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Short Story Portfolio

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Darkwater Bridge

The waves raged beneath the bridge, gnawing at the metal supports. From his perch on the struts Damian could see the headlights of passing cars reflecting off the water like searchlights. Maybe that was why the river was so angry, constantly being intruded upon by the metal world above.

His feet dangled over the water, his bright white Jordans luminous in the dark. £200 he'd spent on those trainers. He hoped the fish would appreciate the offering. Maybe they would make houses out of them, raise fry. Damian could see it now, the fry developing into fingerlings, darting after one another through the laces and that long grass stuff you always found on riverbeds.

A buzz broke through the rumble of the traffic and ever-yelling river. Damian fished out his phone from his pocket. Lauren. Again. And didn't he feel selfish for wanting to hear her voice now more than ever. He hesitated, finger hovering over the green button. A second passed. Then another. He pressed accept.

Damian had always loved Lauren's mellow voice. It reminded him of warm mugs of hot chocolate, cozy blankets, and the smell of plastic Christmas trees after the lights had been left on for too long.

'Hello?'

'Damian! Don't hang up! You need to tell me where you are. *Please*. This isn't right and you know it.'

Lauren's voice wasn't mellow tonight. It was high-pitched and fast. It made Damian's eyes sting.

‘I just needed some fresh air. Nothing to worry about, hun.’

‘We both know that’s not true. Tell me where you are and I can pick you up. It’s not too late. We can go to Pizza Hut and talk. I’m sure they’re still open.’

‘Pizza Hut sounds nice,’ said Damian. ‘But I don’t want to go back. You don’t know what it’s like there. My freedom, my privacy, it’s all gone.’

There was silence on the other end of the phone, apart from Lauren’s quick breaths. He knew she must have been thinking about what to say to him, some way to lure him back into his stagnant life. Her forehead would be crinkled in that way it often was when she had a problem to solve.

‘It’s not forever,’ she said softly, after a pause that could have lasted an hour.

‘Just until you -,’

‘- That’s what they always say,’ said Damian. ‘It’s not forever. It’s just until you get yourself sorted out. I don’t believe it. Not anymore.’

‘What about me?’ said Lauren.

‘What about you?’

‘Aren’t I enough?’

‘You’re always enough,’ said Damian. ‘It’s me who isn’t. I think I was once, when we first met. You remember when I used to take you out on those expensive dates – to Seven Seas and those BBL games? We used to talk for hours afterwards. I was so happy then. You were too. I wish we could go back to those times.’

Lauren's sigh crackled down the phone. 'I don't. They were nice and all – I appreciated the effort you put in – but we know each other so much better now. It's why I want you back. Please don't do this to me. I love you so much.'

'I love you too, Lauren,' said Damian. He pressed the end call button. Then he allowed the phone to slip from his fingers. It arced through the air, the black screen catching the light of the streetlamps and those damned cars. He didn't hear the plop as it entered the water.

He shouldn't have answered the call. It made it all so much more difficult now. Damian glanced up through the metal struts, watching another car drive past. He wished he'd learned to drive. He'd tried, of course, but he just couldn't seem to grasp the concept of the gearstick. How the hell was he supposed to know when to go up or down? Lauren had told him to listen to the engine. His instructor had told him to change depending on what speed he was going. None of it had really made sense. He could have tried automatic, he supposed, but he wanted to drive *properly*. To be in full control.

'You alright, man?'

Damian started, almost slipping on his precarious perch. Heart pounding, he turned to see a moon-white face staring back at him over the railings. The man was younger than him – early twenties, perhaps – and had his dark eyebrows scrunched together. Damian thought about ignoring him, of turning his attention back to the water, but something about the young man's concerned face stopped him.

'No, not really,' said Damian in a soft voice.

The young man didn't hesitate. In a few swift movements he had climbed over the edges of the railing and was swinging down towards Damian. He was scruffily

dressed, wearing a pair of faded jeans, a jacket that was ripped in several places and trainers that must have once been white but were now a faded grey.

