

Section 1

#1: Opening scene (from "The bell over the café door chimed softly" to "The scrape of wood against tile sounded louder than it should have.")

Strengths:

- Your scene-setting is clear and easy to picture. The café feels like a real place where two people meet after a long time.
- The line "I forgot you like to be late" shows tension between the characters without explaining too much, which makes readers curious.

Flat dialogue → Your conversation between Nora and Eli feels a bit plain here. When you write "You're early" and then Nora's response, these lines don't tell us much about how they're feeling or what their relationship was like. Real people often speak with more emotion, especially when meeting someone from their past. The exchange lacks the weight of their shared history. Consider adding small actions or thoughts that show their nervousness or discomfort. For example: *"You're early," he said, fingers tightening around his mug.*

#2: Middle section (from "For a while, they spoke of small things" to "She had found it today in the bottom of her drawer, still faintly scratched with his initials.")

Strengths:

- Your use of the silver spoon as a meaningful object works well. It connects their past to their present meeting in a way readers can understand.
- The detail about small talk (weather, bakery, city smell) shows how they're avoiding the real topic, which is realistic.

Telling instead of showing → When you write "For a while, they spoke of small things," you're summarising rather than letting readers experience the moment. This sentence tells us what happened but doesn't let us feel the awkwardness or see how they interact. The phrase "The way the city always smelled like rain even when it was dry" is interesting, but it comes in a list with simpler details, making it feel rushed. You could expand this section by actually writing some of their small talk, showing their

pauses and hesitations. For instance: *She mentioned the bakery, he nodded. A pause stretched between them. "The city smells like rain today," she said, though the pavements were bone-dry.*

#3: Ending (from "As she stood to leave" to "The bell chimed again when she was gone.")

Strengths:

- Your choice to end with the bell chiming creates a sense of things coming full circle, matching the opening.
- The image of Eli touching the spoon after Nora leaves is touching and shows his regret without using obvious words.

Rushed resolution → Your ending feels too quick after building up the tension throughout the story. When you write "As she stood to leave, he didn't try to stop her," this important moment passes in just one sentence. Readers need more time with this decision—does Nora hesitate? Does Eli consider speaking? The final line "The bell chimed again when she was gone" is neat, but it wraps things up too tidily. Your story would benefit from slowing down here, showing Nora's movement towards the door, perhaps Eli's internal struggle, or one more small detail that lingers. For example: *She stood slowly, chair scraping again. He opened his mouth, then closed it. Her hand touched the door. The bell chimed as she stepped into the rain, leaving only the spoon behind.*

■ Your piece tells a sad story about two people who used to be close but aren't anymore, and you do this through quiet moments rather than big arguments, which is effective. The café setting and the spoon as a symbol work nicely together. However, your writing would improve if you slowed down and gave readers more time to feel each moment. Right now, some parts move too quickly, especially the conversations and the ending. Try expanding your dialogue by showing what the characters are doing while they talk—are they looking away? Fidgeting? Additionally, your story jumps from one moment to the next without enough detail in between. For instance, when Nora mentions the spoon and Eli responds, you could add a sentence about his face changing or Nora's heart beating faster. Also, think about adding more sensory details throughout: what does the coffee taste like? How do the chairs feel? What sounds fill the awkward silences? Your strongest moments are when you use specific details, like the napkin folded into a triangle or the rain blurring reflections, so include more observations like these. Finally, your ending needs at least two or three more sentences to feel complete, giving readers time to understand what this meeting meant for both characters before the door closes.

Overall Score: 42/50

Section 2

#1 → The bell over the café door chimed softly as Nora stepped inside. She hesitated, eyes scanning the room until they landed on a familiar back hunched over a mug.

"Eli," she said.

He looked up, offered a smile that didn't quite reach his eyes. "You're early."

"I forgot you like to be late," she said, pulling out the chair across from him. The scrape of wood against tile sounded louder than it should have.

For a while, they spoke of small things. The weather. The new bakery across the street. The way the city always smelled like rain even when it was dry.

#2 → Nora stirred her coffee, the tiny silver spoon clinking against the cup. It was the same spoon she had given him years ago, back when they had spent every afternoon sketching plans and laughing over too-strong espresso. She had found it today in the bottom of her drawer, still faintly scratched with his initials.

"You kept it," she said quietly.

Eli glanced down. "Couldn't throw it away."

"Funny. You threw away everything else."

He didn't answer. Instead, he adjusted the napkin beside his cup with the careful precision she remembered so well, folding the corner into a perfect triangle.

Outside, rain began to fall. Drops streaked down the window between them, blurring the reflections of their faces until neither could tell who was looking at whom.

"I saw your design in the paper," he said finally. "It looked good."

"Yours too."

Silence settled again, heavy but not cruel. Nora reached for her spoon, then stopped. She left it beside his cup.

#3 → As she stood to leave, he didn't try to stop her. He only watched, fingers tracing the curve of the small, tarnished handle as though it might tell him what to say.

The bell chimed again when she was gone.