

Section 1

#1: Opening paragraph (*"In the sleepy coastal town of Windmere... something that could speak to the soul."*)

Strengths:

- Your setting creates a clear mood with nice details like mist clinging to cliffs and gulls crying like ghosts
- The character's goal is easy to understand—he wants to find something more meaningful than modern instruments

Weakness: Rushed character introduction → You introduce Elio very quickly without helping us understand why he feels this way. The phrase "grown weary of the polished perfection" tells us what he thinks, but we don't see or feel why he's tired of regular instruments. What happened to make him feel this way? Did something specific push him to search for raw, soulful music? Without this background, Elio feels a bit flat, like a placeholder rather than a real person with real reasons.

Exemplar: *Before arriving in Windmere, Elio had spent three years playing in the city's grand concert halls, where every note had to be perfect, every performance identical to the last. The audiences clapped politely, but their eyes seemed empty. He craved music that could make people truly feel something.*

#2: The discovery scene (*"The air was thick with dust... The scroll was carved into the likeness of a weeping face..."*)

Strengths:

- Your description of the violin is vivid and interesting with specific details like the weeping face carving and the musical notes intertwined with vines
- The moment feels mysterious and important

Weakness: Missing sensory depth → While you describe what Elio sees, you don't help us experience the other senses in this important moment. You mention "thick with dust and silence"

briefly, but then focus only on the violin's appearance. What did the chapel smell like after being abandoned for so long? Did the floorboards creak under his feet? Was the velvet rough or smooth when he unwrapped it? The phrase "feeling a strange warmth pulse through his fingers" is good, but it comes too late and happens too quickly. This discovery should feel more real and immediate.

Exemplar: *As Elio lifted the velvet cloth, dust motes swirled in the dim light filtering through the broken windows. The fabric felt brittle, as if it might crumble in his hands. When his fingers first touched the violin's wood, it was unexpectedly warm, almost alive, and he caught the faint scent of old resin and something sweet he couldn't name.*

#3: The legend and obsession ("Back in town, whispers stirred... more like memory.")

Strengths:

- The backstory of Aurelio Vance adds interesting history to the violin
- The idea of dreams becoming memories is creative

Weakness: Underdeveloped emotional journey → You tell us that "Elio became obsessed" but don't show us how this obsession changed him or affected his life. The phrase "played the violin day and night" is vague—did he stop eating? Did he cancel plans with friends? Did people worry about him? Also, the dreams of Aurelio appear suddenly without showing us how they made Elio feel. Was he frightened? Excited? Confused? Your writing jumps from "he played a lot" to "he had strange dreams" without exploring the emotional weight of either experience.

Exemplar: *After the first week, Elio's fingers were raw and bleeding, but he couldn't stop. His landlady complained that the music drifted through the walls at three in the morning. When his friend Marco came to check on him, Elio barely recognised him at the door. The dreams had started on the fifth night—not gentle wisps of imagination, but vivid scenes that left him gasping awake, his heart pounding as if he'd been standing on those storm-swept cliffs himself.*

■ Looking at your piece as a whole, you've built an interesting story with a clear beginning, middle, and end. Your setting is atmospheric, and the idea of a haunted violin connecting two musicians across time is engaging. However, your writing would be much stronger if you slowed down and let us

experience the story more deeply. Right now, you're telling us what happens rather than showing us how it feels. For example, instead of saying Elio "became obsessed," show us three specific moments that prove his obsession. Additionally, your paragraphs sometimes jump too quickly from one event to the next without giving us time to absorb what just happened. The performance scene, for instance, moves from Elio playing to the ghostly figure appearing in just a few sentences—this deserves more space to breathe. Also, think about Elio's internal thoughts throughout. What is he thinking when he first hears the violin? What does he wonder about Aurelio? Your story would feel more complete if we could see inside Elio's mind, not just watch his actions from outside. Consider expanding the chapel discovery scene and the performance scene—these are your story's most important moments, but they feel rushed. Remember, good writing makes readers feel like they're experiencing events alongside the character, not just reading a summary of what happened.

Overall Score: 43/50

Section 2:

In the sleepy coastal town of Windmere, where mist clung to the cliffs and gulls cried like ghosts, a young musician named Elio wandered in search of inspiration. He had grown weary of the polished perfection of modern instruments and longed for something raw, something that could speak to the soul.

One autumn afternoon, Elio stumbled upon an abandoned chapel nestled between two crumbling hills. Ivy strangled its stone walls, and the stained-glass windows had long since surrendered to time. Drawn by a whisper of wind that sounded oddly melodic, he pushed open the heavy wooden door and stepped inside.

#1 The air was thick with dust and silence. At the far end of the chapel, beneath a collapsed altar, Elio spotted a peculiar shape wrapped in faded velvet. He knelt and uncovered a violin—**its** wood darkened with age, its strings dulled but intact. The scroll was carved into the likeness of a weeping face, and the body bore faint etchings that resembled musical notes intertwined with vines.

Elio cradled the instrument, feeling a strange warmth pulse through his fingers. When he drew the bow across the strings, the sound that emerged was unlike anything he had heard. It was mournful, rich, and eerily human. Each note seemed to carry a voice, as if the violin itself remembered sorrow.

#2 Back in town, whispers stirred. Old-timers spoke of the legend of Aurelio Vance, a virtuoso who had vanished a century ago. They said his music could make the sea weep and the stars tremble. Some claimed he had made a pact with the wind, binding his soul to his beloved violin so that his melodies would never die.

#3 Elio became obsessed. He played the violin day and night, and with each session, the music grew more complex, more haunting. He began to dream of Aurelio—**visions** of a man with silver hair and hollow eyes, playing atop the cliffs as storms raged around him. The dreams felt less like imagination and more like memory.

One evening, Elio performed at the town square. As he played, the wind rose, swirling around him in a dance. The townsfolk watched in awe as the music seemed to bend the air, drawing tears and stirring forgotten emotions. When the final note faded, silence fell like snow.

Elio lowered the violin and looked to the cliffs. There, just for a moment, stood the ghostly figure of Aurelio, nodding in approval before vanishing into the mist.

From that day on, the chapel was no longer abandoned. Musicians came from far and wide, hoping to hear the wind sing. And Elio, keeper of the timeworn violin, played not just for the living, but for the legend that had found voice once more.