

Section 1:

#1: The opening paragraph about the nightmare

Strengths:

- Excellent use of sensory details to create an atmosphere of dread ("beads of sweat glistening in the thin beams of moonlight")
- Effective fragmented imagery builds tension with the nightmare sequences

Weakness: Prompt misalignment → Your opening establishes a haunting atmosphere but completely deviates from the prompt requesting "a hero on a quest." The nightmare doesn't establish any quest elements, goals, or heroic journey as requested in the original prompt.

Exemplar: *"I twisted in my sheets, beads of sweat forming as I envisioned the mountain peak where the ancient amulet awaited. My quest had haunted my dreams for weeks—not with terror, but with purpose. The treacherous path ahead, the guardians I would face, and the villagers depending on my success all flashed through my restless mind."*

#2: The shadow's strange behaviour

Strengths:

- Creative concept of the shadow moving independently creates intrigue
- Skilful visual descriptions build suspense ("like security footage buffering and lagging")

Weakness: Unexplored motif → Your shadow concept introduces an interesting supernatural element but isn't developed into a meaningful hurdle or challenge related to any quest. The shadow appears to warn the protagonist but this potential conflict isn't integrated into a larger journey or purpose.

Exemplar: *"My shadow moved independently, not copying my movements but pointing persistently toward the eastern woods. This was the first hurdle in my*

quest—deciphering the message my own darkness was trying to convey before I could continue my journey to find my sister."

#3: The final revelationStrengths:

- Effective twist that recontextualises the earlier scenes
- Emotional impact through the contrast of the happy family scene with the revelation

Weakness: Disconnected resolution → Your ending reveals the sister died years ago, but doesn't connect this to any heroic quest or goal that was meant to be central to the story. The revelation feels disconnected from what should have been the main narrative thread—a hero overcoming obstacles to achieve a specific aim.

Exemplar: *"'You have no sister, Kala. She passed away three years ago,' my parents said gently. I had known this truth deep down, but accepting it was the final hurdle in my quest. My journey to the shadow realm hadn't been for nothing—I had found her spirit, said my goodbyes, and could now carry her memory forward without the weight of denial."*

Your story demonstrates strong creativity and excellent atmospheric writing, particularly in establishing a haunting mood. However, it fundamentally misses the core requirements of the prompt about a hero on a quest. To improve the substance, consider restructuring the narrative to clearly establish what your protagonist wants to achieve. Perhaps their quest could be to accept the reality of their sister's death, with the shadow serving as a guide or warning. The hurdles could be stages of grief or supernatural barriers. Additionally, you could develop clearer stakes—what happens if the protagonist fails their quest? The piece shows your talent for creating emotion and atmosphere, but needs stronger narrative focus and alignment with the quest structure requested.

■ Revise the opening to clearly establish what goal your protagonist is pursuing, whether that's bringing back their sister, finding closure, or something entirely different. Also, transform the shadow element into specific challenges or guides related to this quest rather than leaving it as an unexplained phenomenon. Finally, rewrite the ending to show how the protagonist has changed through their journey and what they've achieved or failed to achieve in their quest, giving readers a sense of whether the hero succeeded.

Overall Score: 38/50

Section 2:

The Black Spot

I was twisted in sheets, beads of sweat glistening in the thin beams of moonlight streaming through the window. I was having a nightmare... not any ordinary, run-of-the-mill terror, but something that seemed out of a horror movie. They were small snippets of scenes, a grave in the darkest night, vultures cawing over a lump, a cackle so eerie ~~that~~ [which] sent shivers down my spine.

#1 I woke up, a sweaty mess, sheets kicked to the floor from my frantic legs. I sat up slowly, blinking away the sleep from my eyes. Sunlight spilled across the floor like liquid gold. My room was the same, a still, rigid, box filled with familiarity. Then a feeling came across me – one of those when you feel something is off. A small disfigurement at the edge of ~~your~~ [my] conscience. I scanned the room, opened the windows and let the smell of blooming hydrangeas envelop the curtains. I froze. I slowly turned around like a horror movie jump scare scene, following something out of the corner of my eye. It was black. It moved. My shadow.

#2 It wasn't copying me – the movements were off. Yet, they also seemed to be a couple ~~seconds~~ [of seconds] later, like security footage buffering and lagging. I began changing into school uniform, and my shadow hesitated before stepping forward and grabbing the shadow jumper. I approached the door, instinctively heading towards my ~~sisters'~~ [sister's] bedroom. My shadow lunged toward me, reaching a hand ~~that I couldn't feel and wouldn't stop me~~ [I couldn't feel but that wouldn't stop me].

I woke my sister, and that wrong, tugging feeling radiated from her even harder today. She always felt off – but that didn't stop me from being a good older sister. I didn't mention my shadow at breakfast. Between coffee-stained counters and dark circles, nobody seemed to notice my strange shadow.

My shadow grew more and more frantic in the evening. I ignored it, thinking that I was just hallucinating or something like that. I scrolled on YouTube in the evening, and my

sister sat down with me. I caught my parents shooting me strange looks as I asked her what she wanted to watch. Then I sat down, pulled out the Monopoly set and smiled at her. We sat and laughed, the silvery pieces clinking on the board. ~~When we~~ [We] burst out laughing so hard ~~my~~ [that my] parents came downstairs, worried.

#3 "Who are you laughing at?" they asked, reasonably concerned. "My sister, obviously!" I rolled my eyes and giggled. "What do you mean?" a small furrow appeared on their forehead. "You have no sister, Kala. She passed away three years ago," And just like that, the girl ~~which~~ [whom] I had always called family faded away with a final hopeful smile.