

Section 1:

#1 (First three paragraphs): Strengths:

- Strong opening hook that establishes the narrator's skepticism
- Vivid sensory details that create atmosphere

Weakness: Limited build-up to the portal discovery → Your transition from walking to finding the portal feels rushed. The description "faint, shimmering light" and "curved inwards" needs more development to create suspense.

Exemplar: *The shimmer started as a pinprick of light, barely visible against the weathered brick. As I drew closer, it pulsed and grew, casting an otherworldly glow that made the walls appear to breathe.*

#2 (Where and When Am I? section): Strengths:

- Detailed observations of medieval life
- Effective use of specific period details

Weakness: Surface-level historical elements → Your descriptions focus mainly on obvious visual elements like clothing and buildings. Deeper aspects of medieval society - social customs, religious practices, daily routines - are missing.

Exemplar: *The air rang with church bells marking the hours of prayer, while merchants hastily covered their wares at the sound, knowing their customers would soon hurry to attend mass.*

#3 (The Challenge of Time section): Strengths:

- Thoughtful reflection on the experience
- Strong emotional conclusion

Weakness: Rushed resolution → Your return to the present happens too quickly. The emotional impact of leaving Lady Eleanor and that world behind needs more development.

Exemplar: *My hand trembled as I reached for the shimmering portal, knowing that once I stepped through, Lady Eleanor's kindness and this glimpse into the past would become nothing more than a memory.*

■ Your narrative shows promise in creating an engaging time-travel story. Consider deepening the medieval world by showing more interactions between characters and exploring the protagonist's inner conflict about belonging in this time period. You could expand on Lady Eleanor's character and add more scenes showing the contrast between modern and medieval mindsets. Adding specific challenges related to language barriers would make the story more realistic.

Actionable task: Rewrite the portal discovery scene (paragraphs 2-3), focusing on building tension gradually and including more specific sensory details about how the portal affects the surrounding environment.

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**Score: 42/50**

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Section 2:

The Portal in the Alley

#1 I never believed in the supernatural. Growing up, I was the kid who always asked for proof, who didn't buy into ghost stories or fantastical legends. But that was before I discovered the portal.

~~It happened on a late afternoon in the fall.~~ [On a late autumn afternoon,] The air was crisp, and the sun, dipping low behind the buildings, cast long shadows on the cobbled streets of my neighbourhood. I had just left my apartment for a walk, a way to clear my mind after a long week of work. The alley behind my building was familiar—quiet, narrow, and often overlooked by most people. I'd passed through it countless times before. But that day, I noticed something different. A faint, shimmering light flickered at the end of the alley, where the brick walls seemed to curve inwards, almost as though they were trying to hide something.

~~Curiosity got the better of me.~~ [My curiosity overwhelmed my caution.] I stepped closer, my footsteps muffled by the damp stone. As I approached the light, the air seemed to hum with energy. It felt wrong, but also strangely compelling. Without thinking, I reached out a hand toward it, and in that moment, everything shifted. The world around me twisted, spun, and then—silence.

I opened my eyes and found myself standing in the middle of a bustling street, but it was nothing like the city I knew. Gone were the modern glass buildings and neon signs. Instead, I was surrounded by towering stone structures, their facades worn by centuries of wind and rain. The streets were narrow and uneven, the cobblestones rough beneath my feet. Horse-drawn carts

trundled past, their wheels creaking, and people walked by dressed in heavy woollen cloaks and tunics, their faces stern but absorbed in their own business.

I **realized** [realised] with a jolt that I wasn't in my neighbourhood anymore. The portal had brought me somewhere far, far away in time—somewhere in the past.

## #2 Where and When Am I?

A quick glance around confirmed it: I was no longer in the present day. The clothing styles were nothing like anything I'd ever seen. The men wore long tunics with leather belts and sturdy boots, while the women's dresses were full and layered, with high collars and intricate sleeves that looked like they might have taken hours to create. Some wore headscarves or veils, their hair hidden beneath them, while others had their faces exposed, though their expressions were mostly serious and reserved.

~~I was in a medieval city—likely in Europe—judging by the architecture.~~ [The architecture suggested I had landed in a medieval European city.] The buildings were squat and close together, their windows small and arched. The streets were alive with activity—traders peddling their wares, children running and playing between the carts, and beggars sitting along the edges of the street, their hands outstretched in hopes of receiving alms.

