

The part of my writing that I'm the most proud of is my work with poetry to begin the class. I started writing poetry during the end of summer break and the beginning of the fall semester during my recovery from my POTS issues, and it served as a means for me to test my brain and ensure I was still making progress towards coming back in the spring. However, most of those pieces weren't polished, or didn't have the type of depth that I would have liked. In this class, however, I was able to truly expand in those areas, most notably with my poem, ~ ~ V O I D ~ ~. This poem was cathartic, allowing me to write out what was happening in my mind during one of the hardest times in my life. I was able to not only conceptualize the gloom I was feeling, but I was able to describe it vividly enough that others were able to feel it or relate to it as well. The entire second stanza is where this is most visible, where I was able to give a more tangible feel to something that's intangible. Beyond that, I was also able to experiment with structure in a way I had not been able to previously. Lines such as "The some~thing? No~thing" and "H~op e, f~ee li~n g, ev e~ryt h~in g? ~ ~ M E A N I N G L E S S ~ ~" were some of my favorites to work with, as I was able to not only give the darkness a voice, but let the structure do the talking. This was something I had only toyed around with in the past, but was finally able to give some legs to in this class.

As far as something I'd like to continue working on from this class, I have begun theorizing how I would take the world I built for the worldbuilding exercise and use it as the core of a story or novel. One of the reasons I took this course was because it seemed like a good class to take for my major, which is game design. If I want to make a game, I have to be able to make a story, and expanding my short story excerpt is something I want to do over the summer. I want it to serve as the start of a full story, and write from the perspective of different characters. In the assignment, I had to start from the middle of the chapter, as I had no idea how to segway to what

I wanted to write. This is why it starts with a confrontation between Elijah and Malakai out of nowhere, and ends with a character named Dante being mentioned, despite having no introduction. I have the rest of that chapter and most of the main characters planned out with their traits, backstories, and development throughout the story, but haven't had the time yet to truly begin working on it. Once the summer begins, I plan on writing the story out as a means to keep my brain active and engaged, and hope to have a full novel done at some point down the road. When that might be, I'm not fully certain, as I have classes I'll have to take and the standard issues of writing along the way, but it's something I've got the motivation to do.

For my revision, I decided to go down the path I had wanted to take when I finished the first assignment. My original assignment was to write a poem about someone conflicted between God and the Devil and have them go down a path towards the latter. I also wanted to have the first words of each line form a sentence from God and the last words of each line to form a sentence from the Devil to further show the position the narrator was in. After writing the first, I wanted to make a sister poem where the narrator goes down the path of God and moves away from the Devil. The main reason was to give myself a challenge, as I am not a religious person myself, and wanted to work with trying to write from a perspective I don't have. My other goal with this revision was to give both poems similar structures to show that they're sister poems and give them both the same feel. For example, both use a similar first line, where the narrator is struggling with their sin. The next line has them asking a question, followed by a quote from an outside voice, and an introspective question. They both have multiple lines of reasoning, and end with a final line bookended by the word salvation, the first being "salvation from you is my true salvation," and the other being "salvation from the Devil's ways is my true salvation." I'm very happy with how the revision came out, and think that it compliments my original piece well.

### Assignment 1:

I am tortured by choice, and burdened by my Sin.  
am I to repent? “That is what you need for  
your salvation, not damnation.” Is that for me?  
God is said to have made me, in his image, for  
the life I am to live. You made me this. I  
only can do what I was created to do. am  
I supposed to burn? Was I made to meet Satan?  
bring me to him, with my gifted sins! Give me your  
eternal damnation! If you making me this way is true,  
salvation from you is my true salvation.

*I am your God, the only. I bring eternal salvation  
Sin for me, for I am Satan, your true salvation*

### Revision of Assignment 1 (Sister Poem):

I kneel before you today, tainted by my Sin.  
am I evil? “You must repent for your actions, for  
your soul must be cleansed.” What has become of me?  
God knows who I really am, and what I’ve done for  
the ones I love, and those who need help around me. I  
only did what I did to better help them. But who am  
I then? A man who looks to evil, who lets Satan  
bring his corruption to others? I cannot be. your  
eternal blessing is my purpose, my faith remains true.  
salvation from the Devil’s ways is my true salvation.

*I am your God, the only. I bring eternal salvation  
Sin for me, for I am Satan, your true*

### Short Non-fiction Story:

Have you ever broken a bone before? It's one of those stereotypical ice breakers people tend to ask when they don't know what else to say. It's cheesy, but has a history of bringing up some unique and sometimes funny stories. Sometimes, it's something you can look back on and laugh about, depending on the circumstances. That's how it is for me. I've only ever broken a bone once, and looking back on it, I can't help but chuckle.

Allow me to paint the scene. It was back in the third grade for a young AJ, who was getting ready for summer. It was May, and with both the start of the little league season and the end of the school year around the corner, I wanted to enjoy the free time I was given during the school day. We spent long hours prepping for our first taste of standardized testing, and for putting up with that, our teachers gave us more recess time than usual. We were let loose outside and were given about 30 minutes to do whatever we wanted, and I decided to enjoy my time by hopping on the swings.

This was the catalyst to me making a very bad decision. I began getting more height as one of the other kids was pushing me to get me higher and higher on the swing. As recess grew closer and closer to finishing up, a thought entered my head. I had seen birds before, and had seen how graceful they looked in the sky, and wondered what that must feel like. I had flown in a plane before, but that's not true freedom. True freedom, I thought, would be flying in the air unabated, with nothing supporting you. When I finally heard the call to head back inside, I saw my opportunity. I asked to be pushed as hard as I could be, and when I reached my highest point, I leapt from the swing. For a moment, I felt what it was like to fly. For a brief moment in time, I felt the air beneath me, and the sensation of freedom that flight gives. It was liberating.

