

Section 1

#1: "Irene, once a concert pianist before a horrid disease of arthritis stole her career, warmed her aching hands around her favourite chipped mug."

Strengths:

- Your opening sentence immediately introduces a character with a meaningful backstory, helping readers understand Irene's connection to the setting.
- The image of "warmed her aching hands around her favourite chipped mug" creates a gentle, personal moment that shows rather than tells about her condition.

Weakness: Repetitive information → You've mentioned Irene's hand condition twice in the same sentence through "arthritis" and "aching hands." Since arthritis already explains why her hands ache, adding "aching" becomes unnecessary repetition. This makes the sentence feel cluttered when it could be more streamlined and powerful.

Exemplar: *Irene, once a concert pianist before arthritis stole her career, warmed her hands around her favourite chipped mug.*

#2: "Rain lashed the windows, into frantic streams. Inside, warmth clung to the scent of cinnamon and espresso."

Strengths:

- Your contrast between the harsh weather outside and the cosy atmosphere inside effectively creates a sense of shelter and comfort.
- The sensory details of "cinnamon and espresso" help readers imagine the café environment.

Weakness: Incomplete sentence connection → The phrase "into frantic streams" doesn't connect smoothly to "Rain lashed the windows." When rain lashes windows, it doesn't turn *into* streams—it creates or forms streams *on* the windows. The word "into" suggests transformation rather than result, which confuses the image you're trying to paint.

Exemplar: *Rain lashed the windows, forming frantic streams down the glass.*

#3: "Irene laughed frightened. Ron looked up, surprised. Isabelle, in the dark, exhaled and breathed a sigh of exhaustion."

Strengths:

- Your structure of showing each character's reaction to the power cut gives equal importance to all three strangers.
- The reactions reveal something about each character's personality in a moment of shared experience.

Weakness: **Awkward word use and redundancy** → "Laughed frightened" doesn't work because "laughed" is a verb and "frightened" is an adjective—they can't sit together this way. You need "nervously" or "in fright" to describe *how* she laughed. Additionally, "exhaled and breathed a sigh" is repetitive because exhaling and sighing are essentially the same action. You're saying the same thing twice, which weakens the moment instead of strengthening it.

Exemplar: *Irene laughed nervously. Ron looked up, surprised. Isabelle, in the dark, exhaled slowly—a sigh of exhaustion.*

■ Your piece creates an interesting snapshot of three strangers sharing a café space during a rainstorm, and you've chosen compelling backstories for each character. However, your writing would benefit from developing the connections between these characters more fully. The phrase "it was love at first sight for Ron" appears suddenly without showing us Ron's feelings through his actions or thoughts beforehand. Instead of telling readers about the emotions, try showing them through small gestures, facial expressions, or internal thoughts.

Additionally, your final paragraph feels rushed. You state that the three characters "share the same emotions," but you haven't shown us what those shared emotions actually are beyond their brief reactions to the power cut. Are they lonely? Hopeful? Searching for connection? Expanding this section would give your story a stronger, more satisfying conclusion.

The sentence "Isabelle approached the table, pretending she was serving a warm croissant" is also confusing—why is she pretending? Is she actually serving a croissant or not? Small details like this need clarification so readers can follow what's happening. Also, the phrase "as she was about to make her move" is vague. What move is Isabelle making? Connecting with Irene? Starting a conversation? Being more specific here would help readers understand the significance of this moment before the lights go out.

Your atmospheric descriptions are a strength, particularly the sensory details of the café. To build on this, try weaving more of these details throughout the entire piece rather than concentrating them at the beginning. This would create a richer, more immersive experience for your readers from start to finish.

Overall Score: 38/50

Section 2

~~#1 Irene, once a concert pianist before a horrid disease of arthritis stole her career, warmed her aching hands around her favourite chipped mug.~~ [Irene, once a concert pianist before arthritis stole her career, warmed her hands around her favourite chipped mug.] Near the window, Ron, who was 17, sketched strangers to ~~practiced~~ [practise] art and tried to sell it to get out of foster care. Behind the counter, Isabelle, an ex-soldier turned barista, wiped tables with ~~practiced~~ [practised] precision, hiding tremors in her fingers.

~~#2 Rain lashed the windows, into frantic streams.~~ [forming frantic streams down the glass.] Inside, warmth clung to the scent of cinnamon and espresso. The mutter of conversation rose above the patter of drops and the hiss of the milk steamer. Coats dripped, puddles spread. Time slowed between refills and glances.

Irene's eyes met Ron's sketchpad, lingering. Ron, sensing her gaze, angled the page away, ~~checks blushed~~ [cheeks blushing], ~~it was love at first sight for Ron.~~ [his heart quickening—was this what love at first sight felt like?] Isabelle approached the table, ~~pretending she was serving~~ [serving] a warm croissant ~~on~~ [onto] Irene's plate. As she was about to make her move, Flash! The power flickered. The

lights died. For a moment, silence fell. Rain pressed harder ~~onto~~ [against] the army green rooftop of the small café.

~~#3 Irene laughed frightened.~~ [Irene laughed nervously.] Ron looked up, surprised. ~~Isabelle, in the dark, exhaled and breathed a sigh of exhaustion.~~ [Isabelle, in the dark, exhaled—a long sigh of exhaustion.]

Three strangers, still. Different personalities. Different talents. ~~But yet~~ [Yet], all share the same emotions.

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