

Creative Writing Portfolio

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About Me

My name is Emma Faith Garofalo, and I'm an author, writer, and editor.

I created this creative writing portfolio as a way of showcasing my writing abilities through personally written work. I can write in a variety of different genres but thrive in fantasy and romance.

I am currently working towards a bachelor's degree in English with an emphasis in Creative Writing, with an estimated graduation date of 2028. I have already obtained my associate's degree in science.

I am experienced in both writing and editing and am proficient in an array of different skills that include organization and proofreading. I am a fast learner, and a detail-oriented worker.

I have a deep passion for all things literature and enjoy it more and more with each passing day. I thrive in the writing world and am open to any and all opportunities that will aid in furthering my career.

Writing Samples

Poetry

“The Sacrifice” is a poem about nature’s sacrifice to humanity.

The Sacrifice

The sun blinds in its raw beauty,
Hovering above in its mother-like form.
Shining exquisitely, sometimes free,
But other times lost in the sea of storms.

The swaying and waving of each growing limb,
Reaching up to touch the mother’s crown.
Living and dying, oh isn’t it grim?
When a single tree falls and makes no sound.

And there is a body unlike any other,
Reflecting the truth of many above.
It saves, but it drowns, don’t go out any farther!
It’s strong and deadly but feels nothing but love.

And there’s also a land full of warmth and sand,
Calling and yearning for a companion or friend.
But always avoided for the heat of the hands,
Its sacrificed friendships must come to an end.

Nobody mentions the build of the snow,
Where ice rules and the shivering is felt.
Its happy, full self wants to share with a blow,
But nobody cares until it starts to melt.

They’re beautiful in ways that very few see,
Yet in each new ruin, they always stay true.
And they want so deeply for the truth they leave,
They deal with their loss, making a sacrifice to please you.

Short Story

"Speak First" is a short story I wrote about two of my friends from my time in North Carolina. Their love story never ended the way it should have.

Speak First

I still remember the day I met her. She was new to everything: the job, the people, the state. It was a new experience, and I knew it would be difficult. After all, I still remembered my first day. The fear, the anxiousness; but most of all, the desperation to fit in one day.

Perhaps that was why I felt a draw to her. She was beautiful, but it wasn't just that. It was simply that I knew what it was like to be her, and I think I may have been afraid of letting her be alone.

During orientation, I walked up to her and smiled. She smiled back.

"Hello."

I was playing a game on my day off when my phone buzzed beside me. I paused what I was doing to pick it up, realizing it was *her*.

I responded immediately, answering the question she had about tomorrow's upcoming shift.

"Thank you."

I smiled at her response.

I laughed at her joke.

She smirked at my response, before a chuckle left her lips. I stopped laughing as she tilted her head back, laughing with me. I didn't notice it until then, but she had such a contagious laugh. Perhaps I had simply never heard her laugh like that before.

The laughter ended and we sat in silence. I found myself wishing I could make her laugh again.

I found out she had a boyfriend. I'm not sure how that made me feel, but our friendship had been building over the weeks, so I guess I shouldn't have been upset about it.

Her boyfriend was coming to visit soon, and I was nervous about meeting him. Even more nervous that he wouldn't like me.

I wasn't sure why I cared, maybe I just cared a lot about her.

In any case, she had researched places they could stay together while he was here and even asked for my opinion one day while at work.

“Do you know any AirBnB’s in the area?” she asked during shift. “I’m still new to the area, and I want this trip to go perfectly.”

I’m not sure why it rubbed me the wrong way, but I pushed my pride aside and helped her research.

The day came when her boyfriend landed in town, and she left work early to pick him up. Within minutes I was bored without her presence on shift.

Her boyfriend and I were introduced the following day, when I was invited to go out to lunch with the two of them. He shook my hand upon greeting; I liked that.

“So, how did you two meet?” I asked them. She piped up and responded before her boyfriend could, clearly excited to share their story. She told me about how she worked with a friend of his, and when they were introduced one day, they fell in love.

