

Creative Writing Reflection Sheet

Name: Serena Bennett

Title: Little Bird

1. What stage of the writing process are you at with this particular piece of work?

Check all that apply

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Just getting started | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Still exploring | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Know what I want, but not there yet |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Need others to read | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Need more time | <input type="checkbox"/> Need to leave it alone for a while |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Have specific questions | <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling good | <input type="checkbox"/> Totally bumfuzzled |

Explain:

I have the main story down, but I don't feel like the relationships are that good or realistic for the characters.

2. What was the original spark for this piece of work?

I did a free write about a war and then it just kind of rolled from there. I had to make a lot of adjustments and changes from my original idea, though.

3. List three things you like about what you've written? Give examples...

The tone

The plot structure

the dialogue

4. What's non-negotiable for this piece of work? What are you sure isn't going to change?

The connection between Saida and Sarah and how Saida helps Joseph get over his grief.

5. List three things you're struggling with and want to improve in this piece?

I want to improve the characterization ~~and~~ of Joseph and Saïda and I want to make their relationship more solidified or something. It just needs something and I can't seem to figure out what. I'm also contemplating adding more to the end, I just didn't have time.

6. What feedback do you expect readers will give you?

It's a little gloomy and sad.

It's cheesy at some parts.

The ending is kind of unsatisfying.

7. List three questions you want to ask your readers?

I feel like it's missing something, but I don't know what it is. Is it just me?

Little Bird

By Serena Bennett

Joseph let the all too familiar sight of the military white barracks, lined up in rows in the ice and snow, painfully settle in his chest. He knew this place. Down that direction were the sleeping quarters, where he and his buddies would drunkenly stumble to in hours much like these early ones, and he knew that the buildings to the left were the camp headquarters. A little further down was the armory, barely touched since it was made. The government had more recruits than they needed now, and it was hopeful that this goddamn war would be over soon. The enemy bombings were very nearly over. They were very nearly over, and the news channels proclaimed the enemy would soon give in, and the country was celebrating because the last bombing had been a full month ago, and everything was looking up, except.

Except.

Except Sarah. Sarah, that stubborn girl. That stubborn girl whose death the news channels didn't cover because she was one of the last casualties, from that last bombing, and there was no reason to be sad because no other little 'Sarah's would die anymore. Sarah, his little bird.

"Joseph?" A voice abruptly interrupted Joseph's thoughts. He quickly blinked away the moisture in his eyes, shook his head, and turned to face a figure jogging towards him in the pale orange of the street lights.

"Nick, hey." He smiled, or at least tried to. Trying to smile was hard.

Nick grinned wide at first, gripped his shoulder. His grin slipped and he stared at Joseph for an awkward moment, stared at his haunted face. He was probably seeing how pale Joseph

had become, how hollow his cheeks had become, how his usually infectious grin was nowhere in sight.

“What’s going on, man? You’ve been on leave for two weeks and nobody knew where you went.”

“Um,” Joseph cleared his throat, averted his eyes from Nick’s. “I, um, my sister died in the last bombing. I was at her funeral.” He focused on the street light, stared at it, counted the seconds as the silence grew. He hated how he felt fine until he told someone, and then watching their face fill with shock, pain, and guilt would break him, and every moment that he didn’t break was his own sick, twisted victory.

“Jo, I am *so* sorry, I can’t believe-”

“No, it’s okay, I, um...” He forced a glance at Nick’s pained face. “Listen, I have to go now, I’m really busy with being gone and all.” He turned around and started walking before his sentence was finished. He closed his eyes as he walked, felt the cold air whip through his nose as he inhaled, exhaled, inhaled, and still couldn’t breathe.

“This will probably be your last assignment, heck, it’ll probably be your only one.”

Sergeant Hayes chuckled as he led Joseph down the fluorescent hallway. “You’re just gonna be keeping watch over this prisoner we got about two days ago. They caught her sneaking antibiotics from the infirmary. Had to put her in here cause the jail’s been full for over a week.” He chewed his gum, shook his head, and pulled open a door to his right. “Truth is, we don’t know what to do with her.”

They entered a well lighted room, separated in two by a glass window. It was actually a one-way mirror, Joseph saw, with a small figure on the other side of it. She sat behind a metal table, legs crossed in ripped jeans, with a coca-cola t-shirt that sagged from her skinny shoulders. She seemed to be maybe ten or eleven, or maybe younger. Her eyes scanned the mirror and she glowered furiously, as if boring holes into every inch of it would somehow make it break. The sergeant shrugged. "She'll probably be out as soon as her parent or guardian or whatever come to claim her. Think her name's Sarah."

"Sarah?"

"Did I say Sarah? I meant Saida." He turned to leave. "Anyways, I'd give it a day. Try to find out who's responsible for her."

