

Section 1

#1: "I saw it at 7:42 a.m. Brown paper, folded tight, taped like someone cared about corners. It was sitting on the black countertop, dead center, like it had been measured into place."

Strengths:

- Your opening creates immediate curiosity by focusing on specific, concrete details like the exact time and the careful way the package was placed
- The precise observations (brown paper, tight folds, careful tape) help readers picture the scene clearly in their minds

Repetitive sentence structure → Your writing relies heavily on simple sentences that start with "I" or "It," which creates a choppy rhythm. Notice how many sentences begin the same way: "I saw," "I didn't touch," "I walked," "I didn't cry," "I didn't scream." This pattern makes your piece feel like a list rather than a flowing story. When every sentence follows the same subject-verb pattern, readers can become tired of the predictable rhythm, and the emotional weight you're trying to build gets lost.

Exemplar: *At 7:42 a.m., brown paper caught my eye—folded tight, corners taped with the kind of care that made my stomach drop. Centred perfectly on the black countertop, it looked measured into place.*

#2: "Miracles don't happen to me, they're fake, deceiving little lies to sustain your happy life, when they're really just temporary repairs to cope."

Strengths:

- Your raw honesty about not believing in miracles reveals the character's painful worldview
- The phrase "temporary repairs to cope" shows deeper thinking about how people deal with grief

Unclear pronoun reference → The shift from "me" to "your" in this sentence creates confusion about who you're addressing. You start by talking about yourself ("Miracles don't happen to me"), but then suddenly switch to "your happy life," which makes readers wonder if you're now speaking to them or to someone else. This jumping between perspectives pulls readers out of the story because they have

to stop and figure out who you mean. The sentence also runs on too long with too many ideas crammed together without proper breaks.

Exemplar: *Miracles don't happen to me. They're fake—deceiving little lies people tell themselves, temporary repairs that help them cope.*

#3: "At 11:03 p.m., I came back. I didn't plan to. I just ended up there. I picked it up. It was heavier than I expected. I opened it slowly, like it might bite. Inside: a photo of us, taken from behind, recent—me at the sink, her silhouette in the window."

Strengths:

- The specific time stamps (7:42 a.m. and 11:03 p.m.) create a sense of real events unfolding
- The revelation of what's inside the package delivers a genuinely unsettling surprise that changes everything

Sentence fragmentation weakening tension → Whilst short sentences can build suspense, your piece uses them so constantly that they actually reduce the tension rather than heighten it. The rapid-fire pattern—"I came back. I didn't plan to. I just ended up there. I picked it up. It was heavier than I expected"—feels mechanical rather than emotional. This moment should be the most intense part of your story, but the choppy rhythm keeps readers at a distance. Combining some sentences and varying your structure would let the genuine horror of the discovery sink in more powerfully.

Exemplar: *At 11:03 p.m., I found myself back in the kitchen without planning it. When I finally picked up the package, its unexpected weight made my hands tremble. Opening it slowly, as if it might bite, I discovered a photo of us taken from behind—recent, showing me at the sink with her silhouette framed in the window.*

■ Your piece creates a genuinely eerie atmosphere and the central mystery is compelling. The package, the impossible handwriting, and especially the disturbing photograph work together to build real unease. However, your writing needs more variety in how you construct sentences. Right now, almost every sentence follows the same pattern, which makes the piece feel flat even though your story is gripping. Think about combining some of your short sentences into longer ones that flow together. For example, instead of "I didn't touch it. I walked past it 31 times," you could write "I walked past it 31

times without touching it, each time finding a different excuse." This keeps the same information but sounds more natural. Additionally, your second paragraph needs clearer focus—the jump from talking about yourself to "your happy life" confuses readers about who you're speaking to. Stay in your character's voice throughout. The ending is genuinely creepy and works well, but getting there would be more powerful if your sentences didn't all sound the same. Try reading your work aloud to hear where the rhythm feels too choppy. Varying sentence length and structure will help your unsettling story land with more impact. Your opening paragraph and final reveal show real promise—now work on making the middle sections flow as smoothly.

Overall Score: 41/50

Section 2:

#1 I saw it at 7:42 a.m. Brown paper, folded tight, taped like someone cared about corners. It was sitting on the black countertop, dead ~~center~~ [centre], like it had been measured into place. The handwriting was hers. My sister's. She's been gone three years. I didn't touch it. I walked past it 31 times. Once with coffee, once with wet hair, once just to see if I could ignore it. I couldn't.

#2 Miracles don't happen to me,—they're fake, deceiving little lies ~~to sustain your happy life, when they're~~ [that sustain false hope when they're] really just temporary repairs to cope : [with.] I didn't cry. I didn't scream. I opened the fridge and stared at the eggs. I checked the locks. I checked the timestamp on my security camera, even though I don't believe in cameras. I didn't find anything.

I thought about opening it. I didn't. I made toast. Ate it slowly. I kept looking at the package like it owed me something. I took a photo. I didn't send it. I didn't want opinions. I wanted proof. I wanted to know who knew her handwriting well enough to fake it. I wanted to know why they'd send it to me, and why today. I wanted a reason that didn't involve ghosts or breakdowns.

Eventually, I sat down across from it. I said, "If this is real, I'll deal with it tomorrow." I said, "If it's fake, I'll deal with it tomorrow." I didn't open it. I didn't throw it away. I just left it there, untouched, like a question I wasn't ready to answer. I turned off the lights and left the room. I didn't look back.

#3 At 11:03 p.m., I came back. I didn't plan to. I just ended up there. I picked it up. It was heavier than I expected. I opened it slowly, like it might bite. Inside: a photo of us, taken from behind, recent—me at the sink, her silhouette in the window. A note in her handwriting: I'm watching you. No date. No explanation. I stared at it for a long time. Then I put it back in the envelope, taped it shut again, and placed it exactly where I found it. I haven't slept.