

PORTFOLIO

Spring 2024

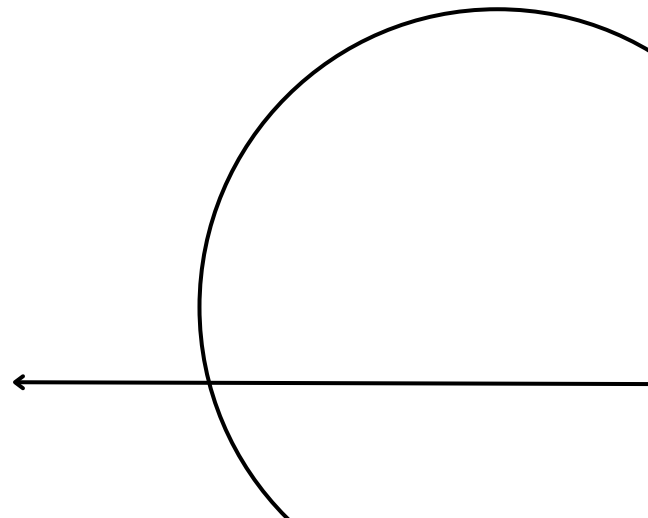
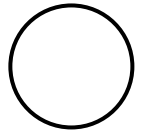
Fictional Writing



Emily Howard

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INTRO

Welcome to my fictional writing portfolio! My name is Emily Howard, and this collection of stories showcases my journey through the world of creative writing. Throughout this course, I've explored a variety of genres and themes, drawing inspiration from everyday experiences, family memories, and imaginative concepts.

In this portfolio, you'll find a range of pieces that reflect my growth as a writer. From light-hearted tales of childhood adventures to more introspective narratives, I've enjoyed the process of crafting characters, settings, and plots that resonate with readers.

Thank you for taking the time to read my work. I hope you find joy in these stories and feel a connection to the worlds I've created. I look forward to continuing my journey as a writer and sharing more stories with you in the future.

REFLECTION

EMILY HOWARD

Writing is a journey, and over the years, I've felt myself growing, not just as a writer but as a person. When I look back at my earlier works, there's a noticeable shift in my style and approach. I used to focus more on the plot and the mechanics, but now I find myself drawn to the characters and the emotions they experience. This evolution didn't happen overnight; it came through constant practice, feedback from others, and a desire to tell stories that resonate with people.

One of the most significant changes I've noticed in my writing is my ability to craft relatable characters. In the past, my characters felt like they were just following a script, moving from one plot point to another. But now, they have depth, flaws, and unique voices. This shift came from paying more attention to the people around me, observing their quirks and listening to their stories. It's amazing how much you can learn from simply watching and listening.

The stories in my portfolio reflect this growth. In "Bus Stop Conversations," I aimed to capture the small moments that can connect strangers. The humor and camaraderie between the two women felt real to me because it's something I've seen in my everyday life. It's those unexpected connections that make life interesting.

In "Love in the Basement," I explored a more personal side of relationships. The act of rediscovering old memories and rekindling a connection is something many people can relate to. It reminded me that sometimes, the most significant journeys are the ones that bring us back to where we started.

Then there's "Ruby Sparks," which took me to a darker place. Writing about control and manipulation was challenging, but it was also an opportunity to push my boundaries and explore complex emotions. It was like peeling back layers of a character, finding the raw truth beneath the surface.

Each story in my portfolio tells a different tale, but they all share a common theme: the complexity of human relationships. As I continue to write, I want to dive even deeper into these themes, exploring the shades of gray that make people who they are. It's a journey that I know will never end, and that's what excites me the most. There's always something new to discover, and I'm ready to keep exploring.

F I C T I O N A L W R I T I N G

BUS STOP CONVERSATIONS

"Children are emotional terrorists," Julianna remarked as she leaned against the worn-down bench at the bus stop. She glanced at the woman sitting beside her, a subtle smile playing on her lips.

