

# The Secret of the Desert

My life has never been the same since then. The nostalgia that I felt the years before that day, running around the kitchen, playing hide and seek. And the days when he went away with my parents, and I was left in the hands of Auntie Susie and Uncle Felix, made me feel left out.

It was his 4<sup>th</sup> journey, and this time, he was alone. A week went by, and still no sign. Now, 7 years later, I'm still the one who wakes up in the night in a terrible state, as salty tears wash down my faces like an ocean wave coming towards the shore.

A nice start, beginning in the distant past, suggesting that these memories are still influential in the protagonist's life - perhaps that they can't move on.

Today is the day I turn 15. You mark the time shift clearly with verb tense too.

My parents are out all day, trading in the local market and won't be back until late this evening.

I decide that I'm ready to make the journey to the city of Minya, to get some supplies for us.

I plan to head out at 6 in the morning, so hopefully, I would get there and back before early this evening. I pack some food, a compass to help me navigate my way, a bottle for me to drink from, and a floral-patterned scarf to protect my head from the heat. Think about how these details can add to your main idea - could it be an old compass, belonging to someone significant for example?

After I have finish packing, I change into a cool, cotton blouse. Now it is time to head out.

It is much cooler than I thought it would be, but I know that it won't last for long.

Walking through the dry, barren landscape, I feel minute compared to this vast expanse of desert and wondering what it holds for me.

I travel over mounds of sand carefully sculpted by the wind, and I check my compass to see if I'm heading in the right direction.

Taking a big thirsty drink from my dented, metal container I carry on my way wondering if this was how his journey began on that day. I try and push these thoughts away, replacing them with images of us all together, and our parents telling us about their happy travels.

Nice moment repeating the importance and focus on the past

I stop in my tracks as I recognise the place from their descriptions. I put my backpack and my compass down on a smooth boulder and cup my hands, scooping up some cool, fresh water from the bucket inside the well and bring it to my hot, parched lips.

Reaching into my weathered, leather sack I take my water container out to refill it. Turning around, I see people in the distance, not too far away. But my eyes must be deceiving me, because when I take a second glance it is in fact a sandstorm.

Knowing I would never outrun it, I wrap my scarf around my mouth and crouch behind the ancient well to protect myself from the force, with my heart beating frantically.

Was this what happened on that day or was it all a misunderstanding and he is out there somewhere, now? Again - great repeated questions - you are establishing a nice pattern through this repetition. It really feels like your protagonist can't escape their past and can't move on  
I glance back and notice my beautiful antique compass, glinting in the now rising sunlight.

My grandfather gave this to me, 2 days before he died. The only precious object that he kept all throughout life and he had given it to me. ah - nice! maybe introduce this earlier  
Was it the grandfather that went missing? Maybe make that clearer in your opening  
Many years later, I still can't picture my life without it. He always told me to hold onto the things most precious in my life, so I did. If only I could have done the same with him.

I stagger towards it, my hair plastered to my face. When the sandstorm hits, I'm thrown to the floor on my knees. I scramble about in hope to find it, and in doing so, churning up the sand. My body heaves with relief, as I feel my backpack and another object in my hands. When I blink away the sand from my eyes, I realise what I'm holding. I let go, and as soon as I do, everything turns black...

How could you tweak this ending to reinforce that idea of a protagonist unable to move on from their past - and perhaps ruined by that?

Great narrative structure with some lovely, deliberate structural choices. Well done!