

Candidate 1 evidence

Hamish stepped off the platform and boarded the train. Anxiously, he moved through the carriage, his fingers gripping the seats as he steadied himself against the movement of the train. A creature of habit, he positioned himself in “his seat”—a window seat, facing in the direction of travel, with a table providing opportunities for conversation if he was lucky. One face on his daily commute was a familiar blur, a connection of indistinct memories that were momentarily broken by a nod from one passenger and a smile from another.

Hamish settled into his seat; the rhythmic clattering of the train wheels on the track was hypnotic. The train passed by the jagged silhouette of the Wallace Monument, with the orange rays of the sun rising in the background—the same scene he had witnessed every day for his whole life, the landmark of his home town. He closed his eyes and was taken back to when he was eight—he and his friends would race up the hill, chasing each other like dogs chasing their own tails. When they got to the top, they would find the biggest stick they could discover and pretend they were one of the famous warriors of the past who inspired the monument in his name 500 years on, whose name struck fear into enemy lines. This naivety was what kept the boys young; the loss of innocence and belief that they could be whoever they wanted was a tragedy every man faced.

Hamish reopened his eyes, and a young, dark-haired man sat across from him. He had the same straight black hair and hazel brown eyes. He looked familiar—a mirror to the past. It threw Hamish back 50 years. He was sitting in the same seat; his too-big grey suit hung ungainly over his hands—a charity shop find for his first day at law school. He clutched his father’s worn-out briefcase, a hand-me-down gift containing nothing. Finally, he had escaped the entrapment of school and had his first chance at real freedom. He looked into the young man’s eyes and could see the desire to try to make a name for himself. He would be the first member of his family to escape the estate where his family had been for 60 years. Hamish wondered if he had the same ambitions as he carried when he was a young man dreaming of his very own car, a house of his own, and a successful career. The first year of law school passed him in the blink of an eye, and then the young man stood up to leave. A faint moustache hovered over his top lip; his once oversized suit now looked tight for wear, and the heavily worn briefcase was packed to the brim with papers. The young man nervously stepped off the train and into the next chapter of his life.

As the young man departed, Hamish caught sight of a young couple sitting on a bench at the station. The woman gazed into the man’s hazel eyes, looking into the future and the endless possibilities that lay ahead of them. It’s a moment imprinted on his mind. Sitting in an Irish pub with the low murmur of conversation, punctuated by the dim lighting cast a glow over the tables and faded leather chairs. And then he saw her ocean blue eyes from across the room, the first glance still ingrained in his mind. That day marked the moment when he finally figured out what he had been seeking—it wasn’t a fancy car, a grand

house, or an important job. It was her. Their love was a love that people find once in a lifetime, and Hamish desperately wanted to disembark here and revisit it, but the train slowly began to grind away from the stop, and the image of the young couple faded into the distance forever.

Lenzie station, the halfway point on Hamish's journey. He looked out of the window and saw the familiar spires of the church where his wedding took place flash by. He recalled how he had stood nervously at the front of the church waiting for his soon to be wife to walk through the ornate double doors at the back of the church. The church congregation was filled with loved ones waiting in anticipation for the bride to reveal herself. She emerged from behind the doors wearing a beautiful white dress. She smiled brightly, her happiness filling the room with warmth.

The church spire faded into the distance and the train sped past a playground. Hamish caught a fleeting glance of a mother with her two young children playing. It reminded him of returning from work and being greeted by his kids when he was getting off the train. A beaming smile would appear on their faces as they saw their dad for the first time that day. His daughter's hair flying out behind her as she flew through the air on the swing; his son's screams of delight as he slid down the slide. It was only a small period of Hamish's life; however, it is a time that he cherished more than any other—time with his wife and his children.

The constant rhythmic hum of the train started to slow. The view from his window had changed from the endless green fields of cattle to the hectic town centres jostling with people. Each part of the journey offered its own memories and beauty.

The train made a sudden jolt, and Hamish's hand instinctively grabbed the overhead strap. The plastic grip made him flash back to a couple of years ago when he was standing at the side of his wife's hospital bed. The faint smell of antiseptic lingered in the air as he gently adjusted the pillow beneath her head, her fragile body so small and broken, lying on the white sheets. "I'm sorry, Hamish," she whispered. Her voice was faint due to the pain; however, he could hear it was full of love. He held her hand, gently stroking it—the hand that he had held so tightly for all these years. Hamish had held her hand when she had received her diagnosis and had held her hand through those sleepless nights when the pain was too much to bear. He held it as she slipped away. Her passing came with unbearable grief but also relief, knowing she was no longer in pain.

As the train pulled into Queen Street, a surge of bodies spilled out onto the platform. Many moved with purpose, scanning the crowd for a familiar face or landmark, while others appeared confused and disorientated. Hamish stayed dead still. This was it—the end of his journey. A journey filled with happiness, love, pain, and laughter. A dim figure in black

approached Hamish and informed him that it was time for him to disembark. Hamish rose and made his way to the exit. He hesitated for a moment—he wasn't ready to leave yet. He took a breath, reached for the button, and the door slid open. He took one final breath and stepped into the arms of his wife.