The other woman adjusted her purse and nodded sympathetically. "Tell me about it. My son won't stop begging for the latest video game console. He swears he'll die if he doesn't get it."

Julianna chuckled, nodding along. "They sure have a way of making us feel like the worst parents in the world if we don't give in to their demands, don't they?"

The woman stared off into the distance, letting out a long sigh as they waited for the bus to arrive. "It's a constant battle. Every trip to the store turns into a negotiation. I swear, sometimes I think my son should be a lawyer with the way he argues."

"Same here," Julianna replied, her gaze shifting to the bustling street beyond the bus stop. "My daughter has a knack for finding the most expensive toy in the store and convincing me she can't live without it. It's like she has a sixth sense for sniffing out my weaknesses."

The woman laughed, her eyes lighting up. "Exactly! Just last week, my daughter was adamant that her life would be over if she didn't get the new branded sneakers all her friends have. It's like they all have the same manual on how to guilt-trip us into buying things."

As the bus came into view, Julianna felt a surprising sense of camaraderie with the woman beside her. Even though they were strangers, they shared the same challenges and frustrations of parenthood.

When they boarded the bus, Julianna couldn't help but feel a small spark of hope from the brief connection they had made at the bus stop. In a world filled with chaos and demands, it was comforting to know she wasn't alone in facing the unpredictable nature of raising children.

As the bus pulled away from the curb, heading toward their separate destinations, Julianna reflected on her earlier comment.

"Children may be emotional terrorists," she thought to herself, "but at the end of the day, they're also the greatest blessings we could ever know."



F I C T I O N A L W R I T I N G

LOVE IN THE BASEMENT

As the clock struck midday and sunlight streamed through the windows, Jon and I settled into our usual retirement routine. Jon was lying on the couch, his attention on the TV playing reruns of classic trivia shows. At the same time, I was cozied up in a nearby loveseat, reading the pages of a thrilling novel. However, though we were both relaxed in our routine, a nagging thought bothered us: the clutter in our basement had grown too big to ignore. We both caught each other's glance and reached a silent agreement; we set aside our comforts to battle the dusty contents of our past, unaware of the emotional journey that awaited us.

Jon sighed and glanced at the basement door, apprehension flickering in his eyes. "I guess we should start cleaning down there," he said, not sounding particularly enthusiastic.

I nodded in agreement, setting aside my book with a gentle thud. "I guess so," I replied, trying my best to smile. "We can't just let it keep piling up."

Jon chuckled quietly, "Only one way to find out," he said, standing from the couch with a stretch. Taking a deep breath, I stood from the loveseat, feeling a wave of anticipation come over me. "Let's do it," I said, intertwining my fingers with his as we made our way toward the basement, ready to find hidden secrets.

Climbing down the stairs into the dimly lit basement, a stale scent filled the air, mixed with the hum of the furnace. We were greeted by boxes stacked upon each other, topped with dust. Jon reached for the nearby light switch, lighting up the space completely. "Where should we start?" he asked, his voice muffled in the crowded room.

I scanned the room, spotting a corner with fewer boxes. "Let's try over there," I suggested, pointing towards it. "That looks like as good a place as any."

Jon and I approached the corner, navigating the maze of boxes and old furniture. As we drew closer, I noticed a chest, its edges distressed by years of neglect. With no hesitation, Jon reached out to grasp the top, his fingers brushing off a layer of dust as he lifted it open.

Jon and I sifted through the contents of the chest, our fingers tracing the edges of faded photographs. As we sorted the first few photographs, a wave of nostalgia came over us, transporting us back to memories of our past. We discovered old photographs – photos capturing the joy and innocence of our children as they grew up before our eyes.

