

Flameover

I shake my hands out, trying to get rid of the burning sensation creeping up from ~~the~~my fingertips.

Aunt Callisto is still frowning at the worn yellow bag placed on her entrance table, visible from the position she took on her living-room couch.

I sit in ~~the only~~a chair where I can't see the glowing embers leaving the master bedroom.

She taps her nail against the bleach-~~ed~~ white arm rest, the rest of her so still and warm, it could almost be the scene of a painting. Her_; staring pensively towards something just out of view, ~~her~~ eyebrows furrowed down, ~~her~~ lips pursed tightly and, nearly hidden by the fingers of her hand as she leans away from ~~her viewers~~the viewer. Something ages her in this picturethere, drags ~~down~~ her shoulders down and steals her vitality.

~~-~~Probably the smoke darkening the sunrise outside her window.

"You should get a new backpack," she starts, finally turning back towards me.

The burns against my knuckles are already tight and blistering. Something hisses and crackles just outside of ~~view~~my vision. The TV plays late-~~night~~ cartoons on low. The smell of lavender is being replaced by melted polyester fumes.

"You've had that one for_; - what? N-~~n~~ine years now?"

"Fourteen," I correct apathetically. Smoke ~~clogs~~starts to clog the back of my throat as it creeps into the room.

Callisto's face loses its ~~sharp quality~~sharpness as the heat waves in the air between us.

"Fourteen years is a long time to hold onto things."

"It isn't that heavy," I lie, ands ash coats my tongue.

Commented [SW1]: I had to look up this term, and while microsoft doesn't recognize it, google does. Unfortunately, it is a very uncommon term, and likely to go unrecognized by your readers.

You might be able to get around this if you plant a few timely hints in the text as to what flameover or rollover is. After looking it up, I am doubly in love with how it fits with the theme and tone of the story, and would really like to keep it. However, as is, it might actually detract from the amount of consideration you've obviously put into this.

try using phraseology to slide an unconscious hint into the reader's mind. Use the word "phenomenon/phenomena", have the word "flame" close to the word "overhead" somewhere when describing its position. Describe the flame as rolling over or across the ceiling, not just the smoke

Commented [SW2]: if bag is worn: "worn, yellow bag"
if yellow is worn: "worn-yellow bag"

Commented [SW3]: rephrase: scenes are large paintings with more going on in background or area than just focus on a person. Implies movement or multiple complex elements. A portrait is for people.

maybe try, "the rest of her so still and warm that she almost resembles a renaissance portrait."

Commented [SW4]: think of adding some sort of cue here for the reader that signifies us stepping back out of the idea of a painting.

like, "she starts, breaking the illusion as she finally turns back towards me."

or: She finally turns back towards me, breaking her image of stillness. "You should get a new backpack."

Commented [SW5]: shows passive voice, also, fumes don't melt, so we'll need a change in sentence structure or wordage here.

suggestion: "The smell of lavender is overcome by that of smoldering polyester."

Callisto leans against the melting couch₅ I can hear her agitation as she talks₅ “Don’t you want to let it go now? Move on_—”

“I tried,” I whisper through the smoke. My eyes focus ~~towards~~on the open door₄ where a boy₇ no older than two screams just outside its boundary. “Every time I think I’m done with it, something happens.”

Wood cracks and splits, crashing into fire as it crumbles apart. The heat of the room behind me is near_{ly} unbearable at this point. I unclench my hands ~~and~~to trap them under my knees.

~~One ankle gets hooked~~I hook one ankle around the foot of the chair and brace it, refusing to look behind me as the entrance to the master bedroom is set ablaze, moments away from trapping the ~~sleeping children~~the rest of the children that sleep inside.

“It’s unhealthy to keep holding onto that bag₅” Her tone is condescending_— the same ~~voice-kind~~ used ~~on children to tell them to tell children~~ why they can’t take their favorite stuffed toy to school. “You have to let go.”

“I can’t leave it behind₅” The words mixed with embers and ash ~~o~~in the room. “It won’t leave me.”

Callisto ~~just~~simply sighs as her skin starts to smoke, “It isn’t a part of you, you know.”

I turn my eyes to the burned window frame behind ~~Callisto~~her, who still sits in still sitting picture_—perfect ~~pose~~ as fire starts rolling across her home’s ceiling. The boy’s screams are soon matched by five more. Two sets of children’s feet run ~~for~~through the abandoned neighbor’s yard calling for help that won’t come in time, while the dad shakes the last ~~one-sleeper~~ awake_— ignoring his own debilitating burns.

Commented [SW6]: confused about what you mean. is this past the door inside the room, or is there a physical/visual boundary (like aura or forcefield)? simple edit: “screams just beyond its frame.” (being the frame of the open door).

Commented [SW7]: crashing through fire surging with flame falling into fire

Commented [SW8]: alliteration protocol complete 😊

Commented [SW9]: this sentence needs to be broken up. It’s a bit complicated, one issue being that feet don’t call for help.

Commented [SW10R9]: erasing the word “calling” fixes most of the issue

~~Outside the window, clothed in a charred purple nightgown covered in soot and who had forced her way out through the white flames and collapsed doors, is an eleven-year-old.~~

~~Outside the window stands an eleven-year old, clothed in soot and char and a purple nightgown, having forced her way through the white flames and collapsing doors.~~

Her hands, blistering and bubbling from where she pulled herself out of the flames, wrap tightly around a brand-new, yellow back-pack, which had accidentally been left outside earlier that night.

She watches through the window as I burn away inside the house.

Callisto talks of grief and acceptance.

I watch fire dance on the ceiling.

Commented [SW11]: can't say that it's shorter, but this makes more grammatical sense. If you can, break it down into two or three separate sentences.

Commented [SW12]: IMPORTANT CONTINUITY ISSUE: burns actually take a bit of time before they start to bubble, if I'm correct. something like an hour at least. I would double check this online or change it to say that it is "already starting to blister and bubble"
The MC's scars/bubbles are fine, obviously