

## Section 1

**#1: "Once a violinist in Prague, she now taught music to restless teens in Sydney, her fingers aching from years of performance."**

### Strengths:

- Your sentence creates a clear picture of Mira's past and present, showing how her life has changed from performing in Prague to teaching in Sydney.
- The detail about her "fingers aching" helps readers understand the physical cost of her musical career.

### Overly compressed backstory

→ You've packed Mira's entire history into one sentence, which makes it feel rushed. When you write "Once a violinist in Prague, she now taught music to restless teens in Sydney," you're telling readers too much information too quickly without letting them experience who Mira is through her actions or thoughts in the present moment. This makes it hard for readers to connect with her as a person rather than just a list of facts.

**Exemplar:** *Mira shook droplets from her umbrella, her fingers stiff as they gripped the handle—the same fingers that had once flown across violin strings in Prague's concert halls.*

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**#2: "Tom thought of the pitch he'd failed, the silence that followed, and how music had once calmed his nerves. Mira remembered her last concert, the applause echoing hollowly after her father's death. June recalled the hospital's fluorescent lights, the way music had soothed dying patients."**

### Strengths:

- Your paragraph connects all three characters through the theme of music, showing how it matters to each person differently.
- The specific memories (failed pitch, father's death, hospital lights) give readers concrete details to imagine.

## Telling instead of showing emotional depth

→ You're listing what each character thinks about, but you're not letting readers feel the weight of these memories. When you write "Tom thought of the pitch he'd failed," you're simply reporting the memory rather than bringing readers into that moment. Your writing would be stronger if you showed how these memories affect the characters right now in the café—perhaps through their body language, what they notice around them, or small actions they take.

**Exemplar:** *Tom's fingers hovered over the keyboard, but he saw only the empty boardroom, heard only the silence after his pitch collapsed. His throat tightened.*

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**#3: "Then, Mira played a single note on the piano clear, resonant, cutting through the café's noise."**

### Strengths:

- Your choice to use a single piano note as the turning point is simple and powerful.
- The words "clear, resonant, cutting through" help readers almost hear the note themselves.

### Missing punctuation for clarity

→ Your sentence needs a dash or comma after "piano" to separate the description of the note from the action of playing it. Right now, "piano clear" reads as if "clear" is describing the piano rather than the note. This small punctuation issue makes readers pause and reread, which breaks the flow of your important moment.

**Exemplar:** *Then, Mira played a single note on the piano—clear, resonant, cutting through the café's noise.*

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■ Your piece creates a lovely atmosphere in the café and introduces three interesting characters who all have connections to music. The rain, the sounds, and the smells help readers feel like they're actually sitting in that café. However, your writing relies heavily on telling readers about the characters' pasts rather than showing who they are through what they do and notice in the present moment. When you write "Once a violinist in Prague" or list what each character thinks about, you're giving readers information instead of letting them discover these details naturally through the story.

Your opening paragraphs work well to set the scene, but they could be stronger if you wove the backstory into the characters' actions. For example, instead of telling us Mira's fingers ache from years of performance, you could show her flexing her hand or struggling to open her umbrella. Additionally, your fourth paragraph lists three memories one after another, which feels mechanical. Try spreading these memories throughout the scene so they feel more natural. Also, the ending moment with the piano note is powerful, but it comes quite suddenly—perhaps you could build up to it more gradually by showing Mira being drawn to the piano earlier.

Your sensory details (cinnamon scent, rain sounds, watercolour streaks) are your strongest tool. Use more of these throughout to make the emotional moments feel real rather than just described.

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**Overall Score: 43/50**

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## Section 2:

The bell above the café door jingled as Mira stepped in, shaking droplets from her umbrella. ~~#1 Once a violinist in Prague, she now taught music to restless teens in Sydney, her fingers aching from years of performance.~~ [She had once played violin in Prague's concert halls, but now she taught music to restless teens in Sydney, her fingers still aching from those years of performance.] At the corner table, Tom hunched over his laptop, a former startup founder turned freelance coder after his company collapsed. He wore the same hoodie he'd worn to pitch investors, now faded and fraying. Near the window, June sipped chamomile tea, her sketchpad open but untouched. A retired nurse, she'd spent decades tending to others, now learning to care for herself.

Outside, rain drummed steadily against the windows, blurring the world into ~~watercolor~~ [watercolour] streaks. Inside, the café buzzed with clinking cups, murmured conversations, and the hiss of the espresso machine. The scent of cinnamon and roasted beans hung in the air, warm and grounding. Mira's coat dripped onto the tiled floor as she passed Tom, who glanced up briefly, his eyes flicking to her violin case. June watched them both, her gaze soft but unreadable.

Mira ordered a chai and settled near the piano in the corner, absently tracing its keys. Tom's fingers paused ~~mid-code~~ [mid-code], distracted by the melody she hummed. June sketched a curve that

resembled Mira's profile, then stopped, uncertain. Mira noticed Tom's glance and offered a half smile. He nodded, almost imperceptibly. June's pencil moved again, capturing the exchange.

~~#2 Tom thought of the pitch he'd failed, the silence that followed, and how music had once calmed his nerves. Mira remembered her last concert, the applause echoing hollowly after her father's death. June recalled the hospital's fluorescent lights, the way music had soothed dying patients.~~ [Tom's thoughts drifted to the pitch he'd failed, the silence that had swallowed his words, and how music had once steadied his nerves before meetings. Mira's mind wandered to her last concert, the applause that had echoed hollowly in the days after her father's death. June found herself back in the hospital's harsh fluorescent lights, remembering how music had soothed patients in their final hours.] Each carried a weight, invisible yet palpable.

~~#3 Then, Mira played a single note on the piano—clear, resonant, cutting through the café's noise.~~ [Then, Mira played a single note on the piano—clear, resonant, cutting through the café's noise.] Tom looked up, startled. June's hand froze ~~mid-sketch~~ [mid-sketch]. For a moment, time stilled. Mira felt the note settle in her chest like a heartbeat. Tom felt something loosen, a knot he hadn't known was there. June felt tears prick her eyes, uninvited but welcome. They didn't speak, didn't move ~~toward~~ [towards] each other, but in that shared moment, the rain outside softened, and inside, something shifted—quietly, deeply, differently for each of them.