke, [REDACTED]  
Re: Developmental Editing Plan for *Blood & Cake* Manuscript  
Date: December 14, 2022

Dear Sheila:

Our team has enjoyed reading your enthralling manuscript, *Blood and Cake*, and getting to follow along with your unique journey through womanhood in a misogynistic society. As an all-women team of editors, we identified with the range of life experiences you spoke about in your narratives and reflections. A significant portion of your manuscript is about your college years, a part of life in which we are currently navigating. We felt that this connection helped us to further relate to you as an author. The manuscript's honesty, with its balance of tragedy and delightfulness is captivating. This draft of *Blood and Cake* has incredible potential, and we feel so fortunate to have had the chance to work with it.

### Content Summary

In this section, we will be summarizing the different chapters or essays of *Blood and Cake* to give a sense of how each one fits into the greater context of the manuscript so far. We hope that by doing so, you can better understand the basis for our suggestions for your manuscript.

## **Blood and Cake**

### **Part I**

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#### **28. Well-Lit Family Establishments**

The chapter begins with a comment on Nick's wardrobe – all black clothing and combat boots — and his limited food preferences. Sheila acquiesces to his requests and tantrums, as presented in the following section of Nick making a scene at a restaurant and the immediate aftermath.

#### **29. Rage Rhymes with Rave**

Sheila writes about the tension and paranoia she felt while Nick was elsewhere as she awaits her return, followed by a scene of a time where Nick crossed her boundaries and she broke down in physical violence, earning his concern for once. Finally, it ends with a brief note on rage and a scene of her trying to sleep, but kept awake by a sound she hadn't realized came from inside her house.

### **30. The Indigo Girls**

Sheila is hired by Patty and Renata, a strong lesbian couple, to babysit their children. There is a time skip, where she's picking up their kid after being left by Nick. It's briefly interrupted by another scene when her mother finds out Nick left because she didn't RSVP a wedding. Back in the scene where she's picking up the children, she draws Pooh for their son, Ben, and feels cared for them as though she were family. Finally, the section ends in 1993, with comments on strong and empowering female voices.

### **31. Happy Pants**

Here, Sheila begins with her catastrophic feelings around her 25th birthday, meeting Sam and Trish to celebrate with Bagels and earning the nickname "happy pants". A short piece on her sister giving birth, and her own desire to have children, a realization she could possibly adopt. This concludes with her feeling included in the family of Patty and Renata, being called a "Third Mother", and her perspective on family changing.

### **32. The Difference Between Fiction and Nonfiction**

This section begins with the author's relationship with fiction and non-fiction and introduces her relationship with Will, followed by her non-fiction class and her stunted relationships in it because of Nick. There is a brief note on Wayne being a great writer, then a longer scene of a sexual encounter with Will followed by her peeing in public, and feeling generally empowered by the evening. Next, a section on two poetry reading experiences, a thrilling sexual experience with another woman, and the author reminiscing and reflecting on her journal. This section is mostly tied together by themes of finding truth and the author slowly growing to be more honest with themselves.

### **33. His Angel**

Sheila and Nick go to a New Year's party, despite her being sick. Here, she meets a woman she suspects Nick is cheating with, who later insists she's too sick to be there, and pushes Nick to take her home and care for her.

### **34. Shift**

The section begins with a description of the type of work Sheila does at the cafe she works at; there's a mention she's separated from Nick, and that she finds the mundanity of the job life saving through her difficulties. There's a jump back to when she started working at the cafe, and how her relationship with Nick was changing back then: the end of her first night shift and of her intimacy with him. The job gets easier, her home life doesn't. Sheila spends Christmas with Nick's family. Soon after, he calls while she's at work, and she realizes he's leaving her.

### **35. Shitty Things I've Said or Done to Myself**

Poem, encompassed by the title.

### **36. Fuck You, Snow Drops**

Sheila goes to Easter at Nick's family, after being separated. A scene of Eddy breaking Nick's mom's windshield with a punch. Nick asks for a divorce, and she goes home and cries.

