

Section 1

#1: Opening paragraph

Strengths:

- Your opening immediately creates mystery and tension by revealing the impossible situation of receiving mail from someone who died six months ago
- The narrator's paranoid personality comes through clearly with specific details like clicking the elevator button twice and watching assassination tutorials

Awkward Characterisation → The phrase "I'm not what I would consider a particularly important person, but this just gives me six more reasons to be paranoid, the latter of which I'm not bothered to explain" feels confusing. You mention "six more reasons" but then say you won't explain "the latter," which suggests only one reason. This makes it hard for readers to understand what you mean. Also, the connection between not being important and having reasons to be paranoid isn't clear. Why would someone unimportant need to worry about a calligrapher impersonating their mother?

Exemplar: *"I'm not what I would consider a particularly important person, which is exactly why receiving this package terrified me—someone had gone to great lengths to get my attention."*

#2: The paragraph describing Gordon's reluctance to open the package

Strengths:

- The precise time measurements ("2 days, 21 hours and 36 seconds") effectively show Gordon's obsessive, detail-oriented personality
- The contrast between Gordon and his mother's approach to opening packages reveals important character differences

Underdeveloped Emotional Depth → You tell us that Gordon walked past the package 17 times and only looked at it 4 times, but you don't help us understand what he was feeling during those moments. Was he scared? Curious? Angry? The phrase "My mother would have already ripped it open" shows us what she would do, but doesn't explain why Gordon can't bring himself to do the same. Is he afraid of

what's inside because it reminds him of her death? Does opening it feel like accepting she's really gone? Your readers need to feel Gordon's emotions, not just see his actions.

Exemplar: *"Each time I passed the package, my chest tightened. Opening it would mean accepting that someone knew her handwriting well enough to copy it—or worse, that I didn't know her handwriting as well as I thought."*

#3: Final paragraph about tracing the path on the map

Strengths:

- The ending brings the story full circle beautifully, showing Gordon beginning to see the world through his mother's eyes
- Specific details like the "pigeons congregat[ing] at a specific spot" and the "violet pattern" make the realisation feel genuine and earned

Rushed Emotional Transformation → Your piece moves too quickly from Gordon dismissing his mother's map as "annoying and useless" to suddenly appreciating what she noticed. The shift happens in just one paragraph, which doesn't give readers enough time to believe Gordon's change of heart. You need to show us the small moments where his thinking begins to shift. What made him decide to actually trace the path? What was the first thing he noticed that surprised him? The jump from "I'm an atheist" (rejecting her imagined utopia) to "My mother had noticed. She'd notice everything" feels too sudden.

Exemplar: *"I traced the line reluctantly at first, expecting nothing. But then I saw it—the spot where pigeons always gathered, marked with tiny bird sketches I'd dismissed as pointless decoration. I stopped walking. Had that always been there? I traced another line, this time more carefully, and noticed the violet flowers I'd stepped past seventy-nine times without really seeing."*

■ Your piece has a strong concept at its heart—a young man learning to appreciate his mother's way of seeing the world after her death. Your narrator's voice is distinctive, and Gordon's anxious, detail-obsessed personality comes through in authentic ways. However, your writing would benefit from slowing down and letting emotions breathe. Right now, you're rushing through important

moments, especially Gordon's emotional journey. When characters change their minds or feelings, readers need to experience that transformation gradually, not all at once.

Additionally, you could strengthen your piece by connecting Gordon's specific details to deeper meanings. You're excellent at precise observations (counting steps, timing packages), but sometimes these details feel disconnected from the emotional story you're telling. Think about why Gordon counts these things—what does this behaviour reveal about how he's coping with grief?

Also, consider tightening your sentences. Phrases like "the latter of which I'm not bothered to explain" add confusion rather than clarity. Your readers should never have to reread sentences to understand basic information. Each sentence should move your story forward or deepen our understanding of Gordon.

Your ending has real power, but it arrives too quickly. The moment where Gordon begins seeing what his mother saw is the heart of your story—it deserves more space. Show us his resistance breaking down bit by bit. Let him struggle against this new way of seeing before he finally accepts it.

Overall Score: 43/50

Section 2:

#1 I should've been able to deduce that the package wasn't meant for me the second I saw my mother's signature hastily scribbled on the tiny note above the box. My mother had been dead for 6 months, which made receiving mail from her either witchcraft or a calligrapher impersonating her to get to me. ~~I'm not what I would consider a particularly important person, but this just gives me six more reasons to be paranoid, the latter of which I'm not bothered to explain.~~ [I'm not what I would consider a particularly important person, but this gave me yet another reason to be paranoid.] I'm the type of person to click the close button on the ~~elevator~~ [lift] twice just to make sure no one else enters and to watch tutorials on how to stay safe from assassinations.

#2 The package had sat on my doorstep for 2 days, 21 hours and 36 seconds, even though I hadn't checked my watch in almost a minute. I walked past it 17 times, but only 4 of those times I chose to actually look. My mother would have already ripped it open with no regard for the condition the

package was in, and dug in like a wild animal to grab whatever the contents of the box were. I, Gordon Kent, am obviously not my mother. My mother was an erratic old fool. I am a depressed 21-year-old. I had inherited her blue eyes and weird fashion sense, but I didn't inherit her apparent disregard for any sort of organisation whatsoever.

When I finally cut the package open with a pen (I couldn't bother using one of my clean knives for cutting a cursed package), the inside was a map. A map. How pointless. And it wasn't even the newspaper type I could use for wiping my feet when my towel was in the dry cleaner. It was the old, worn type, the type that couldn't theoretically be used for anything else except the sole purpose of being a map. I sighed, forced to actually read the contents. Oh bother, this was also the type with the small doodles that represented each place. Sketchnoting didn't work for me in high school; it's not going to work now.

This just reminded me of how imaginative people can be, unlike me. The tiny roses illustrated to the dot in the garden, the sea monster in the lake, a dragon on top of the school, and a bunch of other things people find amusing and creative. I just find it annoying and useless. Yet I have to give a ~~hatsoff~~ [hat's-off] to whoever's impersonating my mother; they really captured her personality perfectly. I'm not saying my mother's pointless; the mountains and buildings have a surprising amount of beauty and detail added, so much so I could almost imagine a multiverse where everything in the map is true, a utopia for my parents to live in peace alongside ~~god~~ [God]. The problem is, I'm an atheist.

Oh yeah, I forgot. This was a map of our town. Yet, this looked so far from my town it could almost be Narnia, and I wouldn't notice. I also forgot how bold and expressive my mother was. I used to be disgusted by it, but now at least she's not shouting it at our family dinners. Every landmark was a buttload of mumbo jumbo, in what would be my mother's words. I traced my eyeline carefully, moving around the key focal points just to prove I wasn't under the influence of modern "psychology". At the bottom of the page, it read, in the same wasteful pencil I told my mother countless times not to buy because there was a cheaper alternative, "For Gordon. I know you're not me, but at least see this place from my perspective."

#3 I traced a line with my finger from "Our Beautiful Home" to "The Sea Creature's Den", or the lake across the street. I had walked down that path 79 times now, every time taking the best route around the old birch tree and straight across the grass. Yes, I have more regard for packaging than for government property. I went there simply to admire nature, as well as ponder how pointless life is. Yet I never noticed the pigeons would always congregate at a specific spot on the grass, or the violet pattern that I always stepped past. My mother had noticed. She'd notice everything.

