Look at you all. Business. Journalism. Science. Government. Multimedia.

Meanwhile, I'm standing here with something called "Professional Editing" in the "Professional Writing Minor." I mean, come on; it's just not fair.

Professional Editing is a bit like the ugly stepchild in the perfect quintuplet suburban family. We're so insecure that we have to say "professional" twice in our LinkedIn bios just so that people know that, yes, editing is a profession; it's a professional thing that we do.

Not that many of you care: you probably think of us as those tyrannical grade-school teachers with the red pen and the righteous sneer. "Haha!" you jest. "I'm out here on the frontier of quantum mechanics and Ukraine and abortion. What do *you* do, you hedonistic narcissistic misanthropic grammarian?"

Ouch.

Well, I can tell you when to use a hyphen and when to use something called an em dash. I can tell you about "who" and "whom." I can tell you the difference between "my brother Paul" (without a comma) and "my brother, Paul" (with a comma). I can tell you that people...

Wait, hold on. I'm getting a call. One sec.

"Huh? What's that? The mobilization of the troops in Ukraine against the soldiers allied with Russia conducting an invasion on foreign soil has been successful?"

Wow! That's amazing! I didn't understand a word you said! And I don't remember anything you said either!

People read and listen to sentences like that only because they have to—and not because they want to. I can tell you that a sentence like "the Ukrainian troops have successfully mobilized against the Russian

invasion" sounds a lot better. Or how about just "Ukraine is quickly mobilizing against Russia"?

And I can tell you that folks are much more likely to read those kinds of sentences all the way through, and I can tell you that that means they're much more likely to understand what you're trying to say, and I can tell you, finally, that that means your writing is much more likely to matter.

Because we live in a world of noise… and ChatGPT. There's just so much competing for our attention. Eat this. Try that. Buy this. Read that. Give me your time. Give me your attention. Give me your adoration.

But how can people give you their time, their attention, and their adoration when they can't even find you, stuck between your words?

Editors are the cheat codes. We are magicians. We bend reality to your will. We command the ancient sorceries of Chicago, Merriam-Webster, and Microsoft Word, and our incantations breathe life into your mechanical marvels, animate the words in your worlds, dynamize your tongue with artifice beyond artificiality.

Now, if you've taken an introductory course in linguistics, or you're familiar with the word "descriptivism," you might be up in arms right about now.

Yes, this is prescriptivism. We say there are rules to language, and we say you ought to follow those rules.

But our brand is more like Prescriptivism Lite: we say the rules *ought* to be followed, but we don't say the rules *must* be followed. Don't like a change we've made? Revert at your own risk, but we won't stop you.

It's your writing, after all; we're just the cleanup crew. We'd probably be lucky just to get our names into the acknowledgments section at the back of the book.

But seriously, revert at your own risk: we're grammarians not because we get a high from ripping you a new one with euphemisms like "perhaps" and "consider" and "disorienting" (well, alright, that's part of the reason) but because the world is filled with people who, unlike us, pay for the monthly subscription to Prescriptivism Pro.

Maybe you've been to the frontier and the abyss, or maybe you've roamed the halls of DC and Apple. But if you use a semicolon when you mean to use a colon, or you say "comprise" when you mean "compose," or you use twenty words when you only need ten, this is what is going to happen: no one will take you nearly as seriously as the person sitting next to you who *does* mean exactly what they say, who *can* do these things.

Those amazing things you've done? Might as well have never happened at all. Think of it: dozens or hundreds of hours slaving over an article or a paper or a dissertation and it ends up in the wastebasket of just one person's mind.

Is this fair, to be judged by the prettiness of your words rather than by the substance? No. But that's just the way the world is.

We, as copyeditors and Professional Editors of the Professional Writing Minor, can help you navigate that world. We can help you happen. We can prettify your words so that your substance shines through. We can save you from that wastebasket.

And if someone does take you seriously? Then look up. Look up from that wastebasket. Look up from those articles heralding the end of human ingenuity, of human wordsmiths. Look up at that corkboard, or up at that bookshelf, or up at that picture frame, in the halls of DC and Apple.

You're gonna do a lot of things. And we want to help you. So, hit us up with a job if you have a gig, eh?