### **37. Sustenance**

Sheila meets with long time friends Harry and Beth to have French Toast. She remembers giving him advice in 10th grade, when they first got together, that he should get her pink roses. Then, a brief scene of when they gave her money to go back to grad school in a white envelope. Finally, back to the present moment, they take care of her.

### **38. Hale Bopp**

The section begins with Sheila's experience after Nick has left, deep in depression. They have goodbye sex on valentines day. She goes to AWP, where she runs into Aaron (ex from earlier section). She mentions reading a poem about selling her diamond ring, includes a scene about the event, and is approached with an offer to publish the poem.

### **39. A Kiss**

Sheila reflects on small kindnesses people show her after Nick leaves, a coworker leaves kisses for her, a friend brings in her groceries for her. Later on, she includes a section thinking back on her childhood, the way her father treated her mom, and an event of someone standing up for her mom after her father and sister complain about the food, "Corn's not brown!". Nick refuses to serve her divorce papers, he says he likes feeling "haunted by [them]" and Patty and Renata tell her not to lease an apartment yet, they tell her to come home.

### **40. Home: A Series**

Three poems with themes of home—spaces where things happened in her previous house, moving out, and moving into her own space.

### **41. Quintessential Me**

Recounting two terrible experiences with men, with the framing of who she doesn't picture when thinking of "smashing the patriarchy"—a professor who had young girls on display and asked her classmates to discuss her, teaching them the word "Quintessential" and another asking inappropriate sexual questions during an exercise called "Public Interview".

## 42. The Lottery

Sheila and Nick meet at a TGIF's to go over divorce papers. This is followed by a scene of her trying to sell the furniture of their old home together. Then, a shift back to TGIF's, Nick states he doesn't know why they have to get a divorce. She goes to court to get a name change, the judge rejects her request, and follows her out to lecture her, calling her "young lady", when she gets her papers back, finds out Nick had signed them with the anarchy symbol. Finally, she's at an Irish pub having a pint with a friend, and realizes she's making memories at places she'd never been with Nick. She has her name back.

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### Working Thesis/Central Narrative

We identified a few possible main arguments in your current draft, and any of these could serve as the main thesis or throughline of the book

- Personal reflection: Personal perception and growth forming a narrative arc without a theoretical frame.
- Misogyny: themes of misogyny, both internalized and externalized, experienced from childhood to after the divorce. What you, as the narrator, and women in general, learn as children and in early adulthood that makes it difficult to acknowledge, therefore resist and heal pain and hardships, especially in relation to men.
- Relationship: Sheila and Nick's relationship; how they are drawn together, change one another, and, eventually, break apart.

While all these pieces are working together in the manuscript, honing one thesis will help polish the manuscript into a more cohesive piece which highlights what readers will be drawn to the most. Option 1 would be our strongest recommendation for this reason, as featuring your own experiences and voice in this manuscript, while allowing it to truly fall into a memoir genre, would highlight the strengths of this narrative the most. Option 2 would include more of the social consciousness angle you were initially creating, without relying on a theoretical framework that a feminist argument would require. Option 3 would bring sharpness and focus into the main core of the experiences behind your manuscript.

### Working Title

The current working titles, *Blood & Cake*, *The Making of a Late Feminist* and *Finally Feminist*, *How my Life Changed my Mind* imply the feminist framing that isn't as strong as other subjects and themes included in the manuscript. If this is to become a memoir, with the heavy themes of misogyny currently present, some possible titles could be:

- *Masculine Rage, Feminine Ache*
- *Playing the Pleaser: my Life as a Woman*

- *Female (derogatory): a Woman in the World of Misogyny*

While these are suggestions, a title more reflective of your experience or the misogyny contained in the manuscript is likely to be more effective and accurate. The title we feel strongest about, *Masculine Rage, Feminine Ache*, encompasses the themes of misogyny and ties in the personal struggles and pain presented in the manuscript.

