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ENG 317

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### Final Revision and Reflection

I consider this semester to be one of the most substantial in pushing me more as a creative writer. I used to write more fiction pieces before high school—and *especially* before college—but got used to writing more poetry and academic pieces. I found poetry to be easier and more manageable to generate than both shorter and longer fiction. By the end of this class, I feel more confident in worldbuilding and character development, as well as studying conflict.

Some of the biggest weaknesses I entered these workshops with were conflict, characterization, and perspective. There were some points that I did not introduce any clear conflict or tension between two characters. They were just interacting with each other without having much conflict, and that made for a pretty boring read! After workshopping a few pieces, I learned more about how to make sure my characters each want something, and that they don't always have to get what they're looking for.

My characterization also underwent some big changes. I tend to accidentally write flat characters by not demonstrating a clear resolution, or by withholding too much of their history or personality from the storyline. I learned that by having my characters incorporate their own habits, interests, and distastes into the story, I find more ways to navigate the plot. I practiced doing this by asking myself *why* a character speaks, acts, or thinks the way that they do anytime I hit a rut during the writing process.

Finally, perspective was a huge area that I got to work with. I learned just how easy it is to shift between third person limited and third person omniscient. The slip between point-of-view was sudden and subtle, but disorienting. I tightened up on a third person limited point-of-view

during revision; in doing so, I narrowed the scope of details that readers are allowed to learn and streamlined them onto a timeline following events as one character goes through them. This made it easier for me to decide what to tell readers and when to tell them.

The story in particular that I revised for the workshop is “Thorn.” This story is intended to be a *Beauty and the Beast* retelling in which Rose, the “Belle” figure, is a descendant of Echidna, the Fae woman (or the “Enchantress” figure) who cursed the Beast a decade ago on his sixteenth birthday. Rose’s father is a gambler who offers her to the Beast in exchange for repayment from the Fae. I hope to eventually rework this story into a longer piece as a book that comments on intergenerational trauma transmission.

From my previous analysis, I worked on the conflict I tried to convey in “Thorn,” which I had to adjust for the scope of the story. I originally wanted the conflict to cover the Beast’s inability to remember Rose’s identity; however, in revision, I decided to focus on the lack of relationship and trust between Rose and himself. In turn, I worked on Rose’s characterization to demonstrate more of her process of moving into the castle and finding her way into the life of the cursed Beast. Finally, I worked to put more of the story into the Beast’s perspective with a third person limited narrator, which led to me rewriting some descriptions to tighten up the story.

All in all, I’m grateful for the ways I was challenged and encouraged throughout this workshop. I even tried to have my characters interact more with the setting around them per the advice of a visiting writer to the classroom. I look forward to continue working with the stories I began in this class, and to even hopefully extend them later.

Thorn  
Bethany G. Roberts

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The Beast had not dreamed for nine years, so why was he haunted by *that* night now?

He had plenty of time for remembrance and repentance during his sentence; but most of his days were simply spent in regret. His sleep, however, usually carried no memories, hopes, or fears. Every night was simply . . . empty. He assumed it was merely a mechanism he'd constructed to abandon the painful reflections from his past. In his waking hours, he fastened his childhood festivities into the tightest of restraints and buried them in the back of his mind, claiming them as forgotten captives deep beneath the doubt that he dressed himself with. Some days, the weight of his imperfection was nothing more than a favorite fur coat; but most days, the tall, sturdy palace doors were simply shadows compared to the to the shackles he crafted from his own shame.

It was those same unforgiving doors that let the girl's father in. There had been many travelers before him—wanderers, thieves, and lovers alike—but none were like the father. Most came within the aching stone walls seeking a night of refuge. He entered to secure a lifetime's repayment.

After much interrogation in the corner of the entryway, the Beast found that the father had swift fingers and a hunger for power; yet he carried nothing but fragile, empty pockets to show for it. His gambling had become too great for the mortal realm alone. The Beast knew of debts that were too expensive to reconcile with mortal gold and jewel.

“And so you came into the forest? You went to the Fae?” the Beast pressed.

“Yes,” the father ducked his head. “They were the only option I had left. I knew that they could help me.”

“Help,” the Beast sneered. “Yes, they were quite hospitable, were they not?”

The father's frown curled around his chin. "They were . . . gracious, in spite of my dire needs."

"They were eager to abuse your desperation for their own entertainment," the Beast snarled. *And, he thought, to add you to this miserable game of ours. But why?*

The father shifted against the wall, his eyes flitting about. The Beast scowled at the skittish twitch of a rodent seeking a swift escape.

