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**Final Reflection**

I started the semester with no expectations of myself as a writer. I have taken over three English classes throughout my undergraduate year because it was mandatory, but I never really enjoyed them. I was always hesitant about my grammar, tenses, and proper use of punctuation because they were academic English courses. It was not until I started this creative writing course that I felt I could express how I felt like a writer. For the first time, I felt like I could let my imaginations wander and go wild without worrying about the correct academic English format.

Our first assignment was 'Memoir 1' about "Meet my X," and I chose my pet Corgi. I was surprised how free the first assignment was since I was so used to reading a literature passage and writing the hidden meanings behind the story. Since the class is called a "creative writing" course, I should've known. Nevertheless, I was excited to write about my Corgi, but 'Memoir 2' might be my favorite out of all the assignments. Memoir 2 is about my mother and how I have always seen her as my role model. The story goes more into depth about my rocky relationship with my father. Still, I didn't notice how personal and sentimental it became while writing the memoir. I finished writing it and started second-guessing myself if I should post it, but I had to submit the piece because I had worked hard on it. As I continued to write more, I gradually became confident in my writing. I was motivated to throw in new ideas to make the plot more interesting. I had to rewrite my whole storyline a few times because I kept having different ideas on how I wanted the story to flow. I would ask my boyfriend to read them and help me decide which he liked better.

Since my first group critique, I was surprised that I have been more open to suggestions and feedback, and questions that made me think to myself and wonder how I can improve my work. People close to me know that I am stubborn; hence, receiving criticism and accepting feedback to better myself was a struggle. I remember when professor Penner said that I don't have to take every feedback to heart. I can take what I feel is good feedback and ignore those that don't resonate with me, precisely what I did. The group critiques did help me a lot as a writer, and they built a good perspective for me to understand what real writers go through daily. My work was not the only one being reviewed, but I had to review my peers' work as well, which at first, was not easy for me. I was nervous about being honest if I didn't like or understand their work. Still, to my surprise, my group had exciting plots and stories. I may have thrown in a few suggestions here and there to help enhance their work, but it is up to them if they want to take it or not, just as I do the same with my work.

I took an English 1 course two years ago. An online writing class was not a struggle for me to adapt because I have been doing online writing classes for two semesters. It is easier for me because I prefer writing my assignments on a tablet or computer instead of submitting them on paper. I remember writing everything on paper and submitting it to my professor. My professor would also write the assignments due on the chalkboard, and we had to keep track of them every week. Everything shifted online has helped me hold myself accountable and submit my work easily. However, the most challenging part would be balancing school and work because I am a full-time student and worker. I have an upper management position, so my obligations and responsibilities are tiring. I tried my best to get assignments in on time and put in my best work every time I did. I started college strong, so I would like to finish strong, and balancing both has been my greatest struggle. Unfortunately, I don't receive financial aid, so I need to work consistent hours to pay my college tuition. I always tell myself that I will be able to find a balance, but if I am being honest, it has been two years, and I still haven't found it. I live my life day by day, making sure that I do the best within my capability to be a strong student and worker.

**Memoir**

Growing up as an only child was often considered a privilege. People I used to be friends with and sometimes people I recently met would tell me how easy my life must be without siblings. To be honest, I do have some perks, but those perks don’t always outweigh the empty space I felt growing up. I don’t remember much of my childhood. Everything pretty much feels like a blur, and memories are saved in the form of polaroids. But, I was always fortunate to have a roof over my head and food on the table.

Before people mistake me for being spoiled and ungrateful, I am far from being one of those kids. I was raised by an amazing single mother who, until now, has shown me what it means to be a strong independent woman. She has been supporting her parents for years and recently took in my three cousins a few years ago. My aunt has made some questionable decisions and left her kids with my mom. My mom did not hesitate and raised them the way she did for me. Now, my second eldest cousin is in one of the most prestigious universities in Indonesia and my oldest cousin is working at a media company. I would never stop talking about my mom to my friends. My friends tend to ask me about my relationship with my dad, and I don’t really bring it up because I don’t have the best relationship with him. I do have love for my dad, but I don’t feel like he was the one who raised me during my teenage years.