‘Careful,’ said Damian as the young man wobbled before managing to regain his footing. The man shot him a grin and settled next to him. He smelled of cheap aftershave and regret.

‘So, you’re thinking of jumping? I’m Hugh, by the way, and I really recommend that you don’t.’

‘Nice to meet you Hugh,’ said Damian with a nod, ‘Why shouldn’t I?’

‘Broccoli,’ said Hugh sagely.

Damian stared at him.

‘You could end up a vegetable,’ Hugh clarified. ‘Fall all that way only to survive and end up trapped in your own body. Surely that’s got to be worse than whatever you’re going through?’

Damian thought about it. He recalled all the weeks spent in the facility Lauren had found for him. The way his body had spasmed and shook as the substances left his body. The dark cloud that lingered constantly on the edges of his thoughts and never seemed to go away. He imagined suffering the same whilst unable to move. Unable even to enjoy everyday pleasures such as eating and drinking.

‘It’s not ideal,’ said Damian, ‘But what if I *succeed*. All the pain will be gone. People can move on with their lives. Lauren can get back out there and find someone who can actually support her.’

Hugh threw his head back with a laugh. Beneath a passing headlight his eyes shone gold. ‘You think she’d want anyone other than you? You’d destroy her. She’d

spend the rest of her life wondering if anything she said or did could have stopped you. Do you really want her to carry around that guilt for the rest of her life?’

‘You don’t know Lauren,’ said Damian. ‘She’s not like that. She’d be upset for a while, sure, but then she’d move on. It’s human nature.’

Hugh didn’t reply. His face, so round and jovial before, fell. He looked down at the water with narrowed eyes. ‘I did it once, you know.’

‘What?’

‘I jumped. And do you know what I felt the moment my feet left the bridge?’

‘Euphoria?’

‘Regret.’

The silence between the two men was loud. Damian couldn’t imagine regretting such a decision, but what if he did? What exactly was he giving up? He’d had Lauren, and a good job. His parents too, before his drinking became too much and they moved to the countryside. Could he build up a relationship with them again? He doubted it.

‘Why did you do it?’ said Damian. His voice was quiet, carried away by the wind, but Hugh still managed to hear him.

‘I was in debt,’ said Hugh. ‘I’d spent all my money on casinos and girls, and the sharks came to call. This was about a year ago, now.’

‘Oh, said Damian,’ I’m sorry.’

Hugh shrugged, the jagged edge of his jacket flapping in the wind. He bit his lip and leaned forward, until his torso was hanging over empty space. Damian’s

stomach twisted, his sweaty hands losing their grip on the struts until Hugh finally leaned back.

'Life,' said Hugh, 'is *a/ways* worth living. Problems can be solved, situations improved. But death, that's permanent. There's no going back, and no telling what awaits you on the other side.'

Damian had a few ideas of what could await him; namely a tiny bundle he and Lauren had only known for a few short minutes. Holding that bundle to his chest would make it all bearable, but the only way to do so was to let the water take him.

It was after he'd lowered the small box into the ground that things started to go wrong. The coping mechanisms, the voices, the cloud that followed around his every waking moment. Hugh must have noticed his expression, for he laid an icy hand on his shoulder.

'You lost someone,' he said. It wasn't a question. Damian nodded anyway.

'Then you *do* know how it feels. Do you really want to do that to your Lauren?'

'Why do you care so much?' said Damian. 'You don't even know me.'

Hands clenched into fists as Damian pulled himself to his feet, pushing Hugh's hand from his shoulder. The wind buffeted his body, threatening to send him off the edge. The bridge suddenly seemed so much higher than earlier.

'I told you,' said Hugh, 'I don't want what happened to me to happen to anyone else.'

'So, you patrol the bridge waiting for unfortunate souls to wander your way?'

Between one heartbeat and the next Hugh was standing too. 'Something like that,' he said.

