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DEVELOPMENTAL EDITING

The Skerrow Race

Recommendations for your revision

MANUSCRIPT VERSION	2
EVALUATION DATE	17 November 2026

> *The novel in this sample is a test text we prepared with AI, so we could show the report without publishing an author's manuscript. The report is the service's own output, unedited.*

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Overall diagnosis

- The Skerrow Race has a strong investigative spine because discoveries repeatedly change what Tess can establish and what she must do next. Her professional respect for Callum makes the inquiry credible, while her return to Skerrow exposes relationships and memories that give the practical investigation emotional consequence. Kirsty's increasingly active support and Firth's evidence-led involvement are especially persuasive: neither requires a wholesale abandonment of the concerns that initially put them at odds with Tess. These progressions give the novel a durable foundation and argue for a focused developmental revision rather than a broad restructuring.

- The first priority is to reconcile the fog-bound dive with the account that alerts Tidewright, since that contradiction sits inside an otherwise legible chain of escalation. The largest dramatic intervention, however, belongs at the transition from Chapter 15 – Down the Line to Chapter 16 – Afterwards, where the recovery's outcome replaces the reader's experience of its execution. The book has already supplied the equipment, physical limits, personal promises, and evidentiary stakes needed to make this sequence matter. Extending it through a consequential choice, retrieval, and safe return would allow the climax to deliver on those preparations without requiring heightened spectacle or explanatory reflection.

- The remaining work concerns the connection between established pressures and their particular human consequences. Callum's instruction to yield slack water explains his delay, but a contemporaneous trace of his reasoning would better connect that pressure to his eventual entry; similarly, Tidewright's financial setback needs a modest, visible counterpart in Skerrow's working life. Leask's photographs would benefit from a brief return within the evidence handover so that their independent corroborating value receives its due. Across these revisions, the most productive approach is selective dramatization: give the reader the decision, action, or encounter that is currently being carried mainly by surrounding context, while retaining the restraint that makes the sisters' reconciliation and Tess's final homecoming effective.

Executive Summary - Recommendations

P1 START HERE

Tidewright's knowledge of the first dive needs a credible route through the fog.

The most consequential continuity problem connects Tess's concealed first dive to Tidewright's attempt to reach the camera. In Chapter 8 – Slack Water, dense haar helps conceal the operation at T4. In Chapter 11 – Harbour Lights, however, Gordie's report depends on uninterrupted observation from the pier, and Neil accepts that account without a clearing or deception being established. The discrepancy matters beyond the immediate exchange because the company's knowledge creates the threat that drives Chapter 12 – The Workboat. Readers need to understand how Tidewright could identify the dive and infer that something worth recovering remained underwater. This is a definite continuity correction, although the choice of information route remains an authorial decision. Establish either an observation opportunity compatible with the weather or another credible means by which the relevant information reaches Lyle. If a clearing permits observation, reconcile it with Neil's belief that the fog concealed them. Preserve the existing escalation: the aim is to make the threat follow convincingly from Tess's actions, not to reduce its urgency.

P2 NEXT

The final camera recovery needs the dramatic space its preparation earns.

The manuscript prepares a demanding underwater recovery, then moves from Tess's descent in Chapter 15 – Down the Line to the successful outcome presented through the inquiry in Chapter 16 – Afterwards. The reader therefore experiences the commitment to the task but not its decisive execution or Tess's safe return. This is a concentrated gap at the climax with roots across several chapters of preparation. The inaccessible camera in Chapter 8 – Slack Water, the equipment work in Chapter 9 – Springs, and the promises surrounding Chapter 14 – The Cairn all build anticipation for this particular test. The descent itself carries emotional weight, and the final skerry scene gives Tess's changed relationship with the water a visible expression. Neither fully substitutes for experiencing the recovery that joins the investigation to her personal risk. The strongest revision would extend the dive through retrieval and return, giving Tess a consequential choice within the established access, equipment, current, and time constraints. Let her handling of those constraints carry the emotional movement rather than adding an explanation of what the dive means. Chapter 8 already offers a useful model for balancing precise physical danger with enough space for a discovery to register.

P2 NEXT

Callum's delay is explained more fully than his decision to enter the water.