I describe my mom as my human diary and best friend in one. There is nothing that I keep from her because she taught me that in order to have a strong relationship with your parent you have to be honest with each other. There were days where she comes home late from work but I would wait for her because I needed an opinion about something or I wanted to tell her about my day. She is my safe space and being apart from her for these past years have been a challenge when I am at my lowest point.

My parents separated around 2013, and every month I would stay with my dad for a week and come back home to my mom. I remember him saying negative things about my mom, like how the divorce was her fault, but there are always two sides to every story. I used to buy the things he said until I realized he was manipulating me, so I would pity him and choose him. Luckily, I confirmed his lies from my aunt and uncle, his own siblings, because they cared about me and did not want me to be blindsided. I still wonder why he had to lie to me, but I think it was because he needed someone by his side, and I was his only person.

Fast forward to 2018, I decided to leave my family to pursue my college degree in New York. I was born in New York, and my parents and I have lived here until I was 9 years old, but we migrated to their hometown, Indonesia. I occasionally talked to my dad through the phone while in the city. Still, I could never consistently bring myself to speak to him like how I was with my mom. After all the trials and tribulations I faced moving back to the city by myself, I thought it was time to visit my family in August 2020. After not seeing my dad for 2 years, I was excited to spend time with him, but before I entered my grandma’s house, he revealed to me that he had a son and was getting married soon. I felt betrayed because he lied to me again and pressured me to call his fiancé ‘mom.’ I was uncomfortable because she did not make an effort to get to know me. Still, my dad forced me to approach her first.

The following day, I called my mom to pick me up from my grandma’s house, and she knew something was wrong. She respected my feelings and gave me the space I needed, but I did not come forth to her until I flew back to New York. My dad called and texted me multiple times, but I declined them. I had nothing to say to him because he did not care about my feelings; he was selfish. I ignored him around 3 months after arriving in New York and told him how I truly felt. The sad thing is, he did not apologize for lying to me and said that I should be more understanding and nicer to his wife. I finally drew to a conclusion that my dad will never truly understand how I feel, and no matter what I say, he will always try to prove his point of view.

**Short Story**

Liza and Bryan have been dating for 5 years. The two initially met at a retail store where Liza was the newly promoted supervisor and Bryan was the new hire. At first, they would constantly butt heads with each other on how things should function so there could be a more organized structure in how they stock their inventory. Eventually, the two decided to stay out of one another’s hair to avoid conflict especially in front of their coworkers. Their coworkers would joke around and say “watch, these two are so toxic but they’re going to end up falling in love with each other!” Liza kept denying it and rolled her eyes every-time but Bryan would stand there quietly. Four months into working together, Bryan found Liza crying in the employee room and approached her with tissues. She was crying because her dad got into an accident and was in a coma. After she told Bryan, he leaned over and hugged her so she would cry in his arms. As soon as they got off work, he accompanied her to the hospital and they stayed inseparable ever since. Bryan was with her through every hospital visit, every check-up even if they were out late until three in the morning. Liza slowly started falling for Bryan and she opened up about her feelings towards him. They both started dating after and fast forward, Bryan proposed on their fifth year anniversary.

For the Liza recently started a new job at a law-firm as a lawyer and is extremely exhausted from handling all the cases. Bryan is currently unemployed and is focusing on his music career. He is very driven when it comes to music and believes that he would rather kill himself than work a 9-5 for corrupted companies. Liza and Bryan got engaged 6 months ago and was planning to get married in the next 3 months which lies on September. Liza told Bryan that she wanted a small wedding due to the expenses to host a big wedding and he agreed. One morning, Liza asked Bryan to come with her to a bridal store to look at potential wedding dresses. At first, Bryan said no because he was writing lyrics to a new song but, he saw the disappointment on Liza’s face and ended up grabbing the car keys and went with Liza.

