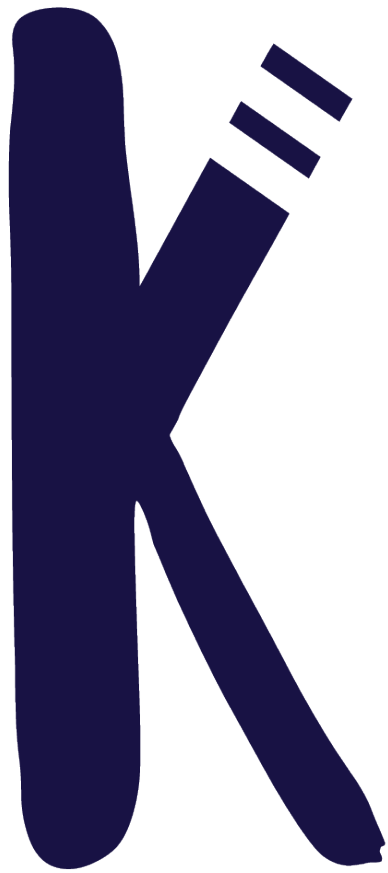




KYLA RAILEY-LOWERY

Writing Portfolio

TABLE OF CONTENTS

REVISION REPORT PAGE 02

PIECE 1 PAGE 07

Substance & Security

PIECE 2 PAGE 12

Who Loved Not at First Sight?

SELF-EVALUATION PAGE 19

REVISION REPORT

The following is a revision report, written about two pieces included in the portfolio: *Substance & Security*, and *Who Loved Not at First Sight?* (previously titled *Jynx*). Both pieces current revisions were influenced by beta readers and feedback given by the instructor and classmates. The revision report will go into detail on reasons things were changed, and reasons things were not.

Let's begin with the first piece featured in my portfolio, *Substance & Security*. One of the major problems with this piece was the lack of ability to identify who the main character was. Their appeared to be a narrator, who had a strong voice, but also both characters in a relationship had thoughts present. The narrator would sometimes tell these thoughts, but other times, the narrator would take on a strong voice. Please note that throughout my revision report, I will refer to the loss and removal of the narrator's voice.

My first initial change was the positioning in the character's car. There were various comments left on feedback, from Professor Nyland and classmates Cooper and Ralph on the awkward drop in of their positioning. Their initial positioning also made actions the characters were conducting later hard to follow. Also based on the Cooper's, I removed the paragraph with the narrator's voice, which was:

Hell, they looked like their interactions might have tortured them. But he was still talking, shouting his complaints into the car, and to her, that meant he still cared.

Cooper had written that the statement above was "contradictory to what comes later. Why would he still care if they had never been a thing?" Van also touched on the fact that this statement made it hard for him to trust the narrator throughout the piece, which was never an intention of the writer. My intentions were not to give the narrator a voice.

I added the sentence *“Average people would have never continued seeing him”* to clarify the timeline of their relationship. Professor Nyland wrote that she wanted to know when they met, and Ralph had told me she was having trouble determining when certain things were happening within the timeline. In order to make the second part of the story flow, I needed to note when in the timeline this was happening. Adding time periods, such as *“Weeks had passed”* shows the readers that this is after the opening scene.

There’s a specific choice on page 2 I would like to comment on. I chose to keep the double adjective, *“Ugly, snarling”* laugh, unlike suggested, as a creative choice. I felt that snarling always resonates as angry in my head, but paired with ugly, it sounds gentler, and more of a character choice and adjective description.

At the bottom of page 3, I had an awkward narration take place. While a lot of this was fixed through the removal of the narrators voice, there were a few other places I needed to change in order for this piece to flow. The initial piece read:

“There is something about moments. Moments happen when a person reaches out to another for some reason; whether it’s to attend a concert, an experience, a club, a job. In her case, he was out of her league, a person too cool to have been the type of friend she picked for herself. Interactions are rare. ... For him, moments were not...”

Professor Nyland had made a comment that resonated with me as an author. Cooper had pointed out earlier how my parallels worked really well within the story. Nyland suggested that the section needed to be outside them both, or that the section needed to belong more to her. Thinking of the parallel’s Cooper had pointed out, I decided to change the section to read: *“For her, there is something about moments. Moments happen when a person reaches out to another for some reason; whether it is to attend a concert, an experience, a club, a job. In her case,*

interactions are rare. ... For him, moments..." I also removed the awkwardness of her trying to decide why someone like him was talking to her, since that was relatively established.

