

Short story example #2



With tumbling, lice-ridden matted hair, the ringleader in his late 20's, stands with his face turned insolently towards the police. He raises his right arm in defiance with the middle finger pointed upwards in an obscene gesture.

Disdainfully and scornfully he hurls abusive language at the armed anti-riot police officers on the other side of the gorge. His speech is drunkenly slurred as spittle flies from his mouth like a rabid dog. He is dressed in a tatty short sleeved t-shirt with a dishwater grey under vest protruding from his flabby waistline.

His body reeks of sweat and unwashed flesh; of stale tobacco and dried-up vomit. He wears shoddy trousers teamed with intimidating combat boots that are caked with mud. His left arm wields a long knife which is taking up the slack of a rope that supports the adjacent bridge spanning the ravine. He thinks himself to be an anarchist, filled with contempt, rebellious and temporary power. In the distance, a modern metropolis stands atop a hill, its buildings like tall, dark fingers touching an early evening sky. An oppressive stream of black matter pervades the air and space surrounding the skyscrapers.

The core of the city is concealed from sight revealing only the outer rim that drops down slightly from left to right because there are fewer landmarks.

The mood is dark, somber and threatening with no aesthetics to lighten the gloom. Life is likely to be as it is in most cities; fast, furious, polluted and dominated by the search for business and profits. It contains people at both ends of the spectrum: from successful young yuppies in loft apartments to down-and-outs, dossers, who survive on the crumbs of others excesses.

This beautiful city has so much going for it and like every major city it has its downsides and disadvantages – just a hundred metres from the financial center of the city stands the cardboard city where the homeless live and where substance abusers congregate. By contrast, the festival taking place in the low horizon is bathed in light. Rock and rollers and hippies are dancing and swaying to a cool vibe from the stage. The site is littered with smashed beer bottles, garbage and cigarette ends.

There are a few parked vehicles and mega-sized amplifiers blast ear-splitting music into the turgid dope filled night. On the platform is a young girl, black hair tied back in a ponytail, playing saxophone with immense energy and passion. Her innocent face is marred by numerous hoops and studs as she continuously picks at a raw scab on her lips where infection has set in and foul smelling pus is oozing out. She is oblivious of her surroundings as her world is cocooned in cocaine induced psychedelic colours. Around her three heavy metal guitarists accompany in wonderful harmony.

Her voice is surprisingly pure and crystal clear as she sings of her deep hatred for authority; her desire to smash a merciless society that has humiliated and abandoned her. The revelers roar approval but start to become aware of a presence on the other side of the gorge. A knot of policemen is close to the bridge, armed with riot shields and truncheons, awaiting an order to charge over the footbridge and into the crowd. The festival has been deemed illegal and their job is to disperse the gathering in the shortest time possible.

Like a pack of hunting hyenas, they are pent-up, aggressive and nervous; they smell the aroma of marijuana as it drifts from a hundred lips across the gorge and wonder if they have friends or family there. Meanwhile, their Commander is barking a warning through a loudspeaker and has given the crowd ten seconds to start leaving the site. A police van arrives with reinforcements, young recruits spilling out of the back doors, battle dressed and fearsome. Like wild, starved and emancipated carnivores, they are eager to taste blood. Their eyes gleam with anticipation and a near insanity grips their mind.

In the name of the law, they are getting ready for a first hand experience in the gory battering and pulping of other human beings. The bridge is the focal point dividing the two parties. An old fashioned rope bridge, such as you still see in India and Nepal today, hangs across the ravine. The rope is like a snake, coiled and flexible. About 50 metres long and sagging in the middle, the bridge is strongly constructed and not really dangerous although it twists and bucks in the wind. A man crossing it will not be able to keep his trunk centered over his feet.

He has to will each foot to lift over the tilting slats and lurch himself forward while the bridge pitches as if to mock his clumsy steps. In the dark and gloomy night, the ravine is menacing. Its mossy, black and silvery boulders resemble thousands of dried up corpse buried in a pit. As the breeze gently flutters the grass, the ravine appears to be infested and alive with hideously fat maggots sucking on decaying meat. The lout who wields the knife has the power to cut the rope that secures the bridge from the festival side of the

gorge and prevent the police from reaching the festival. The outcome hangs on his decision.