I guessed it was sometime in the 14th century, but I couldn't be sure. The people looked healthy enough, but the town was no stranger to hard times. I could see evidence of a more rustic, difficult life—there was a distinct smell of manure in the air, mingled with the fragrance of fresh bread baking from nearby stalls.

I had no idea how to navigate this world. I had no medieval money, no language skills (though people here spoke what sounded like Old English or perhaps an early form of French), and certainly no idea where to go or what to do.

## The Adventure Begins

I decided to head toward a central square I had seen in the distance, hoping to find someone who might help me. But the moment I stepped into the square, I was immediately confronted by a group of rough-looking men who, judging by their thick leather jerkin and swords at their sides, were probably guards or mercenaries. They looked at me with suspicion.

"Stranger," one of them grunted, his hand moving toward the hilt of his sword. "What business do you have here?"

Panic surged in me, and I **realized** [realised] I needed to think fast. With no time to explain that I had fallen through a time portal, I did the first thing that came to mind. I blurted out a line I had

read somewhere in a history book about knights and kings, something I hoped might make me sound important.

"I'm on a diplomatic mission from the King of England," I said, my voice shaking more than I cared to admit.

The men exchanged looks. One of them stepped closer, his eyes narrowing.

"Diplomatic, eh?" he said slowly. "We'll see about that."

Suddenly, a voice cut through the tension. A woman, dressed in a simple but elegant gown, appeared from the crowd. She had a noble bearing about her, and she spoke with authority.

"Leave him be, men," she said sharply. "He's with me."

The mercenaries hesitated for a moment but then stepped back, bowing to the woman. I was too stunned to do much of anything, still trying to process what had just happened.

The woman turned to me, her expression softening. "Are you lost, stranger?" she asked in a tone that suggested both curiosity and concern.

I nodded, still unsure of how to explain my situation. "I... I'm not from here," I said slowly, my mind racing. "I don't know how I got here."

She looked at me for a long moment, then smiled, as though she had heard stranger things. "You're not the first to be lost in this way," she said, as if that explanation made perfect sense. "Come with me. I'll get you to safety."

Her name was Lady Eleanor, and she was the daughter of a local noble. She took me to her family's manor, a sprawling estate on the outskirts of the town. There, she gave me food, a change of clothes, and time to recover from my initial shock.

Over the next few days, I learned more about her world. The constant threat of plague, the ever-present danger of raids from rival factions, and the rigid social structure that kept people like Lady Eleanor far removed from the struggles of the common folk. She introduced me to the local ruler, a man named Lord Wycliffe, who appeared to be a mix of both the kind and cruel aspects of medieval nobility. It became clear that the politics of this time were brutal, and alliances shifted quickly. I had to be careful about who I spoke to and what I said.

### #3 The Challenge of Time

As I spent more time in the medieval world, I began to notice the subtleties of life here—the way people regarded me, the unfamiliar food, the uncomfortable silences that fell whenever I spoke of things they didn't understand. The hardest part was the constant fear of being caught. I had no

idea how to explain my sudden arrival, and the idea of living here permanently was terrifying. How would I survive in a world so different from my own?

~~One evening, while Lady Eleanor and I were discussing the recent news of a potential invasion~~ [During an evening discussion with Lady Eleanor about a potential invasion], I happened upon a familiar feeling—one of déjà vu. The alley from which I had first emerged was nearby, hidden behind a thick curtain of ivy in the manor's garden. I approached it, my heart racing, and found the shimmering light again.

I had no idea if this would work, but I stepped into the light. The world spun once more, and I braced myself for the disorienting journey. When the spinning stopped, I found myself back in my own time, standing in the alley behind my apartment building, just as I had left it.

The world was the same, yet I was not. I had witnessed history in its raw, unfiltered form—its hardships, its beauty, its violence, and its moments of grace. I had walked among people whose names would never make it into the history books but who had lived and loved in their own ways. The knowledge of that world lingered in me, a secret that I would never be able to fully share. But one thing was certain—I would never look at my own time the same way again. The past, with all its mysteries, was a part of me now, and I would carry it with me forever.