Hugh's hair caught in the wind, pushed back from his forehead. For the first time a long white scar was visible, running into his hairline. The more Damian looked, the darker it seemed to grow until a gaping red wound cleaved Hugh's skull in half. Damian blinked and Hugh was back to normal, just that thin white line marring his skin.

'You okay?' said Hugh, reaching out as if to steady him.

Damian nodded, his hand clenching on the bridge support. Of course he was okay. His mind was *perfectly* clear, he was *lucid*, and his path ahead as immovable as steel. And if his eyes were stinging, it was just because of the wind.

'I think,' said Hugh, 'That you should think this over. Go home, sleep. If you still feel the same way tomorrow the bridge will still be here. So will I.'

'I can't go home,' said Damian. 'Lauren, she paid for a... facility. A fancy one with shrinks and everything. They'll know I left by now.'

'And I'm sure they're very worried. Let them take you back, just for tonight. '

Damian looked down at the water for what felt like the hundredth time that night. Though it still slapped up against the metal struts, it was calmer than it had been earlier, though no doubt still icy cold. He wondered what would get to him first, the impact, the hypothermia, or the water in his lungs.

'How long did it take for you to recover?' he asked. Hugh didn't answer, not that it surprised Damian. It was a very personal question, one that probably still gave the other man a lot of trauma. He wouldn't answer either if -

Hugh was gone. Somehow, as Damian had been staring into the water the man had silently climbed back up the bridge and left him alone. Was it because Damian was such a hopeless case?

Gripping onto the struts with both hands behind him, Damian leaned out over the river. He imagined he could feel its icy spray on his cheeks, but he was far too high up for that. His grip loosened, one foot extended out over the abyss. Damian closed his eyes and... stepped back. All his bravado and he couldn't do it.

Gritting his teeth, Damian clambered his awkward way up the bridge and over the railing. His chest was heaving as he finally got to the top. A car sped past, spraying water into his face. He paused against a lamp post, rubbing at his eyes. When he opened them again, Hugh was staring at him.

At least, Damian thought it was Hugh. He looked different in the ragged picture pasted to the lamp post. Happier. Above his face was a caption:

MISSING: HAVE YOU SEEN THIS MAN? LAST SEEN HEADING IN THE DIRECTION OF DARKWATER BRIDGE.

Island

‘Just look at that view. You can see to the other side of the lake from here!
What do you think Fi?’

Fiona glanced up from the remains of their makeshift meal, following her husband’s gaze out of the caravan window. Despite Timothy’s glee, all she could see was an ordinary stretch of dark water with some ordinary trees dotted on the other side. ‘It’s alright, I suppose. Not exactly Heckfield Place.’

‘No, and that’s the beauty of it. Missing that right turn was a lucky accident. We wouldn’t have stumbled across this beauty otherwise!’

‘No,’ said Fiona, crushing her takeaway container ready for recycling – if they even *had* recycling out here - ‘We wouldn’t have.’

Timothy turned, no doubt hearing the dryness to her tone. ‘The caravan’s not that bad.’

‘Of course not.’

‘And it’s only for tonight.’

‘A perfectly reasonable amount of time,’ Fiona agreed.

‘We get our deposit back in the morning too,’ Timothy continued, slumping onto the lumpy corner sofa. ‘As soon as we’ve eaten breakfast, we can get back on the road and find our hotel.’

‘No.’ said Fiona.

‘No?’

‘I’m not eating breakfast here.’

'Oh.' said Timothy.

'I want a proper cooked breakfast. At the hotel. Like we ordered.'

Timothy nodded slowly, 'Okay. If that's what you want. We could go for a walk first though. See the lake.'

Fiona thought about it. She stood and shoved her takeaway container straight into the bin. 'Okay,' she said.

'We don't have to,' said Timothy, with a yawn. He spread out on the sofa, exposing the swell of his stomach. It was like an island, that stomach, with its own miniscule ecosystem, and its own hierarchy.

'Okay, said Fiona, settling down next to her husband, 'We can go for a walk first.'