I didn’t know how to respond once she finished, so I smiled and hoped it would get my point across. She wasn’t convinced.

I didn’t hang out with them again before he left. I tried to think of what I did wrong, but perhaps they just wished to spend time alone together.

That fact hit something deep in my chest.

It wasn’t until a couple of days after his departure that she came back to work. She seemed sad; I assumed it was because he was gone.

I tried to joke around, lighten the mood. But nothing I did seemed to help. I just sat with her after that, hoping she wouldn’t be sad for much longer.

A week later, we had finally gotten back to normal. We laughed together, joked around, but most of all just enjoyed each other’s company.

“Do you remember...” she started, but laughter filled the room. I wasn’t sure what she was talking about, but I laughed along with her. After a few moments we had calmed enough to continue the conversation.

I wondered how I ever managed a world without her in it.

I wasn’t sure when I noticed this, but I could see she was becoming close with another man from work.

I was almost done with my shift when I noticed the two of them talking and laughing together. It wasn’t the same laugh I was used to, but it sounded like a comfortable one. This bothered me.

"You have a boyfriend, you know." I said to her one day while we were walking out of work together. She had been laughing and seemingly flirting with the other man from work.

She stopped abruptly and gaped at me. I knew I had upset her.
Before she could say anything, I walked away to my car.
She didn't speak to me for the rest of the day.

The next day, when I still hadn't heard from her, I pulled my phone out and texted her.

I'm sorry.

I sent the text. Five minutes later, she responded.

Okay.

The following day we were back to normal.

I noticed instantly when she started coming to work with red eyes. I assumed it was her boyfriend.

"Are you okay?" I asked, but all she would do is nod in response.

This went on for two weeks. I would ask if she was okay, and she'd nod and brush me off. Until one day she finally talked about it.

"You need to leave him." I told her.

"I can't." she would say every time. I started to get annoyed.

But she was my friend, and I wouldn't leave. Regardless of how irritated I was.

I would let it go, but only until a couple of days passed. Then, I'd bring it up again, hoping for a different response.

It felt like forever before she came to me and said she had broken up with him.

After she had time to grieve, I noticed she was much happy and lively. Actually, she was happier than I had ever seen her before.

I soon found out why.

"You can't date him; we work with him." I told her.

"I can date whoever I want to date." She replied.

I didn't have another argument against that.

Soon, she was dating our coworker. I grew depressed.

"What's wrong with you?" She asked me one day.

“Nothing.” I’d respond and turn the other way.

I assumed our friendship would die now that she was with someone new. I was more wrong than ever.

“Is it alright if he comes?” She’d ask her boyfriend. She’d insist I stay on the phone while she asked. He’d say *yes* every time.

The three of us hung out together a lot. We’d go bowling, roller skating, and even take drives to the beach. I was worried I’d end up the third wheel, but she’d never let that happen.

There was very little PDA between those two, but anybody looking at them could see how comfortable they were with one another. I soon learned to be okay with this.

I would hang out and soon became friends with him too, and things were even more okay.

We’d laugh together, comfort one another, and became closer than I had ever been with anyone before.

I found myself thinking of the day that she would leave the job, and the sadness would seep in.

The next day, I was invited to go out to lunch with the two of them. I wasn’t sad anymore.

As we hung out frequently, she started to come to me with any problems she had.

If anything he did bothered her, she’d text me. If he made her cry, she’d call me. But despite it all, we’d all continue to hang out as if everything was okay.

I didn’t realize how close we’d gotten. Not just with her, but him as well. It wasn’t until they left for a trip to see their families that I finally comprehended the gravity of our friendship.

They were soon on a plane, flying to the other side of the country, and I grew bored and sad, more so than I had ever been before.

During the time of their trip, she didn’t text me except to update me that they had made it safely. I turned to gaming to ease my mind.

When their trip ended and they finally came home, everything was back to normal.

