

Women screaming, sirens blazing. It was about six o'clock in the morning, the sun barely piercing through the broken blind-venetian. My eyes were hazy. The silhouette of a woman lingered on the other side of the frosted window pane of the door.

'Mr. Montgomery?' The woman's voice was muffled by the heavy door but the continuous thumping on the door was less so. My head was spinning, palpating with the banging of the door. How much had I drunk last night? I checked my glass – empty – not a drop of whiskey left. The bottle next to it was of little comfort either, not enough whiskey left to make up a shot. Ah well. I lit a cigarette. I took the bottle and poured the last few drops into the chipped cup of cold tea which was perched on the other side of the old desk. It had only been there a day or two, it'd that I do. 'Mr. Montgomery?' the voice called again, followed by another series of thunderous thundering knocks. It was Mary Wilkins, the woman from two doors down. It didn't doesn't matter how many times I enlightened enlighten her with the information that I was am, in fact, a private investigator, she still thought I was thinks I'm a police officer. I staggered to the door and struggled to turn the key. As I opened the door screaming voices and sirens resonated resonate across the pPark. I was I'm intrigued. I staggered past the frantic Mary Wilkins, grabbed my coat and stick, and headed for the main door.

I limped down the three steps that led away from the door, across the cracked path, through the rusted iron -gate that was swinging on one hinge, and through one of the small breaches in the hedge that surrounded Hanley Park. I had almost, but not quite, forgotten Mary Wilkins. She was still behind me, vociferously articulating her opinions and outrage -vociferously. She was terrifying. She had never had children, and she had married more times than should be legal – all incredibly young and all fled within a year. I have never understood how she got them down the aisle in the first place. The sun had barely risen and yet she was in full make-up. Her lips were thick with red. Her hair was greying yet perfectly styled on the top of her head. Her body was draped in a tight sequined dress, every lump and sag perfectly swathed without kindness. She wore black suspenders and stockings with black stiletto-heeled shoes and an open fur-trimmed coat. She looked like a harlot, less a lady of pleasure, more a woman of pain. She had a phobia of aging, but her pinched face told her story. Her eyes were sunk and creased with sagging flesh, the lines on her face were like the rings of an ancient tree. She continued to follow close behind me. Her heels were sinking in the ground. She was as slow as me. The intonation of her voice was irksome. The sirens and screaming from tThe pPark sounded like the smoothness of Shelton Brooks in contrast. I used my stick to push me away from Mary Wilkins and moved swiftly across the grounds towards the milling folk of Parkway and the surrounding streets.

Comment [SJC1]: You might want to find a way to subtly orientate the reader with the time period in which the story is set quite early on in the narrative – perhaps through a passing reference to a familiar cultural event, such as the Armistice.

Comment [SJC2]: Although italics traditionally indicate interior monologue this is effectively redundant in a first person narrative. Try these asides without italics and see what you think.

Comment [SJC3]: As above.

Comment [SJC4]: You move from the past to the present tense in this sentence, and switch back and forth as the narrative continues. You started in the past tense, and this tends to read better. The present tense gives immediacy, so they say, but it also gives the impression that the author does not know what is going to happen next either. I'd strongly recommend that you stay in the past tense, but whichever you adopt you have to be consistent. I've standardised to the past tense in the rest of your document – again, see how you think it reads.

Comment [SJC5]: Would he be able to tell? No tights in those days, of course, so he could just note the stockings, which he would be able to glimpse.