

## WRITE A DESCRIPTION THAT CENTERS AROUND A "PERFORMER"

### THE PADDED PROSCENIUM

The scent of disinfectant clung to the air, striking his nostrils with the force of a nudge every time he inhaled. The afternoon sunlight streamed through the tall, arched windows, casting warm, golden rectangles onto the polished floorboards.

The corridor outside bustled with the quiet chaos of the institution. Patients, some agitated, others eerily vacant, shuffled along with nurses and doctors in starched white uniform. The hushed murmur of voices, punctuated by the occasional outburst or sob, formed a constant, unsettling cacophony.

His office, a sanctuary of order among the surrounding disquiet, offered a small respite. Dr. Maximilian Auffenberg adjusted his spectacles as he read the file that was laid before him - a thin manila folder that held the story of a seemingly shattered life. Her name: Sascha Fuchs. The name struck a chord. Then it hit him, the crescendo of a distant melody from a once vibrant past. Sascha Fuchs. The Nightingale of Vienna. The soprano whose voice had once held emperors captive, whose Carmen had ignited a firestorm of passion within the world of theatre.

Auffenberg recalled his first opera attendance. Bizet's Carmen. He had been a young medical student then, more riveted by the complexity of the mind than the dramatic flourishes of the stage. Yet, her voice... it had been an instrument of pure magic, soaring through the hall, each note a perfectly sculpted jewel. He remembered the vibrant energy she had exuded, the fiery gaze that held the entire audience in its thrall. It wasn't just the technical brilliance, it was the raw emotion she poured into every phrase, the way she conveyed longing, defiance, and despair within a single, perfectly sustained note. It was as if the very essence of Carmen, that untamed spirit, flowed through her vocal cords and directly into his soul.

The woman who now sat before him bore little resemblance to the radiant songstress of Auffenberg's memory. Her once vibrant eyes were now sunken, clouded with a profound emptiness, their focus distant and unfixed. Her opulent dress had been replaced by the institution's grey gown, hanging loosely on her withered frame. The hands that had gestured with dramatic flair now lay motionless, tucked absentmindedly between her legs. Ms. Fuchs' once meticulously styled dark hair was dull and tangled, strands escaping the loose braid that framed her pale face. The intoxicating aura of the stage was gone, replaced by the faint, unsettling odor of unwashed linen and a pervasive air of fragility.

The contrast was jarring, almost brutal.

Auffenberg stood up, the chair creaking softly against the polished floor. He would approach this case not just as a doctor treating a patient, but as someone who had once been touched by the enchanting voice. He would delve into the depths of her shattered mind, searching for any fragment of the woman she once was, any melody that might still resonate within the silence. He would begin by simply being present, offering a quiet space amidst the echoing void that was her world, an invitation for the Nightingale to sing again.

Vinser

**ALEX P**

GRADE 10