Except, it wasn’t. Not really.

I grew uncomfortable when I noticed that there was now a third wheel between the three of us.

It was him.

She'd always ask if I remembered our inside jokes from the previous year, and I'd try to include him. Ultimately, it was hard when I did, in fact, remember all of our inside jokes. I always did.

Honestly, part of me was happy she had been acknowledging me more.

One day, the three of us were out at dinner. I laughed at something he had said, and soon after I felt a hand on my leg. I looked down to notice her gripping my thigh, hard. I tried to tell her to stop, but it was hard when he was next to her. Her hand didn't budge.

He noticed it. I think he did, anyway. I wonder if he thought anything about it, or if he just wasn't sure how to respond.

Her hand stayed where it was until our food came.

The dreaded day came where she left our job. I'd been dreading it for awhile now, but never imagined it would fly by as fast as it did.

They shared with me the day before the departure that they were moving in together, and that I would need to visit them as often as I could.

I told them that I would.

"Please don't be a stranger." I said to her on the day of her departure. She started to cry.

"Come here." I said and hugged her tight. She held on tighter.

Five minutes passed before we separated.

There are many different moments when this could've come to light, but instead, the realization hit during her departure.

I've never laughed with anyone as I did with her.

I've never wished to comfort anyone else as I did with her.

I've never found such joy in another's presence, until her.

And for the first time in over a decade, I had let the tears fall.

It was quite soon after her departure when she called me with the news. They were now engaged.

The news felt like a gut punch to my stomach, and I found against the response that found its way on my tongue.

Instead, I forced a smile that she could hear through the phone, and I told her I was happy for her.

There are many ways our story could've ended, I feel. I try not to dwell on them.
I think of this quite frequently, despite my own wishes to stop. The "what if?"
courses through my thoughts time and time again.
But she was happy. And I still had her in my life.
What more could I ask for?

I flew out for their wedding, and the tears fell again as they said, "I do."
She smiled at me, thinking they were happy tears.

Novel Excerpt

Don't Get Caught is the first novel I've written. It's a story of a young girl attempting to escape the witch trials going on in her dystopian world.

Don't Get Caught: The Dream

June stood in a field. She wasn't sure how she got there, but she was surrounded by waist-high wheat, which reached out in all directions.

She looked around but had to shield her eyes from the intense light coming from the sun. She looked down to see that her clothes no longer looked the same. Instead of the dull grey they once were, they were now pristine white.

She gripped her shirt, only to realize that her skin, which was once caked in dirt, was now scrubbed clean. Even the dirt underneath her fingernails was gone.

She reached up and touched her hair, realizing instantly that the once knotty mess was now soft and clean. As she pulled it over her shoulder, she saw that it was vibrant brown, lighter and cleaner than it had ever been before.

She couldn't even begin to understand what happened, or where she was. Confusion washed over her in waves.

She reached her hand out to touch a wheat strand in front of her, but as the tips of her fingers brushed against it, a deep pain stabbed through her skull, emanating into each temple. She snatched her hand away and blinked away the pain.

This isn't right, June thought. Her clothes, her skin, this pain... none of it was right.

June, a voice whispered in the back of her mind, pulling her from her thoughts.

Confusion filled her again. The voice seemed not man nor womanlike, but it seemed as if the voice radiated fear.

June, the voice said her voice again, and a fear so intense made its way into her mind. She spun around, trying to figure out where the voice came from. It sounded as if the voice came from inside her mind, however, and as far as she looked, she couldn't find any sign of where it came from.

June.

She spun around again, and just as before, nothing was there. The voice rang out again, and June was suddenly spinning in a circle, desperate now to figure out who was calling her name.

Now the voice was yelling, and it seemed much louder and closer than before.

June!

A bigger wave of fear hit her, and she had to focus on her legs to stop her knees from buckling.

"What?!" She cried out, spinning around again. "What do you want?!"

June!

