

Dear Askold,

Enclosed are two iterations of my second story for the semester, "Terminal B."

What's been so delightful about my first year in this program is that what has come to the page has been the result of "not overthinking." For a long time I stalled so much on the mechanics of a story, or the "how will I do that"s that I ended up not writing anything at all. Having a cohort so supportive and imaginative, and the deadlines to push against, has helped me break that habit. And what has emerged on the page is instead not something choked by indecision, but something that I felt had to be said.

I spent a lot of time trying to put this feeling into the box of realism. But it felt like, well, a box. That Becca would have a dream that she was going to see Dad again didn't match the urgency of the moment that I wanted. As I tried to usher the characters into Logan Airport on their way to Christmas down in Florida, their first holiday without their dad, there wasn't so much a desperation to say what had to be said among the family members so much as the Irish Catholic standard of "Keep that pain to yourself." But this story wasn't supposed to be about keeping the pain to yourself. It's about confronting the agony of loss amongst people who already had accomplished that, and realizing only then, in their company, that they had already moved down the path of healing.

I "sat down" with Becca a lot to create a better understanding of who she is. What kind of music she listens to, but also what she liked to do when her dad was alive. She borrowed bits of me in her responses. She borrowed bits from my sister. My hope is that in this draft, she comes out more human, easier to understand, even though the pieces of her that are my sister are something I'm still fighting to understand. (This too, is an impetus I cannot fight in my own writing: *Dear Lindsey, who are you? And why do you hate me?*)

I'll probably revise this story five times more before I can get it quite right--it is a very weird happenstance-as-setup, after all. And I will probably tie myself to my favorite armchair to get these characters to talk openly, humanly, without the crazy promise of that last chance to talk to a beloved person who's been lost. But sometime soon and in the future, when that need to get people to open up about a death isn't so immediate.

I want to thank you, deeply and from the bottom of my heart, for your insight and guidance this semester. Your support and words of confidence and constructive advice have meant so much, especially in times of intense stress and schedule struggles.

I truly appreciate all that you do for our cohort. If I don't catch you around campus this summer, I hope you have a wonderful and relaxing break!

Very best wishes and many thanks,

Caitlin Ghegan