Jon's eyes lit up with pride as he lifted a photo of our son's first steps, his laughter captured as he waddled across the kitchen floor. I couldn't help but smile as I reached for another photograph, this one capturing our daughter's high school graduation, her wide smile. I felt a sense of joy for her accomplishments and the pride she brought to our family. The memories came flooding back – birthday parties, family vacations, and shared quiet moments. Continuing to sift through the photographs, I felt a sense of gratitude – a reminder of the blessings we had been given and the joy that filled Jon and me throughout the years.

Digging deeper into the chest, our hands brushed against something unexpected – a bundle of letters tied together with a string. My heart skipped a beat as I recognized the familiar handwriting on the envelopes, a rush of emotions filling me.

Jon's eyes widened in surprise as he lifted one of the letters, his fingers trembling as he untied the string. "Are these...?" his voice trailed off as he glanced at me, disbelief shining in his eyes.

I nodded silently, unable to tear my eyes away from the stack of letters in his hands. "They are," I confirmed my voice only a whisper. "Our love letters."

Jon read aloud, each word bringing a flood of memories and emotions. I felt we were transported back in time – to the early days of our relationship. The letters reveal the depth of our feelings, the struggles we have overcome, and the dreams we have lived. Amidst the faded ink and yellow paper, I could see our bond had overcome the storms of life and come out stronger in the end.

Jon finished reading the last letter out, a tear came from the corner of his eye. Without a word, he reached for my hand, his fingers intertwining with me, showing a gesture of love and understanding. Sat together, the weight of the past upon us, I realized that our relationship was far from over. With each passing day, we would continue to embrace our love.

Making our way back upstairs, hand in hand, I felt a sense of peace settle over me – a reassurance that no matter what the future held, Jon and I would face it together, as our love had stood the test of time. And as the sunlight streamed through the windows, I knew our journey was far from over. With each new day came the opportunity to create new memories, to cherish each other more deeply, and to continue writing the story of our love, one page at a time.



F I C T I O N A L W R I T I N G

WRITING PHOTO SCENES

Underneath the covered sun, we huddled together in his apartment complex parking lot. This photo captures one single moment – Larry’s 20th birthday party during spring break in 2023. The image captures Troye, Lauren, me, and Kelsey from left to right. Our smiles captured in the photo show our shared happiness that day. Larry’s apartment stood in front of us, the distant sound of laughter and music coming through the closed door. Colorful balloons gathered on the railing, swaying in the breeze. The smell of grass lingered in the air, the sky full of clouds from the rain that had just fallen. The air buzzed with the excitement of having fun and being carefree.

Troye, the hard worker with an easygoing vibe, stood with his face exuding excitement. Lauren’s face radiated joy, looking forward to having fun with our friends. Kelsey, the quiet one, stood beside me, looking forward to giving Larry her gift. In the middle, I stood, frozen with a broad smile, enjoying the company of my friends. Our spring break was fleeting, and Larry’s birthday was the last time we would enjoy each other’s company until school was over and we were all home for summer. Looking at the photo, the memory of our shared friendship comes to me – our inside jokes, late-night conversations, and the non-breaking bonds formed through the highs and lows of our lives.

Inside Larry’s apartment, the air filled with laughter and music. Our friends inside greeted us as we joined the celebration. The photo, showing our smiles from the parking lot, now came to life with the lively party scene. Friends danced, and laughter came from all around. This photo showed a carefree moment between my friends, each of us filled with joy. The birthday party was vibrant and full of colorful decorations. This simple photo captures the essence of this day: inside jokes, shared laughter, and bonds of friendship, all taking place on this spring break of 2023.



F I C T I O N A L W R I T I N G

RUBY SPARKS: SCENE WRITING

In the quiet moments of our shared bedroom, I find myself lost in the depths of Calvin's world. My initial excitement of discovering someone who I feel completes me fades into the routine of our daily lives. Yet, beneath this perfection, a storm brews, threatening to shatter the fragile illusion of our perfect love.

As days turn into weeks, I notice subtle shifts in Calvin's behavior. His once-endearing quirks now seem like markers of his newfound possessiveness, his need for control slowly suffocating me. With each of our passing moments, doubts plague the edges of my consciousness, telling me that perhaps I am nothing more than a character in Calvin's story, fit to mold into his desires.

