

Becca Anglesey

Final Portfolio

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I have always considered myself to be a good writer. However, this class has forced me to confront my biggest weakness in writing: revision. A lot of times, if I'm not happy with something I've written on the first draft, I will toss it away and never look at it again. Other times, I look at my work and think it is absolutely perfect the way it is. This class has taught me to see the potential in pieces I've done that might need more work and also to see how things that I'm generally satisfied with can be brought to a higher level with careful and thoughtful revision.

The short story piece was edited and revised in bits and pieces all over; some of Emily's inner monologue was more fully explored, repetition was added to give the reader a clearer picture of her emotional state, and some dialogue was cleaned up to sound a bit more natural. The ending was expanded upon a bit as well to make the conclusion of the story more emotionally satisfying to the reader. I really wanted the reader to understand the emotional stakes of this conversation, even though neither character outright says "baby" to each other. I came to this story from a very personal place, so I might also be biased in the telling of this one point of view. After revisions, I'm mostly happy with how this piece turned out. I think it could be better still in the future and maybe even be slightly expanded upon.

The poetry pieces all together got significant revisions. I've had little to no experience writing poetry. The chocolate sonnet in particular got a major structural reworking. The entire second stanza was re-written, keeping only a few of the key phrases from the original. I also reworked the rhyme scheme so that a) there was one that is identifiable, and b) so that it followed a more traditional sonnet form. In the second (not final) draft of this poem I had the rhyme in an

AABBCDCD type form, but it didn't really flow well at the end, so I fixed it to read AABBCDD and I think it works much better now.

The other two poems, *Elegy for a Hipster* and *White Flowers Waiting*, got more of a punctuation edit. Yes, I reworked a little bit of the wording in them, but not too terribly much. I mostly re-read the original pieces and realized that they felt like a run-on sentence. I thought the addition of strategic punctuation would help the reader identify the ending of a particular thought and help establish a meter in which the poem should be read. I also wanted the punctuation to convey a tone for the pieces. For example, *To wear tight pants and be aloof—/A fidget spinner your only proof.*, where the – lets the reader know that this is one thought, but divided between the two lines and ends with the period.

The multi-genre piece was adapted from my ekphrastic video work. Since I could not attach the video, I decided to incorporate screenshots from the video to convey the feeling of the moment and to add context to the work. I focused on finding the lines that felt poetic and repeating them strategically in order to make it feel like a prose poetry work instead of plain prose. I wanted to play with a little more juxtaposition, and the most appropriate place for it that I saw was after "...the ocean waves splash with joy at my arrival." I wanted to play on the forlorn feeling of the empty castle, so I added "the stones are sorrowful from neglect." The last thing I did was to justify the text so it filled the whole line of the page to make it appear more square, except for the last lines of each page which were centered, signaling the end of that particular idea. I feel that these revisions were more or less successful in this work. I would like to be able to come up with a better title for the work though. It still feels kind of weak to me.

Overall I'm satisfied with my work. These works are by no means perfect, but I think they are heading in a good direction and I hope to keep improving on them in the future.

Metaphorical Kitten

It was 10:45. Emily sat on the squishy couch in their tiny living room, kicking off her shoes and heaving a big sigh. She looked into the dining room where Troy was picking up the dishes from their little table. Dean and Jenny had just left moments before. Emily loved having friends over. It made their tiny house feel full and alive, something which she had been noticing it lacked ever since she got laid off from the magazine.

“Hey honey?” Emily called out to Troy as he set the dishes from their little impromptu dinner party next to the sink.

“Yeah?” he called back to her.

“What would you think about getting a kitten?” Emily watched the back of Troy’s head as he straightened. She got up off the couch and headed into the dining room, grabbing the full glass of wine Jenny had left untouched. Emily had poured it out before Jenny had announced her surprise pregnancy. And, of course, she was delighted for her friends. Of course she was. “I mean, I’m just in this house alone *all day*, and it might be nice to have another living thing here while I try to get my blog up,” she continued.

Troy turned around and gave Emily an uncertain look. His eyebrows always pulled together in the cutest way when he was perturbed. Wait, why was he perturbed about a kitten? “I don’t know Em... that seems like a big commitment.”

“It’s just a kitten.”

“Yeah, but there is all the stuff that goes along with a kitten,” Troy pointed out. He grabbed his glass of wine. Was that his third of the night? Emily had lost track. She looked at the

glass in her hand and realized she had lost track of her own consumption as well. “I mean, you have to get the kitten, then there’s litter, toys, food, and vet bills, and probably more I can’t think of right now.”

“I’m familiar with the paraphernalia associated with cats,” Emily said in a playfully sarcastic tone.

“I know you are. But a kitten isn’t something you can just get rid of when you are bored with it. You have to feed it, and water it, and clean up its poop,” Troy said with distaste. “And there is the fact that our budget is tight right now. An elementary school teacher doesn’t make very much.”