As soon as they arrived at the bridal store, one of the wedding dress specialists greeted Liza and brought the couple into a private room. Liza emphasized that she wanted a simple yet elegant pattern that would emphasize her neckline and body curves. Courtney, the wedding dress specialist, immediately filtered through all the dresses and grabbed the top 10 she felt like Liza would love. Bryan was trying to be supportive for Liza but his mind was constantly wandering to the unfinished song back at the apartment. Liza went into the dressing room and tried the first dress, she felt like a princess and started tearing up as she looked at herself in the mirror. She came out of the room and revealed herself to Bryan and asked him if he liked the dress. The dress resembled a “fairy-tale” like feeling where flowered patterns were decorated all over the dress. It was sleeveless but still gave an innocent and pure look that complimented Liza’s eyes so beautifully. Bryan looked at Liza for 5 seconds and said,

“yeah, it looks nice.” She was hurt because after he said that, he immediately went on his phone.

Courtney noticed the look on Liza’s face and gave her the second dress to try on.

“The second dress looks gorgeous on you hun, it highlights your curves and the laced pattern on the upper body gives an elegant touch.” Said Courtney.

Liza was so excited to show Bryan and made her way to show him.

He looked at Liza and said, “is that a different dress or was it the same as the first one? Anyways, it looks nice.” Bryan proceeded to text someone on his phone while laughing which made Liza extremely frustrated.

Liza then slapped Bryan’s phone from his hand and yelled at him. “Did you forget that this is your wedding too? Do you not want to marry me? You seem so uninterested and whatever is on your phone seems to take your attention away from your fiancé. You know how much I have been looking forward to this and our wedding but you don’t seem to care. I want you to be proactive and show me that you love me, I need you to be present with me right now. If you don’t get your shit together, then I’ll gladly return this engagement ring back to you” Liza screamed as she aggressively throws hands in the air to express her frustration, which also comes from her being half Italian.

Courtney walked out of the room as soon as Liza slapped the phone to give the couple some space but she knew that Liza had every right to be upset. Bryan sat there speechless and he looked at Liza while she continues to shed tears from all the frustration. He stood up and pulled her closer reaching out for a hug when she actively tries to push him away.

“Get off of me! Don’t you dare touch me before I throw my slippers at you!” Liza uttered

Bryan then tries to pull her harder into his arms allowing her to cry on his shoulder while he caresses her hair.

“You are absolutely right my love, I am so sorry for being distant and distracted when this is our big wedding day. I promise to be better and show you that this is equally as important as it is to me. I am so sorry and I love you so much.” Bryan responded with genuine love in his eyes.

Liza nods and hugs Bryan while he looks into her eyes and gives her a kiss on the forehead. Bryan knew that he has not been the best fiancé and have been neglecting Liza, he wanted to make it up to her by showing her that he was serious about the wedding so he gave his most honest and supportive opinions on the next dresses Liza tried on. Six dresses later, Bryan saw Liza walk out the room with the most perfect dress and started to tear up. They both knew that this was the perfect dress especially since it accentuates her figure.

**Poem**

The holidays always hit harder for me, especially Thanksgiving and Christmas. It has been one thousand and thirty-nine days since I left my family and every year I crave my mother's presence. I miss her scent and her cooking. I miss the comfort she gives me while she caresses my hair, cheeks, and face. I used to take her little burst of random hugs for granted but when I'm down that's all I think about. People say distance makes the heart grow fonder, but I never knew I would miss my mom to the point my heart aches. That morning you called me, I was selfish. Only to find out, you were ill and was staying at the hospital. I apologize for not being reliable when you needed me. I will be better and I hope you take care of your well being. Please wait for me, and don’t scare me. I promise to shower you with love and affection when I come home. Let the angels guide and protect you where you go. My best friend, my diary, and my mother all in one I will see you soon in thirty-eight days and a wake up.