As I wake up next to Calvin, a sense of unease lingers in the morning light. Despite our apparent happiness, doubt creeps in, suggesting that things may not be as perfect as they seem. It is a feeling that will not go away, hinting that there might be hidden troubles beneath our surface contentment. So, as we go about our day, I cannot help but wonder if there is more to our love story than meets the eye.

The tension between us soars as Calvin's insecurities rise, his mood swinging from admiration to frustration. Full of emotional turmoil, I find myself walking on eggshells, trying to anticipate his Howard 2 every vagary, all the while wondering if this is what it truly feels like or if I am merely a pawn in his game.

But as the grip Calvin has on me tightens, I can no longer ignore the nagging feeling that something is fundamentally wrong. He uses his writing as a weapon, crafting narratives that trap me in his version of reality. Through his stories, he subtly manipulates me, casting me in roles that serve his agenda, rewriting my identity to fit his expectations. His attempts to manipulate me through his writing leave me feeling suffocated, trapped by the weight of his words. Yet, even as I struggle against his control, a part of me still clings to the hope that the man I fell in love with is buried somewhere beneath the layers of his creation.

The tension between Calvin and me reaches its breaking point one fateful evening. It is as if the air in our once cozy bedroom has turned heavy with the weight of our unspoken truths.

His gaze burns into me, his eyes no longer holding the warmth I once knew but rather a chilling intensity that sends shivers down my spine.

I gather the courage to confront him about his increasingly controlling behavior. His façade of charming essence crumbles away, revealing the depths of his obsession with me. His every word cut through the silence like a knife, each one dripping with venom as he confesses to manipulating my every move through his writing.

Shock courses within me, sending waves of disbelief crashing over me. The realization hits me like a punch to the gut – the man I thought I knew, the man I loved, is nothing more than a puppeteer pulling my strings for his amusement. Betrayal and anger overcome me, igniting an urge of defiance that holds stronger with each passing moment. With shaking hands, I grab the notebook from his grasp, the pages falling in protest as I tear through them with savagery born of my desperation. Each torn page feels like a reclamation towards my being, my sense of being no longer dictated by his typewriter but by the strength of my own will.

But Calvin refuses to let go of his control over me, his desperation apparent as he tries to reel me back in with promises of devotion and love. Yet now I see through his act, recognizing it for its true manipulation. His words are brushed aside as I steel myself against his empty promises.

However, now, I realize that I have the power to write my own story, to create my own reality free from Calvin's influence. With determination, I declare my independence, severing the chains that once held us together. The weight of his expectations falls, leaving me free to embrace the uncertain future that lies ahead.

As I walk away from him, leaving behind the shattered remnants of his façade, I feel a sense of pride wash over me. Though the road ahead may be uncertain, I know that I am now free to write my own destiny, no longer confined by the writing of Calvin's narrative. With each step I take, I carry with me the knowledge that I am the creator of my own story and that my voice will never be silenced again.



FICTIONAL WRITING

THE LAKE SCENE

The moon cast a shimmering path on the calm lake as I rowed, the night enveloping me in silence. Each stroke of the paddles echoed in the stillness of the night, a rhythm that helped to soothe my restless mind. Ahead, the outline of a secluded cabin emerged from the darkness. It was a place of solitude, a calm sanctuary from the chaos of the ever-changing world. But tonight, this place held secrets darker than the night itself.

Docking the boat, I stepped onto the wooden pier, my heart pounding with anticipation. Shadows etched on the cabin's walls, whispering secrets that only the night could hear. Entering the cabin, I found her waiting, her eyes flashing a fear she couldn't conceal. I tried to reassure her, but the tension hung thick, the air suffocating us both. As I saw her, memories overcame me. As I stood there, the weight of my actions was bearing down on me. They were memories of betrayal, deceit, and love that turned into bitterness.