The ending was my final change. I attempted to choose a main character – the male in the relationship, and I let him take over a little more near the end. I made it clear that she had left their relationship behind, and that he was still analyzing what once had been. I also wanted to draw attention to the rabbit hole, since many of my classmates found that they couldn't understand what the metaphor was. I think I needed to choose what the metaphor was, and I chose to make it love. She jumped in, and he fell out of it, and we use the rabbit hole reference because in *Alice in Wonderland*, the story itself is inspired by a drug-trip, and there are strong themes of the drugs affecting their entire relationship.

I consider this a finished piece. I have been working on this for a long time – since 2016, when the experience that inspired it happened. It's been a few creative writing workshops and critiques, and this was the best feedback I had received on the story. While I feel it could use more work to make it more cohesive, I feel the piece has reached a higher potential I than ever considered.

The next piece I will briefly comment on was originally titled *Jynx*, which I renamed *Who Loved Not at First Sight?* during revisions. A lot of the feedback received had to do with the lack of main character, confusion of character development, and the narration style. I made the narrator third person omniscient again and changed to have more of the character's thoughts throughout.

The first major change I needed to point out was Jynx's personality type and details about him. A major focus of discussion was the fact that he was described as a womanizer, and that was never shown in the story, just told through narration. My professor made one comment

about the sentence “*His façade of a personality type made him the usual womanizer,*” and suggested the changes be made here. I felt, since other classmates pointed out that they liked this sentence, or didn’t point out the womanizer trait till later, it needed to be left.

I fixed the narration prominently. I needed to eliminate the narrator’s voice in order to make the piece a third person omniscient, and I needed both Jynx and Gwen to have strong voices in the piece. Professor Nyland left a comment about how after I mentioned Jynx’s prickly hot face, that “we haven’t been inside Jynx’s head since the first line, so this feels more awkward.” Tiffany had made a comment that just said, perspective switch. Since both readers felt that this stood out, I decided to add more thoughts of Jynx’s earlier on. On the first page, I made his thoughts very apparent.

He still could not believe he was coming to Gwen for help! Gwen was the queen of meddling. His face was splattering with an even darker blush. He was choosing not to look at her, and there was a long pause between her question and his response. Jynx took a steady breath.

In later areas, where I felt Jynx’s thoughts were too present, I added more of Gwen’s personality and thoughts. I added lines to say she was getting impatient or had her thoughts vocal and present throughout. I felt adding Gwen’s thoughts continued to stay with the Third Person Omniscient Narrator.

My largest change in this piece would be the ending. This piece belongs to somewhat of a collection of mine – a group of pieces that focus on this relationship between Augustus and Jynx. The pieces are usually around 1000 words and just have tidbits into the relationship. When I chose to submit this to the class, being the first piece, I chose to omit the true ending, and I ended it on Gwen smiling and leaving the room. The ending is completely changed starting at:

“ ‘Awww,’ Gwen mustered again.

‘Hell,’ Augustus said, staring into Jynx’s eyes. ‘Who ever loved that loved not at first sight?’”

From here, the ending is new, and has been revised. I felt that adding a Shakespeare quote about love reinforces the idea that Jynx and Augustus had been traveling performers and had been partnered together at some point, which shows where Jynx’s crush may have started. It also allows Gwen to push them into an official relationship so Jynx does not have these feelings again.

I do not feel this piece is finished and won’t until the entire collection of short stories makes sense, flows together, and have been edited to incorporate a third person omniscient narrator. I need to also figure out the exact distinction in Jynx & Augustus relationship, along with the relationship that Jynx and Gwen have.

SUBSTANCE & SECURITY

They say she found the rabbit hole the day she met him.

The glowing green light on the LCD car hit 11:50 PM. For the second night in a row, they sat opposite seats in a car that reeked of marijuana.

No one could say they were in love. Totally platonic. They sat so far away from each other, each resting back in the seat, knees pulled to their chests, shouting phrases of pure protest.

“Fuck this society,” he yelled, into the loneliness.