## Revised Contents

### *Masculine Rage, Feminine Ache*

- |                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| A. Prologue: Blood & Cake   |   |
| I. Before, Girl             |   |
| 1. On Defense               | - combination of first two chapters               |
| 2. Boys Before Nick         | - a combination of chap 3, 4, and 7               |
| 3. On Offense               | - A combination of 9, 8, 13, 14                   |
| 4. Dear Dad                 | - A combination of chapters 10,11,12,15           |
| 5. Corn's not Brown         | - from A Kiss (Mother's cooking)                  |
| 6. Pink Roses               | - from Sustenance (advice for friends to date)    |
| 7. Quintessential           | - from Quintessential Me                          |
| 8. Public Interview         | - from Quintessential Me                          |
| 9. I Learn I am...          | - from "I learn I am..." and Just Beautiful       |
| 10. My Hero                 |   |
| 11. Thanksgiving 1991       | - From boys on the Side                           |
| 12. Lies                    |   |
| 13. Sunflowers              |   |
| 14. Proposal                | -Combine "Immediate..." + "How to propose"        |
| II. During, Wife            |   |
| 15. Day of Ill Omen         |   |
| 16. The Murder Bed          |   |
| 17. A Diamond Lasts Forever |   |
| 18. Combat Boots            | - retitled Well-lit Family establishments         |
| 19. Rave and Rage           | - retitled Rage Rhymes with Rave                  |
| 20. Strong Couple           | - from Indigo Girls (meeting Patty and Renata)    |
| 21. White Envelope          | - from Sustenance (gets money for grad school)    |
| 22. Fiction and Nonfiction  | - at grad school (empowering experiences & truth) |
| 23. Holiday Grace           | - from His Angel (last new years + Christmas)     |
| 24. Night Shift             | - from Shift (realizes he's leaving)              |
| III. After, Left Behind     |   |
| 25. Mundane Motions         | - from Shift (coping through work)                |
| 26. Draw Pooh               | - from Indigo Girls (Picking up Ben)              |
| 27. Brittle Easter          | - from Fuck You, Snow Drops (fight with Nick)     |
| 28. RSVP                    | - from Indigo Girls (Mom finds out about Nick)    |

29. Valentine's Sex	- from Hale Bopp (Sex w/ Nick after breakup)
30. Pawn Shop	- from Hale Bopp (Selling wedding ring)
31. Haunted House	- from A Kiss (Trying to get a divorce)
32. Conference Encounters	- from Hale Bopp (AWP meetings)
33. A Kiss	
34. French Toast	- from Sustenance (friends care for her)
35. Family Establishment	- from the Lottery (meeting for signature papers)
36. Young Lady	- from the Lottery (trying for a divorce)
37. Third Mother	- from Happy Pants (being included into family)
38. Perfect Pint	- from the Lottery (experiences without Nick)

### Itemized Structural Issues

This draft follows a lot of tangential thoughts and, at times, makes drastic jumps between past, present, and future moments.

#### **1. Consider making chronological changes**

*Indigo Girls* is currently placed before Nick leaves Sheila, and goes through the introducing Patty & Renata after the narrator is hired by them; picking up their child, Ben, from school after Nick has already left; Sheila's mother finding out Nick has left; back to the same day, a different moment after Sheila picks Ben up; a note on Renata's love for The Indigo Girls and meeting them in 1995; and finding joy in disorder of music in 1993.

#### **2. Consider shifting to a 3-part memoir format**

As you can see in our revised table of contents, we suggested separating the manuscript into three parts: before your marriage, during your marriage, and after your marriage. This will require fitting narratives within these three time frames. The central narrative of the piece, your relationship with Nick and its effects, will therefore be more distinguishable as the main insight.

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### Conclusion

All in all, we are very invested in this manuscript and in its ability to prosper. Your writing style is down to earth and relatable but also holds wisdom and wit to it that no one other than you can give it. We can't wait to see how this manuscript will evolve throughout its development.

We hope that this document has helped guide you to solidify your manuscript into published material that you find satisfactory. Thank you so much for giving us the opportunity to read over your work.

Sincerely,  
Your GVSU Developmental Editing Team