Sanctuary

A crash echoed through the church, resounding off the empty pews and crumbled altar.

‘What the hell was that?’ I hissed at Sophia. We were slumped together on the cold tiles, our backs pressed against the church’s heavy wooden doors. To begin with, I didn’t think she’d heard me. Her head rested against the door, shoulders still heaving in a rapid staccato rhythm from our dash to safety. She clutched her arm to her chest like a teddy bear.

‘Sophia?’

‘They are coming through the roof.’

Her voice was distant, but when I glanced at her face her eyes were the most lucid I’d seen them in days; clear and bright. Then the crash came again.

I closed my eyes, wanting to disappear into the darkness. The two of us had been running for weeks and for a moment I thought we had found a sanctuary. Even a night or two of safety would have been enough for me. There was no sanctity in the darkness anymore, it seemed. As soon as the sun dipped beneath the horizon the nightmares were free to roam. Even on consecrated ground.

I swallowed, opened my eyes and followed Sophia’s gaze up to the roof. A sliver of moonlight seeped through a crack and in the pale light I could just make out a dozen bone-white fingers clawing at the tiles. I thought we were safe, with the door shut tight behind us. It hadn’t crossed my mind that they could also climb.

'Sophia, we need to go!' I said, surging to my feet and attempting to drag my sister to hers. She continued to stare past me, as though transfixed by the looming promise of our demise.

I dug my nails into the soft flesh of her wrist. It did the trick, as Sophia leapt to her feet with a yelp. She swayed on her feet, trying to pull her arm from my grip, but I took the opportunity to tow her towards the confessional. We stuffed ourselves inside the small space. It smelled of old, oiled wood and dust.

I didn't truly believe we'd be safe here. The old world had been left behind the moment the creatures had come. They didn't fear God, or death, or even the promise of eternal damnation, for they were already damned, already dead.

I'd watched our family decimated by the creatures, only to be dragged from their graves and raised as one of them. Our own mother had tracked us down, changed and deranged. Our father had backed us into this place, hungry for our blood.

'I don't know what to do,' I confessed to Sophia. My eyes burned with unshed tears. It was my job to keep her safe and I'd failed. The wood of this cramped little box would crumble and splinter and my sister and I would be ripped apart.

'We should visit the crypt,' said Sophia, turning her moon-bright eyes on me.

'It's full of the dead,' I said, 'Why would we -,'

'They've never been infected,' said Sophia, 'Besides, those old bones would crumble the moment they tried to stand.'

Another crash echoed through the nave and I made my decision. We raced out of the confessional as the first pale body slammed into the tiles from above. I caught only a glimpse of a sallow face and a gaping red maw before we were

whirling past. Sophia took the lead this time, her hand grinding the bones of my wrist together as we weaved towards the high altar.

The marble stairs were hidden by heavy marble doors. I slammed into one, unable to slow myself down. I tugged at the handles, but the doors were stuck tight.

'You have to push,' said Sophia calmly. She elbowed past me and heaved at the doors. They swung inwards instantly, bouncing off the walls behind. 'Come on.'

I slipped inside the door, and Sophia slammed it behind us and slid the lock into place. There was a thud as multiple bodies threw themselves at the door.

'That was close,' I said, pressing my head against the cold marble.

'It always is,' said Sophia. 'Listen, Livy, I don't think we should stay here.'

I looked at her with furrowed eyebrows. 'Why not? You're the one who suggested it.'

'I know. It's fine for now but we're trapped down here. *You're* trapped down here.'

'It's fine if I'm with you.'

Her grin looked more like a grimace in the dark, white and distorted. 'There's only so much we can endure together. At some point you're going to have to put yourself first.'

I was horrified at the thought. We'd already been left alone. I couldn't bear the idea of abandoning Sophia. I'd been there when she took her first breath, and I be damned if I didn't see her life through to the very end.

'You understand, don't you?' she continued.