She winced at the voice that now lodged itself in her mind. She shut her eyes, trying to force it away, but it came back, louder than ever.

In a moment of panic, she moved out of the clearing and into the wheat field, desperate now to get away.

But the moment she touched the wheat around her a new pain formed in her temples. She couldn't handle it very long and scrambled back into the clearing. The voice yelled again.

JUNE!

Her knees buckled, and as she collapsed to the ground in fear, she put her hands over her ears to block out the voice. It didn't do much to help, however, as the voice echoed from inside her mind. Each word came out more intensely than the last.

JUNE!

The voice stabbed into her skull. Terror hit her full force and she began to whimper. There was nothing she could do to rid herself of the fear, and before she knew it, she had tears streaming down her cheeks.

JUNE!

She was shaking, rolled up in the dirt. She wasn't sure how much more of this she could take.

JUNE!

This time it felt as if her eardrums were being blown apart, and June pressed her hands onto her temples, hard, as she yelled back.

"STOP IT!"

To her surprise, it did. June lay there for a while longer, trembling, and only after what felt like forever passed by that she dared move her hands free from her face. It felt as if an eternity passed by the time she was able to open her eyes once more.

After she stopped crying, she wipes her tears from her cheeks and pushed herself up onto shaking legs. She looked around at her surroundings, and the once bright scenery was now plastered with fear. A shiver ran down June's back.

A new cold spread throughout the field, and as she turned around, she saw a dark storm cloud emerging from the sky behind her. Her breath caught in her throat as terror once again rushed through her like adrenaline. The wind rushed towards her and almost knocked her off her feet.

She held her arms out to balance herself and watched as the wheat around her moved with the wind.

The dark cloud began to grow, and it was suddenly headed straight towards June. The storm cloud looked to be made of soot, blocking her vision from the sun.

The sky grew dark in the growing shadows, and the wheat farther off in the field was blocked from view. June froze in terror as a dark shadow loomed over her.

Finally, adrenaline rushed in, pushing out whatever fear she previously felt. She watched as the wheat around her started to shrivel. She gaped at the field as all the wheat nearest her shriveled up to ash and fell at her feet.

She took a step away from the cloud, but it was suddenly accelerating towards her.

Her breath became rapid as she turned, tripping over her two feet in an attempt to get away from the cloud. She found her balance, and with her newfound adrenaline, she ran into the wheat field.

The wheat shriveled all around her, but not fast enough. Her waist brushed against wheat as she ran faster, and a pain like no other pierced her eyes. She almost turned back, but the dark cloud stopped her and she continued her pace. As she ran, the pain worsened, spreading through her eyebrows and into her temples.

Every other thought left her mind, and all she knew in that moment was that she couldn't let the dark cloud catch her. The pain was so intense, however, that she almost tripped a couple of times, but she caught herself at the last minute. Tears were filling her eyes at the pain from the wheat around her.

She wasn't running fast enough, however, and the wheat around her quickly shriveled up to ash. As she risked a glance behind her, she realized that the dark cloud was moving faster, coming straight towards her.

With no room for hesitation, she upped her pace. The wheat around her continued to shrivel, and the pain continued to worsen. Within mere moments, it had become the most painful thing she had ever experienced. The adrenaline rush stopped her from slowing, however, and she let out a choked sob as she ran faster.

It still wasn't fast enough though, and the cloud got closer still. It was close enough to engulf her, and the wheat shriveled faster. She took a deep breath, an inhale of ash finding its way into her throat. She coughed up whatever she could but knew she had to keep going.

She ran with everything she could muster, and it still wasn't enough. The pain was too much to take, and she knew she couldn't last much longer.

She couldn't let the cloud catch her though, so she ran faster than she had ever run before. She finally escaped the ashes, and the shriveling wheat began falling behind her. The darkness still loomed over her, though, and it was growing increasingly by the moments.

June began yelling, her voice breaking as she yelled with every bit that her voice could hold. And she ran; she ran with everything, she yelled with everything, and it would kill her.