“I am aware of our finances too, Troy.” Emily sipped at her wine, trying to tamp down the shame she felt at being laid off from the magazine she had been working at for the last five years. Five years, down the drain. What a waste. “It won’t always be that way though. I’m really trying to get my blog off the ground. And a kitten might just be the thing! If there is one thing the internet loves, it’s cats.”

Troy chuckled. He had told Emily about plenty of moments in the teachers’ lounge laughing at internet cat videos with his colleagues, trying to relieve the tension of having to deal with people’s ill-mannered children in a severely underfunded schoolroom all day. Who hadn’t done as much?

“Oh come on! It could be fun! Kittens are so cute, and fluffy and playful,” She goaded.

“You know my brother is allergic to cats?” Troy raised one eyebrow.

“When was the last time your brother came over to this house? Three years ago? Four?” Emily gave Troy a look that clearly said *give me a break*. Besides, Troy’s older brother was a total jerk. Emily remembered one particularly cringe-worthy moment at Thanksgiving two years ago in which he told Troy that teaching was a woman’s job. The man was vile. If a cat would keep him out of her house, all the more reason to get one Emily thought.

“Who’s going to clean up after a cat?” He ran his hands through his hair. “I don’t really relish the idea of having a litter box hanging out in our matchbox bathroom.”

“Why are you so opposed to the idea of us getting a kitten?!” Her voice was startlingly shrill as she said it. Emily took another sip to calm herself, then a slow deep breath as she looked at the countertop. “Do you really want it to be just you and me in this house forever?”

Emily looked up into Troy’s worried eyes. At that moment she knew that they weren’t talking about getting a kitten. Not really. They had never been talking about getting a kitten.

Emily wondered when she had begun to feel this way. Had it been tonight, when Jenny and Dean had told them their happy news? Before? After all, she and Troy had been married longer than Dean and Jenny. Did she only want a baby because she had nothing else to do? Boredom was a terrible reason to have a kid. But what else was a married woman her age staying at home all day supposed to do? She was thirty-two years old! Or did she really, truly want to have a child with this kind, thoughtful, and sometimes too-careful-for-his-own-good man? Looking into Troy’s careworn eyes, she knew the answer. She had always known the answer.

“Em, sweetie, you know we just can’t afford it. This house is so small, and you know that I’m not going to get a raise anytime soon. I just don’t think we are prepared for that kind of responsibility. Not yet.” Troy came around the kitchen counter and into the dining room where

she was standing and wrapped his arms around her. He held her tight, and Emily tried her best to choke down all the feelings she had. Anger. Disappointment. Uselessness. Frustration. A deep, deep sadness. Feelings she didn't even know were there until this moment. She tried so hard to keep it in, but a single tear managed to escape. Damn. She managed to angle her face into Troy's chest so that his shirt absorbed the incriminating evidence. Hopefully he wouldn't notice. She just couldn't bear to show him this deep hurt. Not now.

“Besides, isn't taking care of my sorry ass handful enough?” Troy joked. At this, Emily let out a small giggle. Of the two of them, Troy was really the one who took care of her. Hell, he had been the one to cook for their friends tonight, even though it was a school night. Troy was just better at that kind of stuff than she was. Did that mean she wasn't up to the task? She wasn't sure if she was capable of anything anymore.

Emily pulled back from his embrace with a slight smile, masking her emotional state. “Yeah, you're probably right,” She downed the rest of her wine. “Ugh, all this wine has made me sleepy. Let's go to bed.” She headed to the bedroom, leaving Troy to wonder whether he had lost or won.

It was 6:45. Where was Troy? He should have been home a long time ago. Emily stared at the screen of her laptop, not really seeing the words she had typed there. Was he angry with her about last night? He hadn't seemed so, but it was a touchy subject. Maybe he felt more than he had let on, as she had. As she had the thought, her cell phone rang. It was Troy.

“Babe, where are you? Is everything okay?” Emily nervously asked into the phone.

“I’m fine, Em. I’m just about home. I was just thinking about last night...” Her stomach tightened at those words.

“Yeah, me too.”

“Yeah, well, why don’t you open the door.”

Emily was confused. Did he really want to talk about this again? Now? Over the phone? That seemed incredibly odd. “The door to what? I’m pretty sure it has been flung wide...”

“Not the metaphorical door, Em! The real door! You know, to our house.” Emily was still confused, but she obeyed. What was Troy up to?

When she opened the door, she was absolutely flabbergasted. It was Troy holding a large ball of grey lint, a grin on his face from ear to ear. The lint squirmed and Emily saw two luminous yellow eyes looking at her with trepidation.

“Ohmygod you got a kitten!?” She reached out slowly to the tiny feline and let it smell her hand. It gave a small meowing noise, obviously out of sorts from the trip in Troy’s car. “Come here baby,” she said as she gently picked up the kitten. The little fuzzball nuzzled itself right into the crook of her neck and began to purr quietly as she stroked it’s back. The resonance instantly warmed her soul. “Why? I thought you said...”

“I’ve been thinking about what you said all day long, and I was wrong. About a kitten at least.” Troy stretched out a hand to also stroke the small grey kitten. “I went to the shelter just to look, but this little guy stole my heart. I couldn’t resist. And you *do* need a companion in the house while you work.”