'I don't want to talk about it,' I said, turning from my sister to the staircase. Our footsteps echoed as we descended, no matter how quietly we tried to walk. It was dark but not pitch black so there must have been light leaking in from somewhere. I wasn't sure if this was a comfort or a concern. In the end, I decided not to think about it too hard.

The staircase widened as we reached the crypt proper. It was musty and the ceiling was almost low enough for me to bump my head on. I hooked my hand into Sophia's and squeezed. She squeezed back once before letting go.

'We should find somewhere to sleep,' I said, finally feeling the adrenaline of the past few hours draining from my system.

'I don't want to.' Sophia's voice was barely audible, even though she stood right next to me. I looked at her properly for the first time since our race to safety. Her face was drawn and grey; her tawny hair lank and lifeless. She still held her arm at an awkward angle next to her body.

'You're scared?' I said softly.

'Of course I am. What if they get in? What if I wake up dead?'

'At least we'll go together, knowing we had this sanctuary for a while.'

The crypt was lined with marble plates, behind which lay the caskets of people loyal to the church. A few of the walls had cracked, leaving jagged holes leading into the crawl space beyond. I peered into a few of these. Most had rotten caskets situated within, but a couple were bare. I crawled into one of these empty spaces, bringing Sophia with me. Our feet sent dust floating into the air as we moved.

Our bed for the night was cramped but cuddled up against Sophia I didn't mind. For a while her body remained rigid against mine, before she finally relaxed and slumped against me.

'It hurts,' Sophia admitted after a while. I wasn't sure if she imagined me asleep, so I didn't answer. I kept my breath long and even and hoped she would continue. She did.

'It didn't at first, it just felt cold. But now its throbbing in time to my heartbeat. I think dad recognised what he'd done, Livy. He let me go almost immediately. And now I'm so hungry it scares me. I can feel it gnawing at my stomach. My teeth ache and my stomach aches, and every time you touch me, I want to bury my face against your skin. I don't know how long it will take – if it happens at all – but you need to be brave and save yourself.'

My fingers clenched involuntarily on her leg. I considered myself capable, but one thing I couldn't do was let her go. I uncurled myself from my spot on Sophia's lap, feeling her start at my movement. She really had thought me asleep, then.

'I told you,' I said. 'We end this together. Alive or dead or anything in between.'

'How could I live with myself, though?'

'Because I say that you can. I relieve you of all guilt. I want to live, of course I do. But I don't mind the eternal sleep if it's with you.'

She caressed my face then, with sharp fingernails. A sigh slid through her lips and Sophia closed her eyes, finally relaxing into sleep.

I watched her closely. Her chest rose and fell, before pausing. Then it rose again. I reached for her arm and gently rolled back the sleeve. The skin beneath was

dark and bruised, with two ragged red marks where something sharp had scratched the surface. The wound looked no different to the last time I'd checked.

Satisfied, I let Sophia's arm drop into her lap. I stretched out as much as I could in such a small space and rested my head against my sister's still shoulder. My heavy eyelids fluttered shut.

The dream took me almost instantly. I was cocooned in the branches of a tree. They wrapped tightly around my body, keeping me warm and immobile. Twigs pricked at the exposed skin above my shoulder, but I was so comfortable that I didn't mind.

Rocked gently in the branches, I felt myself becoming light-headed. It was a pleasant sort of dizziness that reminded me of being carried – overly tired - to bed by my father. I'd sought a sanctuary as forgiving as his arms ever since. I slipped deeper into oblivion with a smile on my lips.

Reflective Commentary

Included in my portfolio are three short stories, each focusing on different techniques within the medium of the short story. 'Darkwater Bridge' is inspired by Hemmingway's non-closure to a piece, as read in 'Hills like White Elephants'.¹ It also includes the use of a limited geographical space and pathetic fallacy. 'Island' makes use of an important simile, as well as emulating Hemmingway's inferred context through dialogue. 'Sanctuary' began as an exercise in class from the prompt 'they are coming through the ceiling but morphed into an experimental piece playing with a diegetic narrator in a closed geographical space, as seen with Mansfield's 'The Daughters of the Late Colonel'.² I also experimented with a surprise ending and structural irony, drawing upon the internal surprise endings common in early 20th century stories. I shall be exploring the process of crafting these pieces, as well as inserting critical reflections on my research practise.

