

## Section 1:

#1 "I watched the view slip by through the train window, the world outside flashing into pitch black as we plunged into a tunnel. This can't be it... ten years, and she just shows up out of the blue?"

**Strengths:** Your opening creates immediate tension and establishes the narrator's emotional state effectively. The visual imagery of the train tunnel works well as a metaphor for the character's uncertain journey.

**Weakness: Abrupt transition** → The shift from external observation to internal dialogue feels jarring. You move from describing the scenery to expressing disbelief without providing enough connection between these thoughts. The phrase "This can't be it" appears suddenly without sufficient context for readers to understand what "it" refers to specifically.

**Exemplar:** *I watched the view slip by through the train window, the world outside flashing into pitch black as we plunged into a tunnel. The darkness felt fitting for my mood. This can't be it... ten years, and she just shows up out of the blue?*

#2 "She gave me what I thought I wanted: apologies, regrets, stories of why she had left - the answers I had been searching for my whole life. I finally felt that I could trust her."

**Strengths:** This section effectively builds false hope and creates dramatic irony. Your use of past tense "what I thought I wanted" hints at the revelation to come.

**Weakness: Rushed emotional development** → The transition from receiving answers to trusting her happens too quickly. You haven't shown us enough of their interaction or the narrator's internal struggle. The phrase "I finally felt that I could trust her" needs more emotional groundwork to feel authentic.

**Exemplar:** *She gave me what I thought I wanted: apologies, regrets, stories of why she had left - the answers I had been searching for my whole life. As she spoke, something inside me began to soften. Perhaps I could learn to trust her after all.*

#3 "The glass trembled in my hand as I realised the truth. The warmth of her hug, her too-bright smile, all the words she'd spoken - it was all a mask."

**Strengths:** The physical detail of the trembling glass effectively conveys the character's shock. Your repetition of earlier images creates a strong contrast between appearance and reality.

**Weakness: Incomplete character reflection** → While you reveal the deception, you don't explore how this discovery affects the narrator's understanding of herself or her future relationship with her

mother. The phrase "it was all a mask" states the obvious without delving deeper into the emotional consequences.

**Exemplar:** *The glass trembled in my hand as I realised the truth. The warmth of her hug, her too-bright smile, all the words she'd spoken - it was all a mask. I felt hollow, wondering if I would ever be enough for someone to love me without needing something in return.*

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Your piece demonstrates solid storytelling instincts with an engaging premise and effective use of revelation. The train setting provides a nice metaphor for the journey of discovery, and you've structured the narrative to build towards a powerful realisation. However, your writing would benefit from slower emotional development and deeper character exploration. You rush through important emotional moments without fully exploring their impact on your narrator. Additionally, consider expanding the middle section where the mother and daughter interact, as this feels underdeveloped compared to the strong opening and conclusion. Also, think about adding more specific details about the narrator's life during those ten years of abandonment to help readers understand the weight of this reunion. Furthermore, the ending could explore the narrator's next steps or internal growth beyond just the shock of discovery.

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**Overall Score: 42/50**

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## Section 2:

#1 I watched the view slip by through the train window, the world outside flashing into pitch black as we plunged into a tunnel.

This can't be it... ten years, and she just shows up out of the blue?

The steady rhythm of the train rocked my thoughts back and forth. Why would my mum, the woman who abandoned me when I was only two, suddenly want to see me? I saw faint scraps of memory: her chestnut-brown hair, flashing blue eyes. Everyone used to say I looked just like her. My father would always sigh when I asked, "What happened to her?" ~~But~~ [However,] he never gave me an answer.

A clean, robotic voice cut through my thoughts, announcing the arrival of my station. Clutching my satchel, I tried to hold my chin high, to look like the strong, brave girl she would have wanted me to be. The train doors slid open.

**#2** She was waiting, her arms wide and her smile bright. But something about it - too artificial, too eager. It felt wrong. I barely knew this woman. Should I have stayed home?

Hesitant, I stepped forward and let her embrace me. Her hands were soft, and her breath was warm. I hugged her back, convincing myself it was the right thing.

She gave me what I thought I wanted: apologies, regrets, stories of why she had left - the answers I had been searching for my whole life. I finally felt that I could trust her.

That night, after she settled into our house, I crept downstairs for a drink of water. It was past my bedtime, so I tiptoed, careful not to wake anyone. But I heard the voices - words I was never meant to hear.

**#3** She hadn't come back to be my mother. She was sick, desperate. And I, her abandoned daughter, was the only match she had left.

The glass trembled in my hand as I realised the truth. The warmth of her hug, her too-bright smile, all the words she'd spoken - it was all a mask.

She came back for herself. Not for me. I finally understood what had happened to her.