

Part 1:

Where is the title?

As I stood at the edge of the lost city, I couldn't believe my eyes. The city was a sprawling metropolis, its streets and buildings stretching out like a shimmering silk blanket. Golden light glinted off the skyscrapers, creating the illusion that the whole city was shining brilliant rays of sunlight. People dressed in dazzling clothes and jewellery walked the streets. It was... perfect.

I stepped into the wondrous scene, transfixed at everything around me. Every building looked freshly-painted. All of a sudden, my eyes gravitated to a massive building, looming above even the tallest of skyscrapers. For a fraction of a second, fear pierced my heart, but then it was gone, so quick I wasn't sure it was there. I was sure, though, that the golden city was not what it seemed. The golden city had a streak of malevolence and evil in it.

Little details that I hadn't noticed before were suddenly magnified. An inconspicuous back alley, filled with rubbish, a sliver of a small, grey orphanage tucked behind a church, and the blank, dull gazes of the people walking on the streets. I felt uneasy. Taking off at a fast pace, I was just about to step over the border, when someone touched my back.

My heart was thumping wildly, as I slowly turned around. "Michael?" My husband smiled. "So you've been here, all along!" He had disappeared around five years ago. We worked in the same travel company, looking for more places for tourists to visit. "Why didn't you come back?" Michael's smile faltered. Now, he looked different, somehow.

His nose was still exactly the same arch, and his thin lips were no different from when I last saw him. His eyes... his eyes! They had the same blankness as the inhabitants of the city. "I-I stayed here because the city was so beautiful. I just could not bring myself to leave. After I stayed for a few days, I realised that I did not want to leave anymore. I am extremely sorry for leaving you."

The city was a place of danger. A place with many traps, and Michael fell into one of them. He seemed to be in a trance, only mentioning how good the city was. I wanted to leave, but I wanted to be with my husband. I felt the city sucking me deeper into its trap, but one look at Michael's glazed over eyes told me that this was not Michael.

I was looking at someone else. Still, I was reluctant. His hand grasped mine, but I pulled free, sprinting away. With a flash, the city behind me disappeared.

Note:

This is good, but please see to it that you could answer all the questions in the writing prompt: How do these themes affect your experience in the city? What do you learn about the city and its inhabitants? How does your time in the city change you? You could answer this in an indirect or direct way, its entirely up to you.

Mark: 42/50

Part 2:

What is this scene called?

The crackling fire enveloped me into its warm embrace. I was sitting snugly, wrapped in my blanket. Outside, the snow was swirling, and night was coming. It was nearly my bedtime, but I could not resist staying where I was, letting the fire warm me.

The red and orange fire seemed to pull me closer, spreading heat all over my body. Leaping higher, the flames seemed to have a life of their own. Little sparks sprung from their mother. I could faintly hear the wind howling, snapping its teeth, growling around the house, but I was in another world.

Note:

This scene's too short. I highly suggest that you delve deeper in describing the setting; you could talk about the time, location, weather, and more. Meanwhile, you can further establish the scene's atmosphere using dialogues because they can help reveal the thoughts and emotions of the characters. Please expand this scene.

Mark: 41/50

Part 3:

Alice's Jazz Dream

Alice stood backstage, her heart thumping with excitement. She was finally going to fulfil her childhood dream of becoming a jazz singer. The members of the club were chattering loudly, when the loudspeaker announced, "Next, we have Alice..." Suddenly, all the excitement and happiness from before dissipated. Now, she felt nervous and doubtful.

Alice's mum always encouraged Alice to be a pianist. It was her childhood dream, and somehow, it had fallen upon Alice's shoulders. "Do you know, it is so cool for you to be following your dream career. I never had a chance." But the problem was, Alice didn't want to play the piano. Her fingers never seemed to be in sync with the keys. The music never resounded with her, and every note seemed the same to her. Alice couldn't say she liked playing the piano.

But one day, her perspective of music changed. From the moment she heard a few precious notes of a jazz tune at a cafe, Alice loved jazz. She had practised long and hard, and she finally got an offer to sing at a club. Alice was determined to grab onto that opportunity with both hands.

Now, as she walked onto the stage, her hands trembling as she held the microphone, she wasn't sure if she could do this. But this was her dream, right? She wanted to do this, right? Glancing at the audience, they seemed distant, and they were whispering amongst themselves. Her parents looked at her from the front row, seeming disapproving. The first notes of the accompanying instruments started to play, and Alice began to sing.

At first, a few notes floated around the room, like perfume. Alice's voice was mesmerising, like soft flower petals. She concentrated on her singing, putting all her emotion into the song. Alice thought about how it was her dream to be on stage, and how happy she was. All of the practice clearly paid off. Her voice reached a crescendo, echoing across. Alice could see tears in some of the audience's eyes.

Thunderous applause greeted her when the song ended. People were standing and cheering. Now, tears began to form in her eyes. Her heart still thumping, Alice exited the stage.

A day later, Alice was in her room singing, when her mother rapped on the door. "Alice, I want to talk to you about something. Your singing yesterday was absolutely amazing. I see now that you are not interested in piano. I understand now, and I am sorry for pressuring you earlier."

As Alice sat on her bed, she felt elated that she could finally pursue her jazz dream.

Note:

Please follow the requirements. Write 10 instances of personification here and five instances of metaphor. Moreover, I would advise that you make the conflict more cruel. Disapproving parents is a generic conflict. Remember that in the 1920s, women in the music industry are particularly nothing compared to men, plus the working environment is very hostile towards them. In short, make Alice suffer a lot.

Mark: 44/50

Scholar