

Section 1:

#1 "Fog clung to the harbor like an old sorrow on this damp October evening. Mae stood at the edge of the wooden dock in Port Arlan, her scarf fluttering in the wind like a frayed memory. The last ferry was late. The sea hissed beneath her boots, whispering promises and warnings she couldn't quite decipher."

Strengths: Your sensory imagery creates a vivid atmosphere. The comparison of fog to "old sorrow" immediately establishes a melancholic tone.

Character introduction → While you introduce Mae, her emotional state remains somewhat vague in this opening. The imagery overshadows her as a character.

Perhaps consider: "Mae clutched her ticket tightly as she stood at the edge of the wooden dock in Port Arlan, the fog clinging to the harbour like an old sorrow on this damp October evening."

#2 "Mae had always been the quiet one, a librarian in a coastal town too small for secrets. But today, her world had shifted. In the hollow of her coat pocket was a letter—creased, smudged with the oils of her fingertips, read too many times. It was from her sister, Isla, gone seven years without a word. Come to me. I need you."

Strengths: Your concise backstory effectively builds intrigue without overwhelming the reader. The physical description of the letter adds emotional weight.

Plot motivation → The reason for Isla's disappearance and sudden reappearance remains unclear. This leaves a gap in understanding Mae's hesitation.

Consider adding: "Mae had always been the quiet one, a librarian in a coastal town too small for secrets. But today, her world had shifted. In the hollow of her coat pocket was a letter—creased, smudged with the oils of her fingertips, read too many times. It was from her sister, Isla, who had vanished after their bitter argument about their father's will seven years ago. Come to me. I need you."

#3 "The boat's horn cut through the mist like a wound reopening. Mae stepped forward. As the ferry emerged from the fog—its lights soft halos in the gray—a strange calm settled over her. The dock creaked beneath her, steady as a heartbeat. She wasn't sure what waited on the other side, but the sea, once a wall, now felt like a bridge."

Strengths: Your metaphor of the sea changing from "wall" to "bridge" powerfully symbolises Mae's emotional journey. The pacing effectively builds tension.

Character development → The shift in Mae's feelings seems abrupt without showing her thought process.

Consider: "The boat's horn cut through the mist like a wound reopening. Mae hesitated, then stepped forward. Seven years of anger and hurt still burned, but beneath it lay something else—the ache of missing her only family. As the ferry emerged from the fog—its lights soft halos in the gray—a strange calm settled over her."

■ Your piece creates a strong atmospheric foundation with beautiful imagery and setting details. The emotional core—a strained sibling relationship—has great potential but needs deeper exploration. The character of Mae would benefit from clearer motivations and internal thoughts. Also, consider developing the conflict between the sisters more specifically. What exactly drove them apart? What has changed to bring them back together? Adding these concrete details will help readers connect more deeply with Mae's journey. Additionally, showing Mae's conflicted feelings through small physical actions or thoughts would make her emotional transition more believable. For instance, you might show her almost turning back before boarding or touching a childhood keepsake in her pocket. This would strengthen the emotional impact of her decision to cross the sea towards reconciliation.

Score: 42/50

Section 2:

Fog clung to the ~~harbor~~ [harbour] like an old sorrow on this damp October evening. Mae stood at the edge of the wooden dock in Port Arlan, her scarf fluttering in the wind like a frayed memory. The last ferry was late. The sea hissed beneath her boots, whispering promises and warnings she couldn't quite decipher. #1

Mae had always been the quiet one, a librarian in a coastal town too small for secrets. But today, her world had shifted. In the hollow of her coat pocket was a letter—creased, smudged with the oils of her fingertips, read too many times. It was from her sister, Isla, gone seven years without a word. Come to me. I need you. #2

She hated boats. She hated the sea. And yet, here she was, drawn by something deeper than fear. The ghost of old arguments haunted her—the way she'd slammed the door, the way Isla's voice cracked the last time they spoke. Now, regret curled tight around her ribs.

A seagull shrieked above, slicing the silence. The salty air stung her nose, mingling with the faint scent of diesel and seaweed. Her fingers trembled as she traced the name on the ferry ticket: Isla's Cove. She closed her eyes and let the wind comb through her hair, whispering of tides and second chances.

~~The boat's horn cut through the mist like a wound reopening. Mae stepped forward.~~ [The boat's horn cut through the mist like a wound reopening, causing Mae to flinch before stepping forward.]

As the ferry emerged from the fog—its lights soft halos in the ~~gray~~ [grey]—a strange calm settled over her. The dock creaked beneath her, steady as a heartbeat. She wasn't sure what waited on the other side, but the sea, once a wall, now felt like a bridge. #3

And as she boarded, the fog folded around her like a quilt, stitching her into the story she was finally ready to continue.