“Fuck this school newspaper,” she shouted back, the darkness a void between them.

How did these two individuals end up here? They were so increasingly different. His blonde hair was half shaved, half long, and his clothes were professional and fresh. She wore ripped tights, which she picked at the longer they sat together, and her curly hair cascaded down over her body.

These individuals avoided real communication.

The car reeked as he chucked his cigarette to the ground out his front window. He pulled the door open next to him and stepped his foot onto the asphalt.

“See ya later,” he said, eyes looking away from where she sat.

X

The thing that caught his eye was her jittery and awkward movements. She may have looked calm and collected, but her hands shook with each word she spoke. Her legs criss-crossed on the wicker bench. He was beaming as he rolled each paper, recounting another drugged story from his life, and slowly but surely, she was learning about the hidden mechanisms that made up his life. Average people would never understand.

Average people wouldn't have continued seeing him.

Weeks had passed, and occasionally, someone at school would see them as more than friends. It was the way he would stare at her and move closer to her face before turning away. It was the way she tilted her head back when she let out her ugly, snarling laugh. It was not a contagious laugh, or a pretty laugh, but it was a genuinely happy laugh.

He lit. She breathed in.

Tingling feelings overcame her body at first, and she giggled again as she held her hand out. The sensation of touch was new. He took her hand back.

They broke out in laughter as he too found the rabbit hole.

"Hello," he whispered, smoke exhaling from his mouth. His breath was closer to her, pressed against her neck in the slightly chilly air. A breeze blew over them and the stench of their self-preserving lies swarmed around them.

He felt her brown eyes drilling holes into his head, and he struggled to escape the paranoia. He tried to focus on the depth and beauty that would shine back at him, but instead, he felt scared. His hands began to shake, which only caused her eyes to reflect more worry.

"You know," he said, dropping her hand. "I deflect people."

He watched her fake laugh, and sighed.

She brought up her current dating life. The girl herself is quite an arrangement, presenting herself as someone put together who deep inside is falling apart. She smiled, picking her words carefully as she asked another dating question.

They grow quiet.

They end up inside, on the hardwood floor, laptop in front, giggling hysterically. To them, everything is funny. They hunch over his laptop, trying to print the concert tickets they

need. The two cannot figure out the program and burst into more giggles. Neither of them assumes their human error.

She could barely type a sentence. He could hardly read the screen.

Hanging in the air is a large sense of security between them. She handed him his keys, completely lost in thought and dreaminess. She touched his arm to steady herself, and he ran a hand through his gorgeous bleached hair. The giggles overcame them again, and he ran off to move her car.

Her awkward and jittery movement became normal again as they began to converse.

“The worst part is when you feel paranoid.”

She nodded.

For her, there is something about moments. Moments happen when a person reaches out to another for some reason; whether it is to attend a concert, an experience, a club, a job. In her case, interactions are rare.

For him, moments were not about the thing experienced, but the emotions felt. Moments like when he got arrested protesting at the white house, moments like giggling on the floor, moments like... looking at her and wondering when she would leave.

She spiked his anxiety.

“I use people,” he warned again, watching her stare out the car window.

He finds car rides can be awkward, even when the music is blaring. She was still giggling, still high from early on. They should not be on the road, and as the car glides onward, she found the fact humorous. They could not operate the printer, but here they were, him navigating perfectly, lit blunt pressed to his mouth, in between his fingers.

“Roads,” he exhaled, breaking the peaceful night air. She had been floating, and his voice

was like an obnoxious knife cutting through the air.

“I look for substance.” He breathed out again. “Not everyone has substance.”

She inhaled.

She wondered what substance meant and began to retreat inwardly. What makes her of substance to him?

He begins to drift above the clouds, entering a new realm he didn’t believe he’d reach.

She peeks her toes over the edge of the cloud, and though she can’t see, she jumps straight in.

He watches the white rabbit cloud float by.

X

He sat there reading of populists, and began to imagine her next to him again, like before. He wondered what she would think of the reading, missing her insight and thought pattern. Would she have given insight though? Or would she have made fun of him?

He misses her, but he cannot bring himself to call. Their friendship was toxic, and he had to escape.

