

Section 1

#1: "The moment I saw the package at the steps of my now-gloomy house, I knew it couldn't be for me. It was written completely in my Uncle John's neat, cursive handwriting which could make anyone's day, but he'd been dead for nearly two years up to this point."

Strengths:

- Your opening immediately creates mystery and pulls the reader in by presenting something impossible—a package from someone who has died.
- You include specific details like "neat, cursive handwriting" that help readers picture the scene clearly.

Unclear Time References → Your phrase "up to this point" creates confusion about when things are happening in your story. When you write "he'd been dead for nearly two years up to this point," it's not clear if you mean up to the moment you saw the package, or up to now as you're telling the story. This makes it harder for readers to follow the timeline of events. Time markers in stories need to be crystal clear so readers can understand exactly when each event occurs.

Exemplar: *"...but he'd been dead for nearly two years when the package arrived."*

#2: "This package had been lying there on my kitchen counter for weeks, sitting there and sucking the happiness out of everything of a ten foot radius. I've walked past it about a thousand times now; I just can't think why I really need it."

Strengths:

- You use interesting imagery with "sucking the happiness out of everything" to show how the package affects your mood.
- Your word choice of "lying there" and "sitting there" emphasises how the package just stays in one place doing nothing.

Vague Emotional Reasoning → Your writing tells us the package makes you unhappy, but you don't explain why it has this effect. Why would a package from your beloved uncle make you sad instead of curious or happy? You also write "I just can't think why I really need it," but this doesn't make

sense—if you don't need it, why does it bother you so much? Readers need to understand your character's feelings and thoughts to connect with the story. Right now, your reaction seems odd because we don't know what's going through your mind about the package.

Exemplar: *"This package had been lying on my kitchen counter for weeks, and every time I walked past it, I felt a wave of grief—seeing Uncle John's handwriting reminded me he was truly gone."*

#3: "Finally, I decide to give it a shot. I grab the butter knife and cut open the box, revealing an amulet. But not just any amulet – this amulet was a special family heirloom, surviving 7 generations."

Strengths:

- Your revelation of the amulet is well-paced, building from the simple action of opening the box to the important discovery.
- You provide important background information about the amulet being a family treasure passed down through generations.

Rushed Turning Point → This is the most important moment in your story—when you finally open the mysterious package—but you move through it too quickly. You write "Finally, I decide to give it a shot" without explaining what changed your mind after weeks of avoiding it. Then you immediately see the amulet without describing what opening the package felt like or what you were thinking. This moment should be full of emotion and detail because it's when everything in your story changes, but instead it feels rushed and empty. Your readers need to experience this discovery with you, feeling your nervousness, surprise, and wonder.

Exemplar: *"My hands trembled as I picked up the butter knife, and for a long moment, I just stared at Uncle John's handwriting on the package. Taking a deep breath, I carefully cut through the tape and lifted the cardboard flaps. Nestled in tissue paper was an amulet—not just any amulet, but the special family heirloom I'd only seen once as a child, the one that had survived seven generations."*

■ Your piece has a strong foundation with an intriguing mystery at its heart. The concept of receiving a package from a deceased relative is powerful and naturally draws readers in. However, your story needs more depth in showing how your character thinks and feels. You tell us events happen, but you don't

let us experience them through your character's eyes. For example, when you write about avoiding the package for weeks, add what you thought each time you walked past it. Did you feel guilty? Scared? Sad?

Additionally, your story would benefit from slowing down at key moments. The opening of the package is the climax of your narrative, yet it happens in just two sentences. Stretch out these important moments by including sensory details—what did the package feel like? What did you hear when you cut it open? What emotions rushed through you?

Your ending hints at big changes coming, but it's too vague. The phrases "huddled moments" and "so-called 'secrets'" don't paint a clear picture for readers. Instead, include one specific memory or secret that now makes sense. Also, your final line "my life was about to change" is too general. Show us a concrete sign of this change—perhaps you hear a knock at the door, or the amulet starts to glow, or you remember a specific conversation with Uncle John. Your story has good bones, but it needs more muscle and detail to truly come alive for your readers.

Overall Score: 39/50

Section 2:

#1 The moment I saw the package at the steps of my now-gloomy house, I knew it couldn't be for me. It was written completely in my Uncle John's neat, cursive handwriting, which could make anyone's day, but~~.~~ **But** he'd been dead for nearly two years ~~up to this point~~ **[when the package arrived]**. So, either this ~~is~~ **[was]** a huge miracle,~~—~~and the doctors somehow made an error,~~—~~or it's~~is~~ **[was]** just a ~~post~~ **[postal]** mistake. And you can guess which one it probably ~~is~~ **[was]** – I am not the kind of ~~guy~~ **[person]** ~~a lot of~~ **[whom]** miracles tend to happen to.

#2 This package had been lying there on my kitchen counter for weeks, sitting there and sucking ~~he~~ **[the]** happiness out of everything ~~of~~ **[within]** a ten ~~feet~~ **[foot]** radius. I've walked past it about a thousand times ~~now~~ **[by then]**; I just ~~can't think~~ **[couldn't understand]** why I really ~~need~~ **[needed]** it. Uncle John would have opened it at that very moment, hoping it was a letter from the council ~~of~~ **[about]** his complaint ~~of~~ **[about]** the ~~neighbour's~~ **[neighbour's]** flowers on his ~~yard~~ **[lawn]**. Sadly, he's **[was]** not here anymore, and I would just leave it on the counter – hence, I ~~do~~ **[did]** do that. I may have inherited a bit of his calmness through my dad's side, but not his everlasting love for parcels.

#3 Finally, I ~~decide~~ **[decided]** to give it a shot. I ~~grab~~ **[grabbed]** the butter knife and cut open the box, revealing an amulet. But not just any amulet – this amulet was a special family heirloom, surviving 7 generations. My uncle inherited it from his mom when he grew up, but I never thought it would return to me. I turned the box upside down and found a note taped onto the box I hadn't ~~noticed~~ **[noticed]** before – ~~For~~ *[For] Mark. Continue the family. Don't give up hope.[.]* Then I knew. All the huddled moments. The so-called 'secrets' Uncle John was keeping. I didn't understand his vague letter too much, but I knew I ~~better cherish~~ **[had better cherish]** the next few days, as my life was about to change.