"Either way," the father said, clearing his throat. "I brought them all of my most valuable items. I tried giving them a bag of gold coins, a fur coat, and even my wedding rings. My wife's, she had the finest of jewels. I'd thought for sure that they might take it, given that—"

The Beast slammed a fist into the floor beside the father, who curled away from the impact and squealed—certainly now a rat trapped before his inevitable demise. "The Fae do not worry with such trivial payments. What did they ask of you?"

"Rose!" the father shouted. The Beast froze, unblinking, staring into the man's face.

"A rose," the Beast echoed. "You've come all the way to my home . . . to ask me for a rose? No flower has bloomed on these grounds in years. The courtyards gave grown rampant."

"No, I—" the father gulped. "They asked me for Rose. *My* Rose. She is my only daughter, she . . . she's all that I have left."

The Beast growled. "You lie."

Sweat began to dress the father's forehead. Truth, the Beast could see, did not suit him very well. "She is my only *remaining* daughter," he stammered. "Chrys, the older, she married a wealthy hunter and left years ago. And my youngest, Daisy, she—she did not survive the plague last winter. And my wife, she passed away long before then, so I can't . . . Rose is the only daughter left within my name."

The father held the Beast's eyes, clearly asking for some sort of forgiveness. Acceptance. And while the Beast had a generous amount of understanding to offer, he swallowed it back down. Instead, he extended his next questions with venom.

“Your only remaining daughter. You gave the Fae your only child?”

“N-no, not necessarily,” the father shook his head. “The Fae told me to bring her here. To you.”

The Beast froze and dipped down to meet the father nose-to-nose. What was this, some form of tease? A grim reminder of his upcoming doom? He barely had one year remaining, one year until it would all finally be over with . . . and yet, after dressing him in the curse nine years prior, the Fae still could not leave him alone.

The father went on. One year, the Fae had demanded. Rose had to become the Beast's prisoner and follow his rule for one year. After the time was spent, she would be free to return to her family; and in the meantime, the Fae would ensure that his debts would be reconciled.

After a waltz of pleading and resistance (which was desperately awkward at best), the Beast ultimately agreed to see the girl.

Rose was already sitting on the palace steps as the father negotiated with the Beast. She entered as a frail thing carrying a heavy heart and an empty stomach from a poisonous denial of provision. The walking corpse of a girl filled the Beast with enough rage to take her in, simply to remove her from the father's ravenous habits for some time. She would, if nothing else, be some sort of company for his final year of whatever remnant of his old life he had left to carry. Then they would all be free afterward . . . the father with his restoration, Rose with her freedom, and the Beast with his end. His humanity would leave him then, yes; but the decade of torment would finally be over.

The father's exit was one of the greatest gifts the Beast had received in ages. Each step he took away was surprisingly light after the deal; but then again, he had nothing left to carry.



*"Your hubris precedes you," the hooded woman hissed. "Tell me, boy, what are you truly hiding beneath your pride?"*

*The young prince grinned at the feeble figure before him. "What would I need to conceal? My family is meant to rule, to lead in power and in light—to be seen by all."*

*"And this is how you do so?" she snapped. "By shutting out wounded women to scrap and fight for their own protection, when you seem to have all the support and security to offer?"*

*"This is how you intrude upon a royal son's birthday?" the boy laughed. "In a time of celebration and abundance, you come brandishing your own woes and complaints? You only darken the room."*

*"You know nothing of light, boy." The woman lifted a hand bearing a single ring. The emerald set within the band's golden grasp began to glow, throbbing to match the pace of his own racing heartbeat. "You will surely face the shadows you swallowed. The truth will be shown in the light you claim to know so much of."*

*The prince watched in horror as warm light spilled from the woman's entire being. He recognized the fearsome beauty standing before him . . . he had seen illustrations of the Fae before. But most of all, her eyes—sharp, brown blades rimmed in red—and they looked as though she had been weeping. Surely she wasn't feeling remorse? But she saw him. She saw him see her, and the flame consumed her all the more for it. Her gaze quickly filled with that light, which burned brighter until they pierced him with a golden glow. He felt the beams reach down his*

*throat, seizing his heart, filling his lungs and wrapping its thorny grip around any air he tried to hold . . .*



“NO!” The Beast awoke, gasping for air. The fire was burning and spreading from his chest again. It threatened to burst out of him, but to no avail. Even the light pressed against his eyelids and left spots that pierced the air as he searched the room around him.

His head swam as he willed the ringing in his ears to go away. This was the third night in a row he had woken, the third night in a row that he *saw* the Fae woman again . . . was she to return? Was this some sort of cruel reminder brought about by the Fae’s sick games?