'Darkwater Bridge' is a study of a non-closure piece with a surprise ending, as seen with Mansfield's 'The Daughters of the Late Colonel'.³ Change does not occur much on the outside within this story; it is an internal change that Damian experiences. Namely, the fact that he is not so sure about committing suicide anymore. This is similar to the daughter's realisations that they are free from their

¹ The Short Story Project, *Hills Like White Elephants* by Ernest Hemmingway (2026), <<https://shortstoryproject.com/stories/hills-like-white-elephants/>> [Accessed 20 October 2026]

² Short Stories, Katherine Mansfield, 'The Daughters of the Late Colonel' (2026), <<https://www.eastoftheweb.com/short-stories/UBooks/DaugLate.shtml>> [Accessed 20 October 2026]

³ Short Stories, Katherine Mansfield, 'The Daughters of the Late Colonel' (2026), <<https://www.eastoftheweb.com/short-stories/UBooks/DaugLate.shtml>> [Accessed 20 October 2026]

father in the aforementioned story. Likewise, I built up Damian's realisation subtly throughout the piece. The more Damian talks to Hugh, the bigger his doubt grows. I showed this through the environment. The bridge seems higher and more unnerving the more Damian's doubt grows, and he has a physical reaction to the wind pushing up against his body so close to the edge.

The story is non-closure in that it never explicitly states what happens to Damian or Hugh. It is quite possible that Damian returns the next day to complete his suicide mission. It is just as likely that he does not. Likewise, Hugh's backstory is never explained. Could he be a ghost haunting the bridge where he committed suicide, dissuading others from the same fate? Or is he simply a missing person, who once jumped from that bridge himself, now playing the good Samaritan?

I thought it important to implement pathetic fallacy into *Darkwater Bridge* to reflect Damian's emotions. Pager-McClymont defines pathetic fallacy as 'a projection of emotions onto the surroundings by an animated entity. The emotions and animated entity in question can be featured implicitly or explicitly in the text.'⁴ In the case of '*Darkwater Bridge*' it is the angry, raging river that subtly calms as Damian's mind changes. 'Though it still slapped up against the metal struts, it was calmer than it had been earlier, though no doubt still icy cold.'

'Island' was written from the point of view of a limited perspective third person narrator. Throughout the story I used Hemmingway's theory of omission – that is, allowing the reader to come to their own conclusions on the nature of the argument

⁴ Pager-McClymont, Kimberley. 2024. 'A Stylistic Model of the Converse of Pathetic Fallacy', *Language and Literature (Harlow, England)* (London, England), 33.1, pp. 44–68, doi:10.1177/09639470231220249

between two people. This involved limited characterisation and backstory, which I found difficult as characterisation is an important aspect of storytelling in my usual work. To aid myself, I emulated Hemmingway's dialogue layout – with little prose in-between⁵. As Oliver states, 'Imitation is a very good way of investigating the real thing.'⁶

Instead of being forthright, I had to subtly imply what the backstory could be. Fiona's quick agreement with her husband hints at years' worth of arguments, and the fact that she sees little point in contesting him. In short, she is a woman jaded by life with her husband. I juxtaposed this against her insistence that they return to the hotel they booked for breakfast. She hasn't quite been defeated by her years of marriage and still has a defiant feminist streak. As Clare Chambers writes, 'Feminism confronts women and men with the idea they are not in control.'⁷ Fiona is very much not in control of her life. She goes along with her husband's whims and even neglects her own principles. I showed this with the recycling of the takeaway container. Fiona likes to recycle, but after once again giving in to her husband's desires, she overlooks her own wants and throws away the container. In a sense she is throwing away her own morals.

Hemmingway demonstrates subtext through dialogue in 'Hills Like White Elephants':

'It's ours.'

