

Writing Sample 1

The mere flicker of her body hinted at her aversion to crowds, confirming the theory that had taken root. Ah, it would have to wait for another day, perhaps later in the year. Claude couldn't assume that people would readily place their trust in someone after just a few months, but he liked to hold on to a glimmer of optimism. But that was a thought for another time. In response to her smile, Claude returned one of his own, and while he was accustomed to smiling out of necessity, this one felt more genuine than the others. He felt a sense of gratitude that she seemed more at ease in his presence now, compared to the cold air that had enveloped them before.

"I suppose that's true. Even the most stoic of soldiers often find affection for at least one stray." It was amusing how many animals had found their way to the monastery. If given the chance, Claude would gladly offer a treat to one of the dogs. He was intrigued by her mention of favorite animals being present, and he would venture a guess that horses were the obvious first choice. "I'm going to take a wild guess and say you're more of a cat person than a dog person?" Cats seemed to match her temperament better. If his assumption was correct, then the third animal would most likely be wyverns. It was another small bond they shared; Claude enjoyed observing the magnificent creatures and had even ridden a few in his lifetime. Handling them could be a challenging but rewarding task.

Of course, Marianne would find solace in such a place. Claude was certain that she preferred the company of animals over people. In fact, she seemed to interact with them better than with humans. "Well, you can always come here after everyone clears out in the evening. I'm not sure if there's a completely deserted spot in the monastery at all times." People came and went to various places throughout the day; one just needed to find the right time when nobody else was around. "I mean, in such a vast academy, you'd probably want a place besides your room for a little privacy, right?" While Claude was comfortable in his own room, he didn't enjoy feeling cooped up. Besides, the monastery boasted such a picturesque environment—why let it go to waste?

A playful arch of his brow revealed his sheer amusement. Now she was posing another question? He didn't mind; in fact, he was more than willing to play along. "Is that so? And here I thought my previous answers were sufficient. I poured my heart into them, you know?" He placed a hand on his hip and tapped a finger against his chin, as if pondering the question with utmost seriousness. "Welllll..." he trailed off, pretending to contemplate. Did Claude have a personal spot? He had several places he frequented, depending on the time of day when prying eyes were scarce. "I suppose there is one place I favor more than the others, but it's too good to give away," he teased, adopting an air of mystery. "However, I'll spill the secret to you, on one condition: promise me you won't come unannounced, and please, keep it to yourself."

He took a deep breath, ready to divulge. "There's a particular spot, if you go down from our classroom and take a right turn. You'll come across a row of hedges, and nestled within that secluded little nook is a charming gazebo. There's only one way to access it, unless you're

itching to run through those hedges. During the day, you might find a few people there, mostly staff members, but in the evening, it's fair game. I've heard that some people even enjoy tea there, but every time I've been there, it's been pretty empty." Claude pressed a finger to his lips, a gesture of secrecy. "Consider it our little secret. If I'm not there, you're free to enjoy the spot. It's a perfect place for reading."

Writing Sample 2.

I wonder if every action I take is merely a desperate attempt to capture your attention.

Or perhaps it's just my feeble justification for the heinous acts I commit.

Heido twirled the knife in his hand, a weary sigh escaping his lips as he wiped the corners of his mouth. The metallic taste lingered, stubbornly refusing to dissipate. This wasn't the first time he had experienced it; in fact, it held a strange familiarity. Like the scent of death, like the lifeless bodies. Yet he couldn't dwell on those thoughts for long. If he lingered any longer, he was certain someone would discover him. He wasn't the most meticulous killer, evident from the splatters of blood that adorned the surroundings and stained his once-favorite jacket. What a shame. He carelessly tossed the salmon knife to the ground, letting it fall near the lifeless corpses. It was a ritual he indulged in from time to time, unconcerned about leaving fingerprints since he always wore gloves for safety. He couldn't afford to be traced back to his gruesome deeds. Where was the thrill in that? Besides, he relished the thought of tormenting the police, leaving behind substantial evidence while they remained clueless about his identity.

But before he departed, he crouched down, his fingers plunging into the fresh, dripping blood. Another part of his twisted routine was to leave mocking notes, a never-ending taunt to the law.

"Failure to protect."

Heido shook his hand to rid it of the crimson stain, then rose to his feet, walking away and vanishing into the enveloping darkness.

Two lifeless bodies lay before him—siblings, one twenty-four years old and the other eighteen. They were outsiders, lost souls desperately searching for a sense of direction. Their aimless wandering persisted well into the evening, with the fading sun yielding to the feeble glow of street lamps. And then, Heido appeared, a seemingly gentle smile adorning his face, instantly soothing the siblings' troubled hearts. His soft demeanor effortlessly earned their trust, and when he offered to lead them to a nearby motel, they didn't hesitate to follow. So easily they trailed behind him, slipping deeper and deeper into the abyss of darkness, away from the guiding light.

And then it happened. Without much resistance, their lives were snuffed out. Heido struck first, his knife plunging into the man's chest, and before the woman could even attempt to flee, he

seized her by the hair, drawing her close and mercilessly slitting her throat. But he didn't stop there. Long after their lifeless bodies lay on the ground, blood pooling around them, he continued his frenzied assault, stabbing relentlessly until he felt a twisted satisfaction. Leaving behind his chosen weapon, he departed without a trace, leaving behind nothing but his chilling note.