His footsteps receded, leaving Joseph with Saida and her pale glaring eyes.

After a moment he crossed the room and pressed in the code to the keypad on the heavy metal door, waited for the green light, and pulled it open.

Saida didn't look surprised as Joseph entered and pulled out the chair across from her. He sat down slowly.

"What's your name?" he asked.

"That's stupid. You probably already know it." She crossed her arms.

Joseph paused. "Yeah, you're right. Saida, isn't it? Am I pronouncing it right?"

She shrugged. "But why'd you think I was Sarah?"

"What?" Apparently, the glass wasn't soundproof.

“You thought my name was Sarah. When the redneck told you it, you said ‘Sarah?’” She mocked his voice and made a sappy sad face, presumably his. He couldn’t help but let out a small laugh, which made her glare him down. She had spunk.

His smile faded a bit. “I know a Sarah.”

Saida arched an eyebrow. “Lemme guess, your girlfriend back home?”

He shook his head. “Sister.”

She pinched her lips together and they sat in silence for a moment, the ticking of the clock above the door making a tune with the flickering lights.

“So why were you stealing the medicine?” Joseph asked.

“I needed it for my poor, sick, dying mother.”

“Really.”

She grinned. “I was gonna sell it. It’s worth a whole lot in the city, you know.”

“hmm.”

Saida stared at him for a moment, like she was unsure. “How old is she?”

Joseph stared at the table leg before answering his eyes wandering down the black metal and shiny screws holding it all together. “Twelve.”

“I’m thirteen.”

Silence.

“She died, didn’t she?”

Joseph looked up at Saida, saw her eyes weren’t glaring or scoffing anymore. They were haunted. Like his. He nodded.

“Oh.” She paused, then spoke slowly. “My parents died, too. In one of the first attacks on the city, when you guys occupied us.” Her eyes grew dark, shadowed.

“Sarah died in the last bombing. When you guys dropped one over Kasna.”

Joseph wasn't sure if she blamed him, or even if he blamed her. He was surprised at the words that came out next. “I'm sorry. About your parents.”

Saida didn't hesitate. “I'm sorry about Sarah.”

It occurred to him that this girl was brave.

“You're a lot like her, you know.” He said quietly.

“How?”

“She was a stubborn kid.” He half smiled, mind lost in a memory. “She found a bird, once.”

Saida's eyes widened, and for once she looked like a child should. “A bird? really? I thought they were extinct.”

“Endangered, not extinct.” He pointed out. “We were pretty far outside of Kasna. At least as far as the roads were cleared. There was this pretty big snow chasm we wanted to explore. I'm pretty sure it used to be a lot bigger, back when the climate was hot. Grand Canyon, I think. Anyways.” He shook his head, “They say that snow chasms can have warm pockets of air sometimes. I mean, it was just a rumor, but it was Sarah's birthday, and she always wanted to know what it felt like to be warm outside.”

Saida interrupted. “Why didn't you just go to some place that's still warm? I heard that India can be, like, in the sixties. That's pretty warm, right?”

“I think so. But hell, we didn't have the money for that. That's why I took her to a snow chasm.

At first all we saw was just ice, but the deeper in we got, the less cold it was. Then we could

actually see the rocks under the ice. And we saw trees.”

Saida’s eyebrows raised in scepticism.

He laughed. “It’s true. They weren’t like what you see in the pictures, they were a lot smaller and scruffier looking. but still.”

He smiled, and she smiled.

“Sarah, of course, was over the moon. Just when we thought things couldn’t get any better, we heard this chirping. It was the sweetest sound I’ve ever heard.” He half-laughed. “It sounds cheesy.”

“It sounds really beautiful.” Saida defended. “Then what?”

He leaned forward in his seat and took a moment to think. “There was this hole in one of the trees, and when we looked inside we saw this little bird...” He grinned at the memory, like it was magic. “It had a red chest. And shiny eyes. And everything about it was tiny. It fit in my hand. It’s wing was broken, so Sarah picked it up. She loved how warm it was.”

“What happened to it?” Saida’s voice was barely a hush.

“It died.”

Saida’s face was broken more than it should have been about a bird dying.

“It’s wing was broken and it was starving. There wasn’t much we could do, but listen to it sing and pet its feathers. We dug a hole, as much as we could, and buried it. Sarah couldn’t stop crying. I didn’t really understand...It was just a bird. I know they’re rare, but...She told me she was crying because it didn’t deserve to be in so much pain. She wanted it to be free, and to fly, because that’s what it was meant to do.”

Saida’s eyes started to brim. “I could probably understand that.”

“Yeah.” Joseph took a deep breath, feeling his chest fill with air for the first time in what felt like months. It was relieving, to be able to breathe.