I remembered the countless nights spent alone, waiting for her to return, only to be met with excused and empty promises. Each lie chipped away at the trust between us until there was nothing left but resentment. But it wasn't just the lies that fueled my anger. It was the realization that she had taken everything from me – my love, trust, and sense of self. In her pursuit of selfish desires, she had left me hollow.

And so, in a quick moment of madness, everything changed. A flash of steel, a loud crack. She crumpled to the floor, her life slipping away with each passing second. I stood frozen, unable to comprehend the horror unfolding before me. Guilt overcame me as I realized the truth from my madness – I was the one who had wielded the weapon, the one responsible for her demise.

The lake remained still, its surface undisturbed by the chaos that had unfolded on its shores. But beneath its calm façade, it held the echoes of a crime that would haunt me forever.



F I C T I O N A L W R I T I N G

TALES OF TWINS

The waves were crashing, one after another, on Galveston Beach, sending salty mist into the air. The sun hung low, a big orange balloon slowly dropping into the horizon, leaving behind a sky full of colors that melted from pink to deep blue. Andrew and I were in the ocean, our feet sinking into the wet sand as each wave washed over us. We were thirteen, and this was our favorite place in the world.

"Hey, Emily," Andrew said, his voice muffled by the sound of the waves. "Do you think mermaids are real?"

I laughed. "Mermaids? Seriously, Andrew? You think a bunch of fish-ladies are swimming around in the Galveston Beach?"

He shrugged, splashing me with a handful of water. "Hey, you never know! They could be living in some hidden caves or something. What if they come out at night and steal fish from the fishermen?"

"Or maybe they steal people's flip-flops from the beach," I replied, nodding toward the abandoned flip-flops lining the shore. "Maybe that's why everyone keeps losing their shoes."

Andrew snorted. "Yeah, that's totally it. The mermaids are building a giant flip-flop collection in their underwater cave. Probably competing to see who has the most mismatched pairs."

We both laughed, watching as the waves rose and fell, each one pulling us a little further into the water. The ocean had a way of making you feel small, but in a good way. Like all the worries and stuff just kind of got washed away with the tide.

"So, what do you want to be when you grow up?" Andrew asked, his eyes fixed on the horizon. "I was thinking about being a marine biologist. You know, so I could find those mermaids."

"Marine biologist, huh?" I said, pretending to be all thoughtful. "That sounds cool. You'd get to wear those wetsuits and go diving and stuff. But I don't know. I think I want to do something a little more... on dry land."

Andrew raised an eyebrow. "On dry land? Like what? An office job? Because that's super boring."

"Not an office job," I said, rolling my eyes. "I was thinking more like a teacher. You know, work with kids, help them learn new stuff. I think I'd be good at it."

Andrew nodded, pretending to consider it. "That sounds pretty good. You'd get to have summers off and all those holidays. But you realize you'd have to deal with a bunch of rowdy kids, right? Like, kids who don't listen and throw paper airplanes at you."

"That's not a big deal," I said, smiling. "I can handle rowdy kids. Besides, I'd just tell them stories about mermaids to keep them interested. You know, like how they steal flip-flops and stuff. That'll keep them quiet."

Andrew laughed, ducking under the next wave. He popped up on the other side, shaking his head like a wet dog. "Yeah, you'd be great. You'd have the kids doing all sorts of crazy projects, like building shoe pyramids and pretending to be mermaids. You'd probably be the coolest teacher ever."

"Of course I would," I said, pretending to be all serious. "I mean, someone has to inspire the next generation. And if that means dressing up like a mermaid and telling stories, then so be it."

Andrew grinned. "I'd pay to see that. You with a tail and seashells in your hair, trying to teach math. That would be so cool."

Another wave rolled in, and we both jumped over it, our laughter mixing with the sound of the crashing water. We kept going, jumping and diving, splashing and laughing, until the sky grew darker and the stars began to peek out from the fading sunset.

