Sawing through the cadaver’s head with the fetid stench of formaldehyde in a fluorescently lit laboratory and watching the poorly preserved brain pour out onto the floor, I was just beginning four tortuous years. I despised dental school.

Dad was professedly proud of “my” choice. Mom was solipsistically thrilled.

Enrobed in cap and gown with heralding black velvet stripes encircling the sleeves, my first day as doctor felt entirely emancipating. My parents were glowing when I graduated. Our celebration dinner was at The Cross Keys Inn, the then-new Baltimore establishment boasting the finest contemporary dining in understated elegance. We dined in our own private room, walls of blanched wood with cream carpeting, sophisticated spot lighting and fresh, lily-laden fragrance. The matching light wood, oval table, and chic fabric inset chairs were dripping in professionally designed, contemporary pretense. My partner, Charles, my closest friends Michael and Joan, my father’s business partner and his wife, and my parents sat around the properly set table. I sat at one end, my father at the other.

After eating, “speech, speech” rang out as forks against crystal clanked.

“I’ll do this dentistry thing for a while, but then I’m going back to school to become a therapist.”

Without missing a beat, my mother, behind a know-it-all smile, protested, “No you won’t because you’re going to like the money too much.”

Dad was silent.

Spool forward fifteen years. My dental practice was a booming success, if you define success as earning lots of money. I was not feeling it. I yearned to be a psychotherapist. I enrolled in social work school.

My parents were apoplectic. “You’re at the height of your career. How can you give up that income?”

The first day of internship at a community mental health center for the severely mentally ill left my heart exuberant. I called my parents to share the joy.

“You like it?”

I defensively countered, “I love it!”

The last year of social work school was dispiriting as my father was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. Despite weakness and nausea, skin and bones, Dad attended graduation. Cloaked in sadness I was the happiest I’d ever been. Garbed in a suit now way too big for his beleaguered body, Dad was smiling.

We celebrated at The Capitol Grill. The private dining room in the masculine appointed, hickory smoke-scented steakhouse brandished rich mahogany walls with low lighting. The heavy, dark wood table and chairs set a somber-sweet mood as I sat at one end ready to start life anew, my father at the other ten weeks from death.

Wine poured, glasses raised, I focused my gaze on each guest, and, one-at-a-time, expressed whole-souled gratitude. Mentor Elizabeth, lifelong friend Joan, my closest dentist friend Sally and her husband BJ, Charles and Mom. Ultimately, I turned to my father. I held back heavyhearted tears and released floodgates of love.

Dad, with inspiring difficulty, stood up. “I’m so proud of you for following your heart.”

Mom was silent.

This is quite an emotional story with a nice blend of great description and dialogue. Good job. Also a great combination of two very different dinners. Congratulations.

All writers use helping verbs too much. Try to rewrite those sentences and see how much stronger they are when you don’t use the word, ‘was’.

As for formatting: there is only one space after a period now. I changed your indents in format under paragraph.