The investigation does establish why Callum misses his planned slack: the instruction uncovered in Chapter 5 – The Caravan gives the Skua priority. Employer pressure and his determination to document T4 also provide substantial reasons for his persistence. The

remaining concern is narrower than an unexplained delay or an absence of motive. Against the professional caution Tess invokes from Chapter 1 – The Night Boat onward, his decision to enter eighty-eight minutes after planned slack needs a more tangible connection to his own assessment at that moment. That distinction matters because the central tragedy rests on both the company's working arrangements and the conduct of a diver the book presents as competent. The later account in Chapter 16 – Afterwards establishes responsibility, but it does not fully supply the reader's missing access to Callum's particular calculation. Consider adding a contemporaneous message, exchange, or recorded action that connects the instruction and pressure to the dive he actually undertakes. If he believes a brief inspection is still manageable, make the basis of that belief concrete without asserting that he knowingly crosses an established abort threshold. The purpose is to deepen the credibility of his decision while preserving the employer's responsibility, not to transfer blame to Callum.

P3 THEN

The island's economic stakes need a visible place in the aftermath.

Skerrow's dependence on Tidewright is an active source of conflict from Chapter 1 – The Night Boat through Chapter 3 – Tidewright and Chapter 9 – Springs. Kirsty's concerns have material weight because the company's support reaches into the family café and the wider community. Chapter 16 – Afterwards gives Tidewright a concrete institutional and financial outcome through the withdrawn refinancing, postponed expansion, and continuing scrutiny. What remains more abstract is how island life accommodates those developments. Postponement of the second phase does not itself establish that existing jobs have disappeared, and the ending should not imply a collapse the story has not established. Nevertheless, the earlier pressure on Tess and Kirsty creates an expectation of some observable local consequence or continuity. Consider a brief encounter during Tess's October return that lets work, business, or her reception on the island register the aftermath. Kirsty's café is an established setting where such a moment could sit alongside the family resolution without requiring a separate explanatory scene. A concrete interaction would give the community strand proportionate closure while preserving the ending's restraint and allowing uncertainty about Skerrow's future to remain.

P3 THEN

Leask's photographs need a clearer final role in the evidence chain.

Chapter 10 – The Holm gives Leask's time-lapse photographs a substantial discovery scene and emphasizes their independent preservation. The signed sequence promises corroboration of the Skua's presence at T4 during slack water. Its contribution then drops out of the handover and inquiry summaries in Chapter 13 – Neap Tide and Chapter 16 – Afterwards. The workboat timeline does reach an outcome through other evidence, so the investigation is not left without an answer on that point. The narrower problem is that this particular evidentiary preparation receives less completion than its narrative emphasis invites. Readers have been asked to retain both the images and the care taken to preserve them, making their later absence noticeable. Consider carrying the signed sequence into the evidence handover and briefly identifying what it corroborates. This need not expand the inquiry into another substantial scene or make the

photographs decisive when their value is supporting evidence. The key-to-locker payoff in Chapter 8 – Slack Water provides the manuscript's own standard: a prepared clue becomes most satisfying when the reader can see what it enables the investigation to establish.

Preserve the action-led relationships and evidence-driven escalation that already hold the novel together.

The manuscript's strongest structural asset is its ability to make personal loyalty and investigative credibility develop through consequential actions. Tess's return in Chapter 1 – The Night Boat combines grief and guilt with professional knowledge, giving her challenge to the account of Callum's death more substance than personal conviction alone. Kirsty's movement from economically grounded caution to sheltering Anya in Chapter 11 – Harbour Lights and sharing the visit in Chapter 14 – The Cairn gives the sisters' renewed closeness a persuasive progression. Her fears and material dependence do not need to disappear for her support to become more open. Firth's development from skepticism in Chapter 4 – Sergeant Firth to supervised recovery in Chapter 15 – Down the Line likewise follows evidence while retaining his concern for safety and proper handling. These distributed arcs prevent either reconciliation or official involvement from feeling like a convenient reversal. At the scene level, Chapter 8 – Slack Water combines a physically constrained dive with the B7 locker discovery, allowing danger and documentary progress to reinforce one another. Preserve that alternation of pressure and breathing space as the final recovery is expanded. The revision should complete under-realized decisions and consequences while protecting the manuscript's existing habit of letting actions, evidence, and gestures carry its emotional force.