The torrent of worry was quickly cut off by a *thud* in the hallway. If he had not been cursed to carry canine sense—“To reflect your ravenous taste for power,” the Fae woman once said—he might not have noticed. But his eyes adjusted to the darkness around him, looking for the source his ever-so-pointed ears had found. The Beast was neither hound nor human anymore. He had no place to claim in the world. Instead of a total transformation, he was left with rough fur for skin, sharpened teeth and nails, and pointed ears. The worst was his eyes, which always carried that same golden torch that had trapped him in the first place. There was no mirror left whole in the castle to remind him. He made sure of that.

The Beast’s breath suddenly hitched in his throat as he remembered he did not sleep within an empty building any longer. Had the Fae come back for him early? For her? He leapt out of the bed and burst into the corridor.

A sharp clatter drew his attention to his left. Rose was a few doors away, pressed against the wall with fists clenched tightly against her chest. Just beyond the hem of her gown was the now-extinguished lantern he had left for her in her bedroom; or, at least, the pieces of the lantern.

He frowned across the darkness. The only light in the hall was a few strings of timid moonlight leaking through the windows.

“Is everything alright?” the Beast asked.

“Yes,” Rose answered quickly.

He raised a brow and stepped closer. “If you’re hoping to find any enchanted objects or hidden riches lying about, I’m afraid you will be disappointed.”

Rose’s eyes widened as she tried to step back into the wall. “No,” she said. “I wasn’t—I’m not him.”

At once noticing her retreat, the Beast stopped. Of course. How could he be surprised? She had no reason to trust him as a last-minute captor, especially one of his caliber.

“Rose,” the Beast began, and hesitated. What was his word worth, anyway? “I will not harm you during your stay. You are free to do as you please here.”

She nodded slowly. “Okay.”

“Truly, if I were you, I would be more worried about the Fae,” he continued. “All I would ask of you is to mind their stipulations. They tend to be . . .”

“Demanding?” Rose offered.

“Unforgiving,” the Beast completed, feeling somewhat of a smile come about. Rose nodded again. He gestured to the metal at her feet. “Do you need help with that?”

“Oh,” Rose glanced towards the small heap, suddenly remembering the lantern. She knelt down and picked up a piece, turning it over in her hands for a moment. “Yes, I think so. I’m not used to this kind.”



“They can be difficult once they’re disrupted.” The Beast stepped over, making sure he wasn’t causing her to retreat. He helped pick up the metal pieces and gestured for her to follow him into one of the nearby doorways.

Finding themselves in the library, the Beast invited Rose to a seat at a small table near the fireplace. He started a small fire to illuminate the newly-claimed worktable and set to repairing the lantern.

“You said you did not have lanterns at home?” he asked, studying the metal.

“Yes,” Rose answered. “My father sold whatever metal we had left in the home, save for a few spare pieces of jewelry . . . until recently, at least. I used to make my own torches if we wanted any light.”

The Beast glanced up as she spoke. The hand beside her necklace was smudged with blood and something dark, and many fresh scratches carved their way around her fingers.

“Your hand!” he exclaimed. Startled, Rose’s face lit up with recognition as she ducked her hand underneath the table. “What happened?”

Rose studied her own hands resting on her lap now. “I just . . . I saw there were gardens and other areas around the courtyard, and they looked . . .”

The Beast settled back into his seat a bit, suddenly realizing how tightly he had been holding his shoulders up. “Neglected.”

“I used to tend to my own garden back home,” Rose admitted. “I figured I might be able to help. Maybe.”

The Beast blinked. “That’s . . . that’s alright. I have had no use of the gardens, so you may do as you wish there. But what have you been using?”

“My hands,” Rose said sheepishly. “I was inspecting the soil to see what it could carry. It’s full of surprises.”

“Indeed,” the Beast smiled. “I appreciate your interest in trying to bring some life about the place, but I do wish you would have asked before harming yourself in the process.” The light flickered in Rose’s eyes, so he quickly added: “But, I understand. Somewhat. I can’t imagine I look like the most approachable host in the kingdom.”

Rose smiled. “Thank you,” she offered, and he took it gratefully.

“In the morning, I can show you where the gardening tools are stowed away, if you’d like,” he said. “I believe I can remember where my father’s servants kept them.”

The fire nearby suddenly seemed to fill Rose’s eyes with a gentle reflection, mere candlelight in comparison to the low roar of the original flame. “I would like that,” she said.

The Beast smiled as he pushed back a completed lantern. “Very well, then. But first, we should find some bandages.”