⁵ The Short Story Project, *Hills Like White Elephants* by Ernest Hemmingway (2026), <<https://shortstoryproject.com/stories/hills-like-white-elephants/>> [Accessed 20 October 2026]

⁶ Mary Oliver, *A Poetry Handbook: A Prose Guide to Understanding and Writing Poetry* (New York: HarperCollinsPublishers, 1994) p.13

⁷ Clare Chambers, 'Feminism', *Freedom and Equality: Essays on Liberalism and Feminism*, 28 February 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1093/9780191919480.003.0002> [Accessed 19 October. 2026]

'No, it isn't. And once they take it away, you never get it back.'

It's never implicitly stated what is theirs and what they aren't getting back, but it is implied that the woman is getting an abortion. Likewise, in 'Island', I wished to show that Fiona and her husband do not get along or agree. Even though her words say that she *does*, it is implied that she does *not*.

'Timothy turned, no doubt hearing the dryness to her tone. 'The caravan's not that bad.'

'Of course not.'

'And it's only for tonight.'

'A perfectly reasonable amount of time,' Fiona agreed.'

A significant simile is present in the titular 'Hills Like White Elephants.' I also included a significant simile in the idea of Timothy's stomach being like an island. 'It was like an island, that stomach, with its own miniscule ecosystem, and its own hierarchy.' This was to represent Timothy's control over his family. He is the one in control, not Fiona, no matter how much she secretly longs for it.

'Sanctuary' began as an exercise from a writing prompt in class. I experimented using a diegetic narrator with a limited perspective in an enclosed environment. Livy, the narrator has a limited perspective in that she either doesn't see, or doesn't *want* to see, the clues regarding Sophia's true nature.

As so many of the works written in the 20th century have limited geographical settings, I decided to set the story in a church. The main action of the story occurs in the church and the church crypt and, although all the protagonists do physically is

run for their lives, there is a lot of emotional internal turmoil occurring. I also worked on character building, primarily with the relationship between the two sisters.

As 'Sanctuary' is primarily a gothic piece, I was sure to entwine the themes of life and death heavily throughout – with the inclusion of bloodthirsty monsters and the girls' own mortality. Bagthaliya supports this, mentioning the importance of imagery and themes when crafting a gothic narrative, stating 'Life, death, and transcendence were important topics in romantic gothic literature.'⁸

Structural irony is present within 'Sanctuary' as the narrator believes she is finding a safe place for herself and her sister to spend the night away from the monsters, only for it to be implied that the sisters is one of the monsters herself and kills the narrator whilst she sleeps. Again, this implied context is reminiscent of Hemmingway, in that the reader must put the pieces of the story together themselves.

In conclusion, the portfolio successfully explores a variety of different aspects of writing craft. In 'Darkwater Bridge' I explored pathetic fallacy and the use of a surprise ending. In 'Island' I emulated Hemmingway's theory of omission. Though this was done semi-successfully, for the future I will brainstorm different ways to imply context to help me grasp this technique better. Likewise, in 'Sanctuary', I explored the use of a closed geographical environment and attempted to experiment with structural irony. Singleton suggests that through workshoping sessions one can '...develop an ability to offer constructive criticism.'⁹ Through feedback from my

⁸ Ravi B. Bagthaliya, 'A Study of "The Gothic Elements in Romantic Literature" With A Focus on Mary Shelley and Edgar Allan Poe's Works', *Vidhyayana*, 8.6 (2023), pg.6, <https://j.vidhyayanaejournal.org/index.php/journal/article/download/1011/11112/4103#:~:text=The%20Roman%20movement's%20pursuit%20of,and%20terror%20to%20their%20writings>. [Accessed 20 October 2026]

⁹ John Singleton and Mary Luckhurst, '*Creative Writing Handbook*', 2nd edn. (London: Macmillan, 2000) p.14

peers in class sessions, I improved upon all pieces, tightening diction and using environmental description to help develop character.

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