

Section 1

**#1** - Opening paragraph: *"It was a quiet afternoon when Emma stood at the bus stop, her fingers twisting nervously around the strap of her backpack. The bus was late, as it always was, but today it felt different."*

**Strengths:** Your opening creates a clear setting and shows Emma's nervousness through her actions. You build tension by hinting that something important is about to happen.

**Weakness:** Vague foreshadowing → Your phrase "today it felt different" doesn't give readers enough specific details about what makes this day special. The sentence feels too general and doesn't help us understand why Emma is so nervous or what she's expecting.

**Exemplar:** *Today felt different because Emma knew her mum might finally return from her three-year absence.*

**#2** - Dialogue exchange: *"'Mom?' Emma whispered, unsure if she was imagining it." and "'Emma,' her voice was soft, shaky, as though she couldn't quite believe it either. 'It's really you.'"*

**Strengths:** Your dialogue sounds natural and shows both characters' shock and uncertainty. The whispered speech and shaky voices help readers feel the emotion.

**Weakness:** Underdeveloped emotional context → The conversation jumps straight into recognition without showing us enough about their past relationship or why they've been separated. Readers need more background information to understand why this reunion is so meaningful.

**Exemplar:** *"'Mum?' Emma whispered, remembering the last angry words they'd shared three years ago when her mother had packed her bags and left.*

**#3** - Resolution: *"Years of lost time couldn't be erased in one conversation, but it didn't matter. The gap between them was already starting to close, one word at a time."*

**Strengths:** Your ending acknowledges that healing takes time whilst showing hope for their relationship. The phrase "one word at a time" creates a nice image of gradual reconnection.

**Weakness:** Rushed conclusion → Your story moves too quickly from years of separation to forgiveness without exploring the complexity of their feelings. The reconciliation feels too easy and doesn't address the real hurt that would exist after such a long separation.

**Exemplar:** *Emma felt a mix of joy and lingering anger - she was happy to see her mum, but part of her still wondered why it had taken so long for her to come back.*

■ Your piece tells an emotional story about family reconnection that many readers will find touching. However, your writing would benefit from adding more specific details about Emma and her mother's past relationship. What caused their separation? How has Emma felt during these years apart? Adding these details will help readers understand why this reunion matters so much. Additionally, your story resolves the conflict too quickly - real family problems usually take longer to heal. Consider showing more of Emma's mixed emotions, such as feeling both happy and hurt at the same time. Also, your dialogue could include more specific memories or references to their shared past. This would make their conversation feel more realistic and personal. Finally, try to show us more about the characters through their actions and thoughts rather than just telling us how they feel.

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**Score: 43/50**

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Section 2:

**#1** It was a quiet afternoon when Emma stood at the bus stop, her fingers twisting nervously around the strap of her backpack. The bus was late, as it always was, but ~~today it felt different~~ [today felt different because Emma knew her mum might finally return from her three-year absence]. ~~Today, something that had once felt impossible was about to happen~~ [Emma had received a text message that morning saying her mother would be on the 3:15 bus].

**#2** The bus rounded the corner, and her heart skipped a beat. She took a deep breath, her throat tightening, but she stepped forward anyway. The doors creaked open, and there she was—her ~~mother~~ [mum], standing on the steps, looking exactly the same. Emma's breath caught in her chest.

"Mom?" Emma whispered, ~~unsure if she was imagining it~~ [remembering the last angry words they'd shared three years ago when her mother had packed her bags and left].

Her mom's eyes widened. For a moment, neither of them moved. Then, her mother's lips trembled into a smile, and she stepped off the bus.

"Emma," her voice was soft, shaky, as though she couldn't quite believe it either. "It's really you."

Emma's mouth went dry. She wanted to say something, anything, but the years of silence between them made it hard. There was so much to say, but nothing felt right. So, instead, she did what her heart told her to do—she stepped forward and wrapped her arms around her mother.

**#3** Her mom's arms tightened around her, as if afraid she might disappear again. Emma could feel her mother's heartbeat against her chest, steady but fast, like her own.

"I'm so sorry, Em. I... I never wanted to leave you," her mom whispered, her voice thick with regret.

Emma pulled back, wiping away a tear before it could fall. "You don't have to say sorry. I didn't ~~understand~~ [understand then]... but I think I do now. We both had to grow up, right?"

Her ~~mom~~ [mum] nodded, tears glistening in her eyes. "I thought about you every day. Every single day. I just didn't know how to come back. I was scared." She gave a small, nervous laugh. "I'm still scared."

Emma smiled, her eyes meeting her mother's. "I was scared, too."

For a long moment, they just stood there, the world around them fading into the background. ~~Years of lost time couldn't be erased in one conversation, but it didn't matter. The gap between them was already starting to close, one word at a time~~ [Emma felt a mixture of joy and lingering anger - she was happy to see her mum, but part of her still wondered why it had taken so long for her to come back. Still, she knew this was a beginning, and perhaps that was enough for now].

Finally, Emma spoke again, her voice soft but clear. "I'm glad you're here now."

Her mother nodded, her smile growing wider. "Me too, sweetheart. Me too."