Emily looked at Troy, emotion rising in her throat. This kitten was more than just an adorable fuzzball to her. It was a symbol of his belief in her and his trust in her ability. A moral support kitten. And the start of a real family.

“It will happen Em,” he said softly. “I can’t promise how soon, but it will. And I love you.”

“I love you, too. And I love *you!*” She lifted up the kitten to look it in the face. “Stole your heart, huh? Maybe this one should be named bandit.”

“I was thinking something like Hermes, god of thieves,” They both started laughing as they entered their home, welcoming the newest addition to their lives with happiness. Together.

Chocolate (A Sonnet)

Oh chocolate, how I adore thee
I'm certain that many would agree
Dark, milk, or white
Any kind of chocolate is right
The color of my beloved's eyes
Happiness that money buys
A taste beyond compare
It is a rich delicious fare

Oh chocolate, how I adore thee
Melts in my heart and you hold the key
Delectable cookies, cakes, and ice cream
Hot in my hands, a mouthwatering dream
Swimming in a scrumptious fondue
I truly fall in love with you

Elegy for a Hipster

Are you here to ease your mind?

It doesn't help that much, I find.

To wear tight pants and be aloof—

A fidget spinner your only proof.

And the man-buns high,

To not be alike... or try...

Are you here to help your cause?

Or to only see what attention draws?

To end up looking like a fool—

But, you liked it *before* it was cool.

Can you move on?

Hipsters are gone.

White Flowers Waiting



Here we rest,
My sisters and I
Glorious morning glories!
And I cannot but wonder why...

Is this our place in the world?
Reposing along this wall?
Looking out, over the garden
The envy of them all.

One sister dares to climb higher
As any flower has ever done—
To declare her personal glory,
And be the first to taste the sun!

There she sits alone,
Surrounded by her vines—
And I gaze up at her triumph
Wishing it were mine.

Though all must come to end—

We hear the nightingale's call.

Then my sisters and I look up

Waiting for the fall.

Homecoming

I was born here; this is my home.

This is it. The place I have heard of, thought of, longed for my whole life. Then why am I so scared?

I am formidable. I stand in the boat as the waves press us ever onward to the shore. My advisors and allies surround me, but I know I must do this alone. It is for me. It has always been for me.

My children cannot wait. They fly ahead, joyful to have made it to journeys end. They know this place. Perhaps not from their memories, but they know this is their place. Ancestral. For them—for me. It fills me with hope. Can I make this life last? Can I protect them as a mother should? My blood demands I must.



We alight on the beach. The air smells familiar, but why? I haven't been in this place since I was a baby. The rest fall back as my purposeful boot strides take me further to the place of my birth. I slow as I feel the trepidation rising in me. I sink to the sand and place my hand on the damp grainy surface. In its texture I can feel the call of my ancestors. The thrum of dragons past. *'This is your place,'* it seems to say. *'Go and take it.'*

I look up at the path to the keep and I know what I must do.

I was born here; this is my home.

This is it. The gate I have heard of, thought of, longed for my whole life. Then why does my heart pound so hard in my chest?

I walk along the brick path, up the stairs, and to the gate. The stone heads of dragons await me. What will I find beyond this point? The gate is intimidating to all, but I am blood of the dragon. I must continue on. The gates are opened for me and I see the myriad of stairs. They have been awaiting my return; they long for the step of a Targaryen once more.

I lead the way, taking the steps two at a time in my desire to return home. We journey up the path to the keep and the ocean waves splash in joy at my arrival. The stones are sorrowful from neglect.



The castle is empty and dark. The torchlight flickers off the walls, revealing ever more carved dragons casting ghostly shadows. I enter the hall to see the banner of the usurper hanging, taunting me with the loss of my home and family. I grasp the end of the musty tapestry and yank it down. Who is the victor now? You are dead, and I am here. I take back this place that you stole from me. I give the tapestry one last contemptuous glance as I continue on.

I look up at to the doors of the main hall and I know what I must do.

I was born here; this is my home.

This is it. The throne I have heard of, thought of, longed for my whole life. Then why am I so filled with trepidation?

The doors to the main hall are opened for me and I can see it: an obsidian throne carved out of the jutting rock that this place is named for. Dragon Glass. A fitting seat for the last dragon. The hall is black and empty, my footsteps echoing off the high ceilings. I walk up to the throne, considering it. How many years has it been since a true dragon has sat here? Fifteen years? Twenty? Do I have the strength of those who came before me? Or do I carry their weakness? They are all gone, and I must do better.

I continue on to a chamber beyond the throne. In it there is a large table, small figures of ships and castles littered across its surface and covered with dust. The table has been carved into the shape of this country. It is a large and magnificent thing, an heirloom of my house. I run my fingers along the coastline, northward to the head of the table. I hold this kingdom in my hands.



I come to a stop at the top and contemplate this country; it is my birthright. I look back at my advisors. This stage of our journey is over.

I know what I must do. And now we can begin.