After settling into her own routine and realizing the Beast’s distaste for abandoned girls (or his blatant refusal towards feasting on any human, for that matter), Rose began to inquire about the ruin around her. This produced a bounty of conversations with the Beast. She even permitted him to accompany her to the garden during the day with no apprehension. As she worked with the stubborn earth beneath her hands, she seemed to crown herself with some sort of peace . . . contentment, even.

It was during one of these meetings that the Beast decided to introduce some inquiries of his own. He sat perched on one of the cobblestone walls as she knelt in the dirt, weaving her fingers within and without of the world he could not see beneath the ground.

“Rose,” the Beast said. “May I ask you something?”

She looked up at the sound of her name. Her eyes did not snap up with fear, as they had one month prior; instead, to his surprise, they lifted in gentle expectation. She nodded, waiting for him to continue.

“About the Fae, when your father visited . . .” the Beast began slowly. The shadows flit across her face. He had not brought up the incident ever since the night it happened. He knew firsthand that some memories were better left buried in silence. Even now, he paused.

“I apologize, would it be better for me to ask later?”

Rose shook her head. “No, it’s alright. What is it?”

“The Fae,” the Beast resumed. “Have you ever . . . met them before?”

Rose laughed—bright bursts of sound that filled the silence he’d feared moments before. However, it carried its own weight into the courtyard. He had already learned weeks ago that she was not a child as he had first suspected, but her laughter now bore a strength that pushed against the cruel treatments she had endured in her twenty years. He had caught before of some brief allusions to a mother taken too soon and a father coping too quickly. Her amusement was not weak; but it was, apparently, not easily won, either. He had never heard her laugh before.

“No,” Rose answered as she calmed down. “My father warned me growing up to never engage with them. If he had nothing else to give me, he showed me what not to do.”

“What did he tell you?” the Beast asked.

“Well,” Rose dusted her hands off on her lap, dirt still dusting her fingers. “To be truthful, that was the extent of his warnings. ‘Stay away from the Fae,’ he told me. It was the townspeople who filled me in on the rest.”

“Did they suspect you would try to visit them?” the Beast pressed on.

“Some of them worried for me,” Rose pondered. “The others waited for me to fall. I would walk through the forest to look for food when my father could no longer provide for us.”

“You hunted?” The Beast blinked. He struggled to picture her with a sword. A bow, perhaps; but her arms did not seem to be used to its pull.

“No,” Rose smiled. “I learned to forage. I would bring home whatever fruits, vegetables, and herbs I could find. I even started a garden deep within the forest, somewhere my father could not find my work and sell it.”

“You *planted* in the forest?” the Beast asked. “That is Fae territory! What if they tampered with your garden? You could have been poisoned!”

Rose shook her head. “I’ve always felt . . . welcome. More so than in my own home. I would spend hours at a time in the forest, learning and planting. The townspeople thought I would become too curious and ask after the Fae. But I’ve never really feared them.”

“And why is that?”

Rose thought for a moment. He watched as her eyes shifted to look above his head, reading something in her own mind. One hand drifted to the golden chain that draped around her neck and dipped beneath her collar. She pinched the chain between two fingers and rolled it as she waited for the words.

“Respect,” Rose finally answered. “I assumed that if I respected the Fae and their lands, then they would extend . . . tolerance, I guess, in return.”

“That was a risk you were willing to take?” the Beast asked.

Rose shrugged. “What did I have to lose? My older sister married and left. My mother passed when I was a child, and my younger sister died last year. My father . . . was never really present to begin with. I had nothing but the forest.”

“And look where that’s brought you now,” the Beast frowned. The light faltered in Rose’s face again.

“I apologize, I didn’t mean to—” he started.

“No, it’s alright,” Rose cut in quickly with a smile. “I’ve heard it before. The townspeople always said I had some form of payment waiting for me in the future. But I am grateful for the shelter, really.”

The Beast hesitated, looking for something—anything—to spin away from this moment. His eyes dropped to her hand, which was fidgeting with the gold chain more than ever.

“Your necklace,” he said. “I thought your father sold all your belongings?”

“Ah,” Rose nodded, lifting the gold chain over her head and into her palm. On the end was a ring that she clutched, holding it out to the Beast. “Not everything. This was my mother’s. My father finally gave it to me on the day that he left. I convinced him that if he was willing to give it to the Fae, then he could leave it with me instead. His payment will come, anyway.”

The Beast took the bundle of gold into his hand. When he looked down into his palm, his breathing hitched. His gaze froze on the ring threaded onto the chain—the gold ring, with a familiar emerald clutched in its grasp.

“Is something the matter?” Rose asked.

The Beast looked up slowly, peering back into her eyes that stared deeply into his.

Her very own brown eyes, flecked with gold.