Creative Nonfiction

“Autumn Skies” is a story about one of the greatest adventures I’ve ever experienced: falling in love.

Autumn Skies

Sing to the moon for me, darling.

And I did.

His last letter to me repeats itself over and over in my mind. Anticipation riddled with anxiety fills me as I press on the brake.

I’m singing. Can you hear me?

The gate guard asks for identification. I go through the process of getting on base, before pressing on the gas again.

I can hear you. I can always hear you.

Today is the day. After three long months of torturous waiting, today is the day I get to see him again.

My best friend; my family.

I press on the brake again, before shifting the gear into park.

Today is the day.

Anticipation soon morphs entirely into fear, and I’m nervous to see him again.

Six years of friendship, and I’m suddenly nervous to see him.

Get a grip, Emma.

I take a breath and message him that I’m here. He responds immediately that he’s on his way.

I get out of the car, locking it as I go, and begin walking.

The walk was long, and my health screamed at me the entire time as I shuffled my feet towards my best friend. It has been a struggle for the last long while, and today I find that it’s even worse as my anxiety rips through my joints, shredding them as it goes.

I take another inhale, attempting to catch my breath.

Then, there he is.

He seemed taller than before, and much more built. His hair was cropped short, and he held himself up tall, confidently.

A flutter fills my chest as I inhale sharply, and the fear I once felt washes away with a new feeling, one I’m not yet familiar with.

I was suddenly speed walking, unable to run still but moving as fast as my legs would carry me.

Then, I’m in his arms.

The scent of him washes over me, one I have been so familiar with for the last few years, and I’m caught off guard by the comfort that it brings me.

My best friend; my family.

I smile so wide my jaw begins to ache, and as we finally break our contact, I shift my body so I can look up at him.

"Hey," he says.

I smile and say 'hey' back.

We hug again.

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Jordan's mom and dad are taking us to Disneyland.

The four of us are piled in the car, and I lean up against Jordan, his scent once again bringing me a kind of comfort I didn't know I was missing.

We pull into the parking lot, and I break contact with him as we get out of the car. The autumn breeze brushes against my cheek, and I smile at him.

After getting through the entrance, we move around and look at everything.

I had fun, don't get me wrong. But the entire time, my sole focus was spending time with Jordan. And that's exactly what we do, we spend time together on each ride, enjoying each other's company more than anything else at the park.

He buys me a churro, we laugh. He buys me a caramel apple, I smile. He carries me when my health gets bad, and I hold him.

My head up against him, my chest close to his own. Our heartbeats match one another's. I never knew how much he felt like home.

On the ride home, I lay down in the back seat and lay my head in his lap. His hands remain still, until they're suddenly on me, brushing through my hair at the base of my neck.

Shivers run down my back, and I smile inwardly as he continues brushing through my hair. One of his hands finds my own, and he brushes his thumb against the back of my hand.

I fall asleep.

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We're in the car, driving in my 1999 Jeep Grand Cherokee, exploring southern Utah as we talk about life.

We now sat in comfortable silence. He asks me a question.

"What do you think would've happened if we ended up together?"

I blink at his response, ignoring the flutters that filled my chest.

"I think..." I start. "I think I could've been happier." I respond hesitantly.

I look over at him; he glances back at me. Our eyes meet, and I feel the blood rush into my cheeks. I look away.

Our comfortable silence stretches, and all the while I forget that I have a boyfriend. I always seem to forget that when he's around.

I know it's not fair, I know that. But I can't get my heart to calm down long enough to care.

We went back to my mom's house, where I was currently staying. It's late.
We go into my room, and we talk. We talk all night.
My surgery scars are stinging, he notices. He asks me what's wrong, I tell him.
He starts to rub my feet, and another flutter fills my chest. I'm not sure why this feels so intimate, but it does. No amount of sexual activity would ever feel as intimate as this moment.
Suddenly, he's kissing the surgery scars on my legs. Blood rushes into my cheeks again, and I dip my head down to hide the flush.
His head is close to mine, and he's looking at my lips. I swallow.
We don't kiss though; we just sit together. The comfortable silence stretches until we fall asleep.