Then I hit the mulch. I landed flat on my face, with my left arm sandwiched between my body and the earth. I felt like I was hit with a flashbang, like in war movies when the main character gets disoriented and watches everything with double vision and ringing in their ears. I watched all of my classmates and a couple teachers walk past me as I tried to crawl to the door. Eventually, one of the assistant teachers came over, helped me up, and brought me to a nearby bench. They asked what had happened, and as I was disoriented, I struggled to find the words. I tried to balance myself with my left arm.

It gave.

The inner bone of my forearm snapped under my weight. It was broken when I landed on the ground, but I didn't know until then because of my disorientation. As soon as pressure was applied to the limb, it collapsed. My arm suddenly resembled a shelf, bent 45 degrees in towards my body. The disorientation was completely erased in that moment, replaced only by the unbearable pain in my arm and my screams of agony. The teacher's face went pale, and I was rushed to the nurse's office. I was given ice to try to help with the pain, which didn't help at all. When my mother got there, she was hurried to meet me, and was horrified at the state of my arm. The funniest part was the nurse saying, "It could just be a sprain" in an effort to calm me, completely forgetting how bones work. My father was called, and both him and my mother helped me to the car and brought me to the urgent care nearby.

The rest of the story is pretty uneventful. The urgent care took me to the hospital in an ambulance, which was my first time ever riding in one. On the way, my little league coach had called to ask where I had been, since I was supposed to be in a game that evening. He was promptly told off by my mother for putting the game above my health even after he was informed of where I was. At the emergency room, they took x-rays to figure out where the break was, and proceeded to set my arm and cast it up beyond my elbow. We were eventually sent home quite late, where I had to learn how to sleep in a chair. My arm was in that cast for a couple months before it was removed and replaced by a smaller one to give me more freedom for the end of the summer. It was eventually removed soon after when my arm was fully healed.

At the time, it was hard to find humor in the situation. For the first time ever, I had experienced the pain of breaking a bone, and it had cost me the entire little league season, along with messing up my rhythm for classes. It had also been a hard lesson in curbing my ambitions and reminding me that flight wasn't achievable for me without either a plane or some wings I never grew. But looking back at it, there's a lot to laugh about. I'm fortunate to have not broken any bones since and hope to keep it that way, but at least the one time I did has a fairly entertaining story behind it.

### Short Fiction Story:

Elijah placed his hand on Cirilia's shoulder with force. Malakai's eyes ignited in fury. He quickly grasped Elijah's arm, tearing the hand away from his sister. As he did, the skin on the arm began to decay, his skin rotting and falling away from the bone. Elijah screamed so loudly and shrilly that the entire bar fell silent and looked on at the work of the death mage.

"What are you doing to me? What kind of accursed magic is this?" Elijah cried. His eyes welled with tears.

"Let go of him, please!" cried Cirilia, growing distressed with her brother's actions.

Malakai refused. His grip remained strong, and his eyes burned holes through the holy mage. More of Elijah's arm withered away, down to mere bones. Elijah's cries became weaker as his life began to fade away.

"Malakai! Don't do this!"

Suddenly, Malakai looked at Cirilia. In a mere moment, his gaze softened as he looked into his younger sister's eyes. He saw the pain in them. He saw what she thought of him in that moment. He released his grip, and Elijah fell to the floor in a heap.

Cirilia knelt down next to Elijah and rested her hands on his rotten arm and spoke an incantation. The arm began to heal as quickly as it had decayed. In a matter of moments, the arm was returned to life. Elijah began returning to his senses, and soon returned back to his feet. His eyes were wide in amazement, both at the strength of the black magic applied to his arm and the speed at which it was healed.

"If you ever lay a hand on my sister again, I will send you to your Four Gods in a heap of rotted flesh and cursed remains. Do you understand me?" Malakai's words were laced with venom and hatred.

"You'll rue this day soon, heathen," Elijah replied. "You'll see."

Elijah proceeded to turn and leave the bar. Slowly, the other patrons began returning to their conversations and meals. Malakai turned to face Cirilia, who returned a look of disappointment.

"I thought you had that part of you under control," Cirilia said. "I thought you knew that you don't have to be so overbearing with me, and that I can hold my own now."

"With you, I cannot be too careful," Malakai replied. "There have been too many times where you have gotten into trouble and I was not there to help. I vowed that I would never let that happen on my watch again, no matter how small the matter may seem."

"But you don't have to do that anymore. I'm not the young teenager who doesn't have their magic under control anymore. I'm more than capable of protecting myself and making my own decisions."

"You say that, but I know you. You're far too trusting. Need I remind you of the last time we were in town?"

Cirilia looked down at the floor. "You don't have to."

“It’s times like those that make me feel obligated to make sure no one takes advantage of you. I cannot and will not let that happen.”

Cirilia returned her gaze to Malakai. “I understand that you want to protect me, but you don’t have to become a monster to do so. What would mother and father think of you trying to murder people like that over something so small?”

Malakai flinched and looked away. He fell silent, seemingly looking off into nothingness. After a while, he spoke again.

“We should get going. Sif is probably worried that he hasn’t seen you in a while. I’ll order him something to eat. You should make sure he’s okay.”

“You’re right! I’ll make sure he hasn’t gotten himself into trouble.” Cirilia turned to face Dante. “It was a pleasure to meet you! I look forward to our quest!”