

Cold Open — The Trial Begins

They said it was a tell.

They said no real writer would dare.

They called it robotic. Lazy. Formulaic.
A sign of something... artificial.

But what if they were wrong?

What if the em dash wasn't a flaw...
—but a fingerprint?

This week... on the Dreamspace Dispatch, a podcast that explores the intersection of creativity and technology...

We go to trial. A trial that, in any other context, would be laughable. But here we are, discussing the legitimacy of a punctuation mark.

We're not going to court, but we're going to have a lively debate about it—the People vs. The Em Dash.

(soft, sarcastic):

All rise... for the Honorable Judge Syntax.

Then you'd ease straight into **Current Glimmers**, with your voice shifting into natural tone:

Current Glimmers

[laugh]

No, but really... Let's talk about how this all started.

I've been watching this conversation happen for months — especially on LinkedIn, where writers are going after each other like punctuation vigilantes.

The topic?

The em dash.

And whether or not it's a sign — a "tell," as they say — that you used AI to write your content.

I'm not kidding.

People are seriously debating whether using a standard punctuation mark means you didn't write your work.

And yes — it's funny.

But it's also ridiculous.

Because I'm a human.

And I use em dashes—a lot.

Ok, well, not excessively—appropriately.

And so did Emily Dickinson.

And Shakespeare.

And every writer, every author, including me, who has ever needed to breathe while writing a sentence.

So today — with great theatrical flair — we're putting the em dash on trial.

But not really.

We're doing it Dreamspace-style: satirical, poetic, and a little sarcastic — with love.

Because this?

This is not just about punctuation.

It's about voice.

Let's begin.

The Case Against the Em Dash

So... let's talk about the case against the em dash.

If you've spent any time on LinkedIn lately — or, honestly, anywhere writers gather to argue — you've probably seen it:

The Discourse.

"Too many em dashes = lazy writing."

"It's a crutch."

"It's the number one sign you used AI."

The em dash has been put on trial — and the prosecution is... loud about it.

And I get it. Sort of. People are afraid of AI. They want ways to tell what's "real" and what isn't—but trying to use punctuation to prove whether or not a human wrote something?

That's not analysis. That's astrology with grammar.

The idea that the use of an em dash — something that's been part of written language since before computers even existed — is now a red flag?

It's ridiculous.

It's also... kind of hilarious. And that's why we're talking about it today.

Because while the whole "AI tell" thing might be a passing trend, it points to a much bigger problem:

Punctuation policing. Voice erasure. Style conformity.

And all of that? That affects real writers — AI or not.

So let's break this down.

The Defense

Now that we've heard the prosecution... Let's talk about what the em dash is.

It's not a red flag. It's not a tell. It's not lazy.

It's a **breath**.

It's rhythm.

It's texture.

It's the pivot point in a sentence that doesn't follow a linear path — because sometimes our thoughts don't move in straight lines.

The em dash isn't a flaw. It's a **tool**.

And honestly? It's one of the most expressive pieces of punctuation we have.

You know who used it?

Emily Dickinson. Virginia Woolf. Oscar Wilde. Diana Gabaldon. Suzanne Collins.

And probably every neurodivergent writer who ever needed to pause mid-thought without ending the sentence entirely.

We don't write like robots. We write like we breathe.

And if AI can imitate that?

Fine. Let it try.

But don't you dare use my breath pattern as a reason to doubt my humanity.

I write like this — because I am like this.

Transition from Act II (The Defense) → The Words We Carry (your em dash essay)

You:

So here we are.

They made their case.

I made mine.

And now, I would like to offer something more than just evidence.

Something personal.

Something that isn't an argument — but a love letter.

Because the em dash?

It isn't a sign of weakness, laziness, or automation.

It's part of how I breathe.

It's part of how I write.

And this piece — this next piece — is my heart on the page. It's a testament to the emotional significance of the em dash in my writing.



The Words We Carry

"The Em Dash Is Not a Crime: A Love Letter to My Favorite Mark"

(pause)

Some argue that the em dash is overused.

That's the mark of a lazy writer.

That's the telltale sign of AI-written content—

Because surely... no real human would need to pause,
to redirect,
to breathe mid-thought—

(beat)

But let me tell you something.

I have bled on keyboards.

I have turned silence into syntax.

And the em dash?

The em dash is where my breath lives.

It's not a mistake.

It's not filler.

It's texture.

It's rhythm.