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He's leaving today. I'm not sure why that upsets me so much, but it does.  
We've said our goodbyes before, such as when I moved out of state or when he left for bootcamp. Still, nothing is going to prepare me for this.  
He, who has always been there for me; he, who has always called me and kept in touch. He, who spent all night kissing my surgery scars and showing me a kind of intimacy I have never known before.  
I felt a lump rising in my throat, but I shove it down. We've said our goodbyes before, and we will say them again; and everything will be fine.  
Jordan has told me from the beginning of our friendship, back in those 8<sup>th</sup> grade moments, that he wanted to be a Marine. I've never doubted him; in fact, I've pushed him to do what his heart calls for. I'm proud of him, I am.  
It still could not have prepared me for this moment.  
Upset to the point of being near-tears, I start driving. I end up at my sister's apartment.  
We've had our ups and downs, but one thing I can always count on is my sister providing the best distractions.  
I walk up that staircase, that oh so long staircase, until I reach her front door. My health is a bit rocky nowadays, but I make it.  
I knock on her door; she lets me in. We go through the motions of chatting, but all I can think about is him.  
She gives me a drink, or two. A distraction: we dance.  
He calls.  
Without a moment of hesitation, I walk onto the apartment balcony and answer.  
"Hey," he says. I mirror his hello.  
"I wanted to say goodbye to you," he says. "We're leaving soon."  
I can't even remember what I said. I remember telling him how much I believe in him, how I know he can do this. I tell him I love him – we had always been a loving friendship – and I tell him to call me the second he gets the chance.  
He hangs up. I cry.

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I break up with my boyfriend. I feel horrible, but my mind is elsewhere. He deserves better.

I tell him that, but he doesn't get it. It's okay though, he'll realize it eventually.

I cry. Not because of him, but because of Jordan.

He sent me one last text, which says to look out for a letter. The all too familiar feeling of anticipation fills me, and I attempt to push the anxiety down.

When I get the letter, I throw everything else down and go into my room. I shut the door, sit down, and open it.

It was a love letter, as I had expected. Tears fill my eyes as I read it.

I'm falling in love with you.

I shut my eyes tight to attempt to keep the tears in. A lump fills my throat, and my body shakes with unshed tears.

I curse at myself and wonder how I ended up here.

How did I let this happen?

I remember the next moment in pieces, where I walk into my mom's office, consumed with my own 'what if?', when I finally accept what has been eating at me for awhile now.

Ever since that first embrace after bootcamp, and every moment that followed.

My best friend; my family.

When I tell my mom that I love him too, she gapes at me in shock, before a grin spreads across her face.

~~~

I cry for awhile in my room, playing Jordan's favorite TV show, *Friends*, on repeat. He'll be able to call soon, and I still don't know what to say.

I dry my eyes and await his phone call. Anticipation riddled with anxiety fills me for the last time as I wait.

My phone suddenly starts ringing, and I inhale sharply.

"Hey." he says when I finally draw enough courage to answer. I exhale, his voice bringing out that all too familiar comfort.

"Hey." I respond.

I hear him smile.

I smile back.

## Conclusion

Within my writing career, I never imagined I would find as much joy as I have.

With each new lesson learned, and each new mistake made, I've realized how much joy there is in switching up genres as well. Instead of staying inside one box, I live in a paradox of them all.

I admit that I have much left to learn; as do we all. At the same time, I feel as if I've already come so far; and will grow some more still.

I hope that within my writing portfolio I have been able to showcase this joy of mine, as well as the passion that has grown deeper by the day. It is a world in which very few will experience, and I feel fortunate enough to know exactly who I am, and exactly who I want to be.

A writer.