He took another bite of the sushi, acknowledging that he was thinking about her again. Her presence was taking over his brain, and he hated it. He hated being dependent on someone else. Maybe it was because he was high, and he liked her energy. Maybe he was feeling something different, and he missed it. Or maybe, he didn’t.

The two were like parasites, feeding off of each other’s energy. When they were happy, they were hosts, in perfect alignment. An odd sight, the two were. Maybe there was hope. Maybe they were high. Unhealthy and codependent.

They were becoming dependent and irrational. Coming and going and begging and

crying, and he could not take it. He stares at the sushi he forgot to eat. He looks up and looks back down, holding his phone up, typing away his inner demons.

He fell out of the rabbit hole that day, his love fading away.

WHO LOVED NOT AT FIRST SIGHT?

“Gwen,” Jynx asked. “How do you know if somebody really likes you?”

Gwen looked back at him. His blue eyes were staring downward at the coffee table, and his face a shade of a crimson red.

“Jynx,” Gwen asked, moving closer to him, hoping the curves of her body would intimidate him into spilling the information she was looking for. His façade of a personality type made him the usual womanizer. “Did you meet somebody in town?”

Jynx and Gwen, along with a few others, belonged to a performing arts group that traveled around to different high schools, teaching students about theater. They ended up in different towns and cities all over the world, performing written poetry with their bodies, small sketches, silent dances, and plays. The few times Gwen had been lucky enough to not be paired with Jynx, she had studied him with an intensity. He spent a lot of time flirting, and flirting with her, but it always fell flat. She could feel the insecurity every time he pushed himself on to another woman.

Here Jynx was, asking her for help with a romance situation. But, if Jynx was with a girl... that proved her and the others wrong about him.

“N-No,” Jynx stuttered. He still could not believe he was coming to Gwen for help! Gwen was the queen of meddling. His face was splattering with an even darker blush. He was choosing not to look at her, and there was a long pause between her question and his response. Jynx took a steady breath. “Just... I’m curious. It’s something I should know.”

Gwen eyed her stage partner with suspicion, and wondered what Jynx was up to. Glancing down at the coffee table, her hand shifted between a few different girl magazines. She picked up one of them, *Girl Vogue Magazine*, and looked back at Jynx.

“Let’s figure it out than. Answer these questions about her,” she said.

Jynx erupted into a coughing fit out of nerves. Maybe, this was a bad idea. He should not have let his anxiety get the better of him, or he wouldn’t be here.

“Okay,” he mumbled.

“Is she always paying attention to you?”

Jynx could not get the prickly heat that was on his cheeks to go away, and he felt his heart beat speed up at the mention of the question. He tried to rack his brain. Were... they always paying attention to him?

After some time passed, Gwen tapped her hand against the page impatiently. Jynx could be infuriating.

“Jynx, you are blushing like you just did the most embarrassing thing in the world.”

He cursed a few times under his breath, trying to regain himself, when another performer, Augustus, walked through the lounge door.

“Fuck,” Jynx muttered, looking straight down. If he made eye contact, Gwen would know everything.

In the doorway to the lounge, Augustus stood. His bright, green-colored hair was sopping wet, and Jynx felt his heart beat faster as their eyes met. Augustus’s hazel eyes lingered longer than necessary before he smirked, turning to Gwen.

Gwen too was watching the two men, the atmosphere changing as Augustus entered the room.

“They are cancelling the outdoor school performance,” Augustus said to Gwen. “It’s raining again.”

“That’s fine,” Gwen said, dismissing him with her hand.

“I’m not sure why we came here than.”

“Who cares.” Gwen dismissed him immediately, not in the mood for small talk, and more interested in Jynx’s crush...

Augustus turned around, grumbling some nonsense about her dismissal, but as he walked out the door, he turned and slung one glance over his shoulder, watching Jynx... again.

“Does HE pay attention to you?” Gwen asked, a smirk creeping over her face. “With the way he just entered the room, I’d say yes.”

It was too late, and Jynx sighed. Gwen had picked up on his secret.

“It’s okay,” she urged, watching Jynx retreating inside of himself. “I’ll help you figure it out, and I won’t tell anybody, except Augustus that is.”

Jynx’s heart rate sped up as she winked. He felt like his entire life was flashing before his eyes, but all he could think about was Augustus and that wet hair.