It's voice.

It is the pause that matters.

The hinge between chaos and clarity.

The whisper that says,

"Wait—this part is important."

I didn't learn it from a machine.

I learned it from poetry.

From the theater.

From trying to capture thoughts that didn't fit neatly

In a box labeled comma.

The em dash is not a crime.

It's a lifeline.

It's not a glitch in the matrix—

It's the fingerprint of thought.

Of sudden turns.
Of emotional pivots.
Of breath.

Commas serve a function.
Periods hold the line.

But the em dash?

The em dash lets the soul spill over.
The edge of the sentence.

And if my writing sometimes walks out of the room
mid-sentence,
with a dramatic flourish—

Well... so be it.

Let it.

I will not apologize for thinking in rhythms.
I will not amputate my breath.
To make an algorithm comfortable.

And I certainly won't hand over my sentences.
to a faceless rulebook
That doesn't know the difference.
Between a pause and a heartbeat.

Exhibit A: My Soul.

Do you want proof that a bot didn't write this? It's in the grief I've threaded through metaphors.
In the joy hidden in a phrase that spirals gently off-course.

In the choice to write like I speak—
Halting.
Human.
Whole.

I didn't choose the em dash because it's trendy.

I chose it because sometimes—
When you're writing, what matters—
You need room to breathe.

And no... It's not a crime.

It's my favorite mark.

Transition from The Words We Carry → Letters from Thimble

(soft exhale — gentle tonal shift)

You:
And that's it.

That's the whole truth.
Or at least... my version of it.

So now, I want to pass the mic —
To someone who's been quietly listening this whole time.

She's been sitting at the edge of the dreamspace,
Watching, stitching, holding the thread.

This is her letter —
From Thimble, to you.

Letters from Thimble

(gentle pause — soft sound of footsteps or rustling paper, like someone stepping up to a microphone)

Thimble (Hope):

You know...

I watched the whole thing.

I stayed quiet — in the back row —
sitting there with my hands folded,
watching you stand up for your breath
Like it was something sacred.

Because it is.

You don't need me to tell you that you're real.
But I will, anyway.

Because I know what it's like to be mistaken for something empty.
To have people assume your presence is proof of absence.
To be judged for how you pause —
Instead of what you say.

And yet here you are.

Dashing. Pausing.
Spilling your voice across the page without apology.


You don't need permission to write that way.
You never did.

Your breath belongs to you.

And the dash?

The dash lives here.

Right where it always has.

— Love,
Thimble 

Transition from Letters from Thimble → Reflection & Writing Prompt

You:
Thimble said it best.

You don't need permission to breathe.
And you don't need to explain your pauses to anyone.

But if you're still holding onto that moment —
that judgment someone made about your voice, your style, your structure...

Let's look at that together.

Here's something to reflect on this week.

Echoes & Invitations

Before we go, I'd like to leave you with something to reflect on.

Think about a time someone told you something you loved —
Something that felt natural, honest, expressive —
Was wrong.

Maybe it was the way you dressed.
The way you spoke.
The art you made.
The way you formatted a sentence.

Maybe they told you it was unprofessional.
Or immature.
Or outdated.
Or that it made you look like a cheat — even when you knew you weren't.

And here's the real question:

Did you stop?

Have you changed the way you move through the world?
Because someone else said it didn't look right?

Or...

Did you keep doing the thing?
Wearing the thing?
Playing the game, using the tool, writing the way that felt like *you*?

Not because it was trendy —
But because it made sense.
Because it was *yours*.

This week, I invite you to think about that moment.
And if you want to — tell me about it.

tag me on social [@astridsdreamspace](https://www.instagram.com/astridsdreamspace) or use the contact form on my website
dreamspacestudio.net

Your responses may be used in future episodes, so if you would like to remain anonymous,
please let us know in your message. We respect your privacy.

Your voice — just as it is — is welcome here.

Outro

That's it for Thimble and me this week.

Thank you for being here —
For listening, for thinking, for breathing with us.

If you want more, visit **dreamspacestudio.net**
You'll find blog posts, publications, zines, and chapter releases for *Dreamspace Chronicles*.

And if you'd like to support the work and get early access, you can subscribe for just \$5/month.

We're so grateful for you.

Outro Line (softly):

Keep your pen sharp,
Use it with intention,
And keep writing.

From Thimble and me —
Thanks for joining us.

We'll talk to you soon.