Structural recommendations

P1 START HERE Whole book 1 chapter

Make Tidewright's discovery plausible in the fog

Tidewright's account of discovering Tess's dive depends on observations that conflict with the fog's stated visibility. Provide a discovery route and specific information compatible with those conditions.

AFFECTED CHAPTERS Chapter 11 – Harbour Lights

P1 Chapter 11 – Harbour Lights

Chapter 11 – Harbour Lights: Ground Lyle's knowledge in Gordie's report

EDITORIAL NOTE

Here, Gordie's report is the link between the earlier dive and Lyle's response, but the threat to recover or destroy the object depends on what that report could establish. In Chapter 8 – Slack Water, the fog makes an uninterrupted visual account of Tess's dive implausible.

MODIFY

- Revise the discovery explanation in Chapter 8 – Slack Water so Tidewright learns of the dive through a fog-compatible route, with enough specific information to identify T4 and infer that something remains underwater. In this chapter, make clear that Gordie's report is the basis for Lyle's move toward T4, so Tess and Neil's fear of recovery or destruction follows from what Tidewright could know.

WHY IT MATTERS

- Makes Tidewright's response follow from information it could plausibly have received.
- Keeps the submerged evidence and the threat to it driving the investigation.

P2 NEXT Whole book 1 chapter

Ground Callum’s decision to make the delayed dive

The pressures to complete the inspection are established, but the story does not sufficiently connect them to Callum’s decision to enter well after planned slack. Show why he accepts this particular dive despite the known risks.

AFFECTED CHAPTERS Chapter 16 – Afterwards

P2 Chapter 16 – Afterwards

Chapter 16 – Afterwards: Trace the delayed entry

EDITORIAL NOTE

At the inquiry, Callum’s footage and the witnesses establish the danger at T4 and Tidewright’s failures, but the account of his decision to enter after the delay remains less tangible. The testimony that he was told to wait could connect the instruction in Chapter 5 – The Caravan directly to the choice that preceded his final dive.

MODIFY

- Reshape the inquiry testimony about Callum being told to wait so it clearly links the instruction to his eventual entry after planned slack. Use the existing account of the message and the timing
- do not introduce a new reason or reveal, or claim he judged the conditions safe unless that is established in the manuscript.

WHY IT MATTERS

- Makes the delayed entry legible as a specific decision shaped by Tidewright’s instruction.
- Strengthens Callum’s characterization without shifting the inquiry’s account of responsibility.

P2 NEXT Whole book 1 chapter

Dramatize Tess’s camera recovery and return

The narrative moves from Tess’s descent to the inquiry, summarizing the successful recovery instead of showing it. Extend the dive through retrieval and safe return, letting a consequential choice carry the emotional change.

AFFECTED CHAPTERS Chapter 16 – Afterwards

P2 Chapter 16 – Afterwards

Chapter 16 – Afterwards: Bring Tess’s recovery onstage

EDITORIAL NOTE

Chapter 16 moves from the camera’s recovery straight into the inquiry, so the pivotal dive reaches the reader only as a completed fact. The chapter’s account depends on an emotionally consequential action that has not yet been dramatized.

MODIFY

- Revise the transition from Chapter 15 – Down the Line into Chapter 16 – Afterwards by extending the dive in Chapter 15 beyond Tess’s descent to show the retrieval and her safe return. Work within the pinned strap, restricted access, and return deadline already established, and let Tess’s choice under those constraints carry the emotional change. In Chapter 16, retain the inquiry and its evidence sequence, but avoid making the recovery’s first appearance a retrospective report.

WHY IT MATTERS

- Makes the prepared physical test and the recovery’s emotional stakes immediate rather than reported after the fact.
- Connects Tess’s conduct during the dive to the inquiry without disclosing or altering its planned beats.

P3 THEN 1 chapter

Motivate the delay in going to the police

Tess and Neil agree to postpone reporting evidence that may link GL to Callum's death, but the scene gives no reason for waiting. Establish a concrete rationale or make the hesitation and its cost visible.

