

Section 1

#1: "Who is this?" Memory and Curiosity had asked. / It's a photo. Of me and my sister—before she died.

Strengths: Your opening effectively captures attention by introducing mysterious voices (Memory and Curiosity) that immediately intrigue readers. The fragmented sentence structure ("It's a photo. Of me and my sister") creates a halting, emotional rhythm that mirrors the narrator's reluctance to discuss painful memories.

Inconsistent Narrative Perspective → Your piece begins with personified concepts (Memory and Curiosity) asking questions, but this framing device disappears entirely after the flashback. The voices never return to provide closure or reaction to the revealed truth. Additionally, the shift from answering their questions to suddenly being arrested creates confusion about when and where this interrogation is actually happening. The reader cannot tell if these voices are internal thoughts, actual people questioning Judy, or abstract concepts—and this ambiguity weakens the story's foundation rather than enhancing it.

Exemplar: *After the flashback, you could write: "Memory and Curiosity fell silent, finally satisfied. But Truth whispered, 'Now tell them what really happened.'" This would reconnect the opening framework to the story's conclusion.*

#2: I just saw you grab the rope from the garage. I know your plan. I saw it on your phone. / "C'mon, let's strangle her 2day." / I am not spitting out random words. I am quoting the direct words you had texted to your friend.

Strengths: The inclusion of the text message ("C'mon, let's strangle her 2day") provides concrete evidence that makes the accusation feel real and immediate. Your use of short, declarative sentences builds tension effectively.

Unclear Accusation Logic → Your narrator claims to see the brother grab a rope, see his plan on his phone, and know he texted a friend—but then the narrator admits to pulling the lever that killed Sarah. This creates confusion about what the narrator actually witnessed versus what she planned herself. The lines "I know you are overwhelmed by envy" and "I know you wanted all of Father's will" read as though Judy is projecting her own motivations onto her brother. The shift from "You killed her" to "I pulled the lever" happens too abruptly, leaving readers puzzled about whether there was ever a brother involved or if Judy imagined the entire accusation.

Exemplar: *You could clarify by writing: "I told myself you were the one who wanted to kill her. I convinced myself I was stopping you. But when I pulled that lever, I became the murderer I feared you would be."*

#3: "Judy, you have pushed me to your brother," Blame said. / As I looked at the house, I didn't notice the photograph on the side of the road. / I didn't notice that it had ripped, separating me and my sister.

Strengths: The personification of Blame creates a powerful moment of realisation where Judy acknowledges her own responsibility. The symbolic image of the torn photograph visually represents the permanent separation between the sisters.

Underdeveloped Symbolic Ending → Your photograph metaphor appears suddenly without sufficient preparation earlier in the story. The title is "The Photograph," yet the actual photograph only appears in the final three sentences. The image of her sister's half "dancing in the wind" and Judy's half falling "into the drain" carries meaning, but you haven't built up this symbol throughout your piece. Additionally, the line "My sister had moved on. She had left me just how I had left her" attempts to create poetic symmetry, but Sarah didn't choose to leave—she was murdered. This comparison doesn't quite work because the circumstances are fundamentally different.

Exemplar: *You could strengthen this by writing: "My sister had moved on to wherever the dead go, freed from me at last. But I was trapped, falling deeper into the darkness of what I'd done, just as my half of the photograph disappeared into the drain below."*

■ Your piece tackles complex themes of envy, guilt, and self-deception with ambition. The twist—that Judy is actually the murderer, not her brother—has potential to be genuinely shocking. However, the story's impact is diminished because the mechanics of the deception aren't clear enough. You need to help readers understand whether Judy genuinely believed her brother was guilty (and was delusional) or whether she consciously framed him. Right now, the narrative voice shifts too quickly from accusing the brother to admitting guilt, which creates confusion rather than clarity. Additionally, your framing device with Memory, Curiosity, Truth, and Blame needs to be woven more consistently throughout the entire piece, not just at the beginning and end. You should also consider developing the photograph symbol earlier in your story—perhaps Judy could be holding it during the interrogation by these personified concepts, or you could describe it before the flashback begins. This would make your ending feel more earned and connected to the rest of your narrative. Finally, your piece would benefit from clearer transitions between the present moment (visiting the house) and the flashback to show readers where they are in time.

Overall Score: 41/50

Section 2:

The Photograph

"Who is this?" Memory and Curiosity had asked.

It's a photo. Of me and my sister—before she died.

"Why are you here?"

I am visiting her old house.

"How did she die?"

He killed her. Strangled her to death.

"What did he do?"

I sighed. The relentless questions were not going to stop until answered.

My mind stopped, and replayed the ten-year-old memory.

Brother. Don't. You are going to hurt Sarah.

I just saw you grab the rope from the garage. I know your plan. I saw it on your phone.

"C'mon, let's strangle her 2day."

I am not spitting out random words. I am quoting the direct words you had texted to your friend.

I know you are overwhelmed by envy. You are jealous that Sarah is the oldest child. I know you wanted all of Father's will. You are planning to hurt Sarah. No. You killed her. I saw her death in front of my eyes.

You grabbed the rope that always hung on the wall as a decoration. You tied it onto the top ~~sister's~~ **[of my sister's]** doorway, **[. You]** ~~you~~ used so many mechanical objects and nails to make ~~deadly~~ **[a deadly]** contraption.

When my sister passed that door, I pulled the lever and the rope came down perfectly on her neck. Then, I switched the blue lever on, and the rope started to rise, lifting Sarah off the ground.

I didn't do anything. You had killed her.

Why am I next to the cops? Why is an officer handcuffing me?

"Jude Myclarre. You are being arrested for ~~murder~~ **[the murder]** of Sarah Myclarre."

What? How did they find out?

"So, were you the murderer? Were you guilty?"

Yes, I was, but I didn't do anything wrong, did I?

"Think, [I] Judy," Truth had whispered in my ear. "You were driven mad by envy. You also wanted the money. Guess what? ~~At~~ **[In]** the end, your father gave it to your mother, who gave it to your cousin."

"Judy, you have pushed me to your brother," Blame said.

As I looked at the house, I didn't notice the photograph on the side of the road.

I didn't notice that it had ripped, separating me and my sister. My sister's side of the photograph danced in the wind, disappearing into the sky, as mine fell into the drain.

My sister had moved on. She had left me just how I had left her.