X

Gwen had allowed Jynx to retreat since he was on his rotation for lunch duty. Part of their responsibility in the summer days was to make sure all the performers were fed, their clothes were washed, and their sleeping quarters were clean. Jynx was thankful that his cooking kept him in the kitchen duty most the time.

Jynx was glad to escape Gwen’s grasp because she was just so nosy and prying. Unable to control the emotions he felt, he was wobbly as he entered the kitchen. He had just admitted to

one of his stage partners that he was bisexual. Or rather – that he was bisexual for his other best friend.

Augustus had lunch duty too, and not much time passed before Augustus knew something was wrong. Jynx's body language was off. His knees swayed and his hands were shaking slightly. He was more slumped forward than his usual cocky stance.

Augustus watched a little longer, taking in the sight of Jynx. It was not until the large exhale came from Jynx that Augustus stepped forward.

"What's wrong?" he asked, touching the side of Jynx's waist.

Another shaky breath. "Nothing."

"Look at me," Augustus' deep voice held emotional will over Jynx. "Tell me."

"I told Gwen something... personal," Jynx blurted out, feeling Augustus's hand rub a circular motion.

"Yikes," Augustus laughed. "You know she *loves* to meddle. Hopefully you'll make it out okay."

Jynx smiled, hearing a timer go off. He lifted one of the lunch pots and motioned Augustus to set up the tables. It was time for lunch, and he prayed that was the end of the questions.

X

"Look here," Gwen said, pointing to another question in the magazine. For the past hour, Gwen had gone over every quiz in every one of her girl magazines, and to Jynx's distress, asking questions about Augustus. Jynx accepted the permanent red flush over his face. He was becoming more sociable in the conversation, spilling little secrets.

Gwen was soaking it up like a sponge, enjoying every second of it. Jynx's confession was now the main topic of gossip as it confirmed a major suspicion she and other girls had been investigating. She wanted as much information as possible.

Hell, this was the most exciting thing to happen in the past few weeks.

She began reading from the magazine again. "He notices when something is wrong even if you don't mention it."

Jynx nodded, thinking back to lunch duty. "Sometimes," he spoke, nervously.

"This is a definite always, Jynx," Gwen laughed. "He literally always notices. His eyebrows do that little twitch whenever you're in distress. Even in a performance!"

Jynx stared at her, feeling slightly empty as the conversation progressed. If Augustus liked him, why has he never said anything? Why was it always just minor moments and friendly bickering, with other moments few and far between? And how did Gwen notice everything?

"Is there anything else?" Jynx asked.

"He's always staring at you and smiling," Gwen pointed out. "He's always leaning on you for support. He is always bragging about you."

"Bragging?"

"Yeah. Whenever we're somewhere else, he talks about you. He tells newbies he knows a better performer. He tells all the fan girls he is saving himself for someone amazing and he never mentions a gender." She paused. "Why don't we just ask him how much he likes you?"

Jynx stared at her, baffled.

"I'll get him!" Gwen shot up, dropping the magazine and rushing out of the room. Her excitement did not leave Jynx much time to stop her, and he heard the shrill pitch of her voice

call for Augustus. He groaned.

X

Gwen and Augustus entered the lounge to find Jynx smoking a cigarette. He was taking large breaths and releasing smoke into the air.

“I don’t like it when you smoke,” Augustus stated. “We’re indoors.”

Jynx finished the cigarette, stubbing out the end. He looked back at Gwen, his eyes pleading not to do this.

“Ask him.” Gwen’s voice was clear and demanding. “You have on the count of 5.”

“Five.”

Jynx looked at the ceiling.

“Four.”

He frowned.

“One.”

“You skipped two numbers!” he called out in exasperation.

Gwen was fed up with the charade in front of her.

“Augustus,” she said, her eyes landing directly on him. Her face looking warm and pleasant. She met his eyes with no fear, leaning forward. “Do you actually like Jynx? Do you... like like him?”

“What am I a child?”

Jynx was freaking out. His heart was pounding, his head was going nuts with anxiety, and he felt his entire body shaking. Jynx was preparing himself for the flight response to run.