"Hey, Emily," Andrew said, his voice a little more serious now. "Do you think we'll still be best friends when we're older? I mean, I know we're twins, but, you know, life gets busy and stuff."

TALES OF TWINS

I stopped splashing for a moment, looking at him with all the seriousness I could muster. "Andrew, we're twins. Like, we shared a womb. That's gotta count for something, right? I think we're stuck with each other, no matter what."

Andrew smiled, a goofy grin that made him look like he was ten years old again. "Yeah, I guess you're right. I just... I don't know. It's weird to think about growing up and not having you around all the time."

"Don't worry about it," I said, giving him a friendly nudge. "We'll always be twins. We can be weird and laugh at stupid stuff forever. And if you ever need me, I'll be there. Even if I'm teaching and you're chasing mermaids."

Andrew nodded, looking out at the waves as they rolled in and out. "Thanks, Emily. You're the best."

The stars grew brighter, and we knew it was time to head back to the beach house. But instead of heading back, we stayed in the water a little longer, letting the waves tug at our legs. Andrew turned to me with a thoughtful expression.

"Do you think being a teacher will be hard?" he asked. "Like, what if you get a class full of kids who just don't want to learn?"

I shrugged. "Yeah, it might be hard sometimes. But you know what? I think it's worth it. I mean, imagine being the teacher who inspires a kid to do something amazing. Like, what if I teach a future astronaut or a future president or something? That'd be so cool!"

Andrew grinned. "Or a future mermaid," he joked. "You could be the first teacher to take a class on a field trip to the bottom of the ocean."

I rolled my eyes. "Yeah, sure, why not? I'll just get a submarine and a class of 40 kids and head down to Atlantis. No big deal."

We both laughed, letting the waves splash around us. The beach was getting quieter as people packed up their things and headed home, but we weren't ready to leave just yet. There was something magical about being in the ocean at night, with the stars shining above and the waves rolling in like a steady heartbeat.

"Hey, Andrew," I said, breaking the comfortable silence. "Do you think we should make a time capsule or something? You know, to remember this night?"

Andrew raised an eyebrow. "On dry land? Like what? An office job? Be? I mean, I know we're twins, but, you know, life gets busy and stuff."

Andrew looked intrigued. "What would we put in it?"

I thought for a moment. "Maybe a shell from the beach, a picture of us, and a note about what we wanted to be when we grew up. You know, so we can dig it up when we're older and see if we made our dreams come true."

Andrew nodded, his eyes brightening. "Yeah, that's a great idea! We could bury it under that big rock over there. That way, we'll always know where to find it."

We spent the next half-hour gathering a few things for our time capsule—a couple of cool shells, a plastic toy shovel we found, and a crumpled-up piece of paper with a quick sketch of a mermaid on it. I wrote a note about wanting to be a teacher, and Andrew wrote that he was going to find mermaids someday.

We buried the capsule under the big rock, marking the spot with a smaller stone that had a unique shape. It looked a bit like a heart, but Andrew insisted it was just a regular rock with a cool dent in it. Either way, it felt special to us.

Afterward, we headed back to the beach house, our feet dragging in the sand, knowing we'd have to wash off the salt and sand before bed. But we didn't mind. It had been a perfect evening, one that we'd remember for a long time.

As we walked back, I looked over at Andrew and felt a warm glow inside. It didn't matter what the future held. We'd always be twins, always have each other's backs, and always be ready to laugh at the most ridiculous things. Even if it was about mermaids and stolen flip-flops.

When we got back to the house, our parents were waiting, pretending to be all annoyed that we'd stayed out so late. But we knew they were happy we had each other. Because being twins was a bond that couldn't be broken, not by time or distance or even a million waves crashing on the beach. It was just us, Andrew and Emily, always together, always ready for whatever came next.



F I C T I O N A L W R I T I N G

THANK YOU

Spring 2024

Fictional Writing



Emily Howard