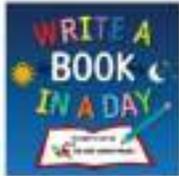


Covidae ³



Team Abbotsleigh Purple



Write a Book in a Day 2016 Book Summary



The Team Supervisor must confirm the details on this page. When the book is complete, please mark the checklist items and sign where indicated. Please add this page as the first page in the final book.

TEAM DETAILS

Writing Division: Middle School (NSW)

Writing Date: 12-08-2016

Group or School: Abbotsleigh

Team Name: Abbotsleigh Purple

Team Members: Emily Chan Ann Gao
Chelsea Chaffey Charlotte Deng
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Hannah Qian
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PARAMETERS

Primary Character 1: Surfer

Primary Character 2: Blacksmith

Non-Human Character: Magpie

Setting: Castle

Issue: Saving an endangered species

RANDOM WORDS

Delicious

Nonsense

Hums

Cracked

Danger

AFFIDAVIT

I, Joel Ford (Team Supervisor), certify that the above team:

- completed all work on their book in accordance with the competition rules
- completed all work between 8:00am and 8:00pm on the day of writing
- included all five random words
- Word Count: 4237 words

Date: 12.8.16 Signed: 

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Prologue



The dragonfly alights from its perch, an iridescent electric blue body that took to the azure sky. The graceful reed that bobs down, then up again, as if joyous to be relieved of its strain. The insect's wings hum through the air, an erratic, spontaneous movement that suspended its electric blue chassis within the turbulent air. Wire thin veins are a skeleton for the delicate, iridescent membranes vainly spun by nature's flaunted whim.

And yet an age could past in that same moment, its turmoil of joy, grief and angst thrumming through the meridians of the earth.

Time is asymmetrical. Fickle as the water sprites that used to haunt their watery domains. But those, too, have already disappeared from the surface of the earth.

And I am a being that exists outside the cruel loop of time. A species with no corporeal body. A soul, preserved. A powerless sentience that must simply exist, endure until it fades into nonbeing.

I once had a body. A name. A family. Memories rose through my consciousness, distorted by the millennia behind me.

Bitter hate. A woman's face. Eons of torture. The wail of a baby. Bars, persecution, hate, fire, cruel hate. Were they my memories? Someone else's? I don't know.

And it doesn't matter. Not anymore.

Because death is what defines us. Without it, there is no meaning to life.

They used to call us angels. We were younger, and projected ourselves onto the earth. There we walked among people, lived with them. And yet, even then, I could pass through a wall as easily as the air.

We are just another tortured existence, ridden with the plagues of eternal despair.

And all of the others have already found their release.

I am the restless earth that moved and shifted. The raging sea reaching for the moon. The sun that fed the Earth, nourished its life, and sent it spinning back for more. The tree that blossoms in the spring, then sheds itself anew in the autumn.

But I want to be more.

The lilting song of a magpie broke my thoughts, its earthly warbling cry able to pierce through the barriers between us. My consciousness smiled slightly, drawing together.

The magpie cocked its head, its red eyes questioning, then understanding. I pushed part of my consciousness into the bird, so it assumed my messenger. I hated to use animals in such a fashion