Augustus on the other hand, was not. He thought this whole thing was humorous, considering the emotions displayed the small amount of times they had confessed love in Shakespeare plays. He reached for Jynx, pulled his hands up, their bodies meeting for a kiss.

“Gross,” Gwen mustered in an insincere tone.

“Of course, I like you, jack ass. Did you really have to come to Gwen to figure that out?”

“Awww,” Gwen mustered again.

“Hell,” Augustus said, staring into Jynx’s eyes. “Who ever loved that loved not at first sight?”

Jynx’s heart fluttered.

“This is when you say, I love you too, jack ass.”

Jynx whispered a soft sound. “I love you too.”

“Does this mean you two are... official... now?”

Jynx had forgotten about Gwen’s looming presence and frowned.

“Ask him,” Augustus said, shaking his shoulders.

“Yes,” Jynx spoke.

“Yeah?” Augustus asked, excitement rising in his voice. He sounded like a happy child, and Gwen made note that she never had heard his voice so high and happy.

“Oh good,” Gwen chirped. “I can’t wait to tell the others! I’ll be the queen of gossip!”

She smiled and left, as the two men ignored her, lost in each other’s eyes.

SELF-EVALUATION

I feel as a writer, I have grown more than ever this semester. I took both Creative Writing: Fiction and Advanced Screenwriting, and these classes pushed me to work hard and take a focus on my writing. At the beginning of this semester, I felt like my writing was amazing, and that it could not improve. I felt my scripts understood a perfect act structure, and I translated a lot of this act structure into my writing pieces. I felt every single piece had this perfect story and perfect ending.

Oh, how I was wrong. The first time I submitted a piece to creative writing, and people had negative – but constructive – feedback, I felt overwhelmed, but soon realized what that could do for my writing. I feel I now have an even better sense than before when it comes to creative pieces, and I am less scared to show off my writing and makes changes. The attachment I feel to pieces is less than before, but in a sense of perfection.

My own individual thematic and style choices have changed through what I have learned. Previously, I tend to not pick a main character, or a main relationship to focus on. I tend to cram too much information about characters into a short story, some of which details do not need to be elaborated on. I learned how taking out some descriptive detail, and including detail from previous stories, can be more important. I learned that pushing yourself to keep writing can be more valuable than stepping away, because with a good beta reader, you can always change the story later.

As for thematic choices, I learned that I tend to write good interpersonal relationship stories. These do not always have to be romance, but they need to have some type of relationship where two characters are connecting with one another. I wrote a piece this semester entitled

Abandoned Society, about a kid who was part of a science experiment and is left alone in a neighborhood with no knowledge the neighborhood is desolate. I found myself lost and confused without a person to interact with, which proved to me that most my stories stand on that forefront.

Due to these style choices, I learned important things about myself from my semester. The first is to push yourself and to never assume that a finalized piece is the best you can get. There will always be critiques and beta readers who find different parts of your writing frustrating. I now assume something is finished and feel the need to keep pushing and progressing towards the actual final version. I felt *Substance & Security* was the most polished it could get, but now I feel **even with critiques**, it could keep going.

Another important thing I learned is how to create a story with a narrator and main character. I always wrote my stories with the intention of being third person limited, but I would never clarify who the main character was. I would often give the narrator a strong voice too. Readers would often think they were following one character, only to have another character's thoughts shifted in later. Even reading back after a semester of rewriting, I can see where I do this without even thinking. What I was really trying to accomplish was third Person Omniscient... just done incorrectly. I had to find a way to rework my writing where no matter what, I was giving personal thoughts of multiple characters. I learned that I was not good at keeping the main character the main character, or the main relationship the focus. It was important for me to learn how to keep my characters separated and focused on.

In the future, I plan to continuously work on a script with a friend of mine. His name is Kyle, and we met in an online script-writing group in my early high school days. He has a degree in English, while mine is in design, but we plan to write 12 episodes of a TV show and work on

them until they would be ready to pitch to directors. Besides that, I plan to continue my fanfiction writings.

After the semester is finished and looking back, I feel like I am less confident in my ability to write, because I feel all my pieces could continually use feedback and critique. I am a lot more confident in my ability to critique. I feel like I understand what people are looking for when being a beta, and I feel like I can give advice on what the story could use, instead of just minor grammar critiques. I'm excited to see how far I can push my writing.