AFFECTED CHAPTERS Chapter 5 – The Caravan

P3 Chapter 5 – The Caravan

Chapter 5 – The Caravan: Make the delay a choice

EDITORIAL NOTE

After Tess and Neil connect the messages to Callum's fatal wait, they agree to take the evidence to the police but defer without explanation. Because this is the moment the evidence becomes actionable, the unexplained pause makes their decision feel arbitrary.

MODIFY

- Reshape the exchange beginning with Tess's proposal to take the evidence to the police so one of them gives a specific reason for waiting, such as not wanting to make an accusation from messages they cannot yet fully interpret. Let the other briefly resist or show unease about leaving the evidence unreported, making the delay a conscious choice without revealing information learned later.

WHY IT MATTERS

- Makes the delay credible at the evidentiary turning point.
- Lets the reader feel the cost of waiting without pre-empting later revelations.

P3 THEN Whole book 1 chapter

Connect the lighthouse photographs to the investigation's outcome

The photographs are carefully discovered and preserved, but their role in the investigation is not made clear in the handover or inquiry summary. Identify how they corroborate the Skua's occupation of T4.

AFFECTED CHAPTERS Chapter 16 – Afterwards

P3 **Chapter 16 – Afterwards**

Chapter 16 – Afterwards: Connect the photographs to the inquiry

EDITORIAL NOTE

The inquiry brings together the warnings, the delayed dive, and the flawed survey, but its account of the evidence does not show what Leask's carefully preserved lighthouse photographs establish. As a result, the photographs' corroboration of the Skua's occupation of T4 during slack water remains detached from the official account.

ADD

- In Chapter 16 – Afterwards, add a brief reference during the inquiry's evidence summary to Leask's signed sequence of lighthouse photographs, identifying that it corroborates the Skua's occupation of T4 during slack water. Keep this as a compact addition to the existing evidentiary account, without expanding the inquiry or changing its findings.

> WHY IT MATTERS
>
> - Completes the photographs' evidentiary thread in the inquiry's account.
> - Makes the corroboration of the Skua's occupation of T4 legible without altering the outcome.

P3 THEN Whole book 1 chapter

Show the local impact of Tidewright's setback

The ending establishes a financial setback for Tidewright but leaves its consequences for island livelihoods abstract. Add a concrete local example of what continues, changes, or is abandoned.

AFFECTED CHAPTERS Chapter 16 – Afterwards

P3 **Chapter 16 – Afterwards**

Chapter 16 – Afterwards: Register the local aftermath

EDITORIAL NOTE

In Chapter 16 – Afterwards, the official determination and Tidewright's worsening financial and project troubles establish the company's setback, but the island's working life remains outside the closing return. Tess's October visit offers a place to show how that setback is felt locally without interrupting the inquiry's resolution or her return to the skerry.

ADD

- During Tess's October return, add a brief encounter at Kirsty's café. Let a small, observable detail in an exchange with Kirsty or a customer show local work continuing or adjusting to Tidewright's reduced prospects, and register Tess's reception through the interaction rather than explanatory reflection.

WHY IT MATTERS

- Makes Tidewright's financial setback tangible in island life.
- Completes the economic strand through a lived moment rather than summary.

Chapter notes

Further structural notes beyond the main list, and smaller notes on individual chapters. Not counted with the structural changes above.

Chapter 9 – Springs

Keep the workshop scene moving

As Neil fits the pole together, the brief explanation of his longstanding habit and his teenage engine repairs pauses the present-day exchange. The detail is vivid, but tightening it would keep the scene's momentum through to his question about the night Tess left.

MODIFY

- Condense the aside about Neil's habit of working through problems into a shorter observation tied to his actions at the bench.

Chapter 13 – Neap Tide

Let the silence stand

In Chapter 13 – Neap Tide, Fiona's account of Callum's belief already gives Tess a strong reason not to answer. The sentence explaining that nothing useful could be said repeats the silence and interprets it for the reader.

REMOVE

- Cut "There was nothing that could usefully be said." Tess's silence and the scene's movement toward Garth can carry the beat.

  EXAMPLES

  – Tess said nothing. The road climbed and the lights of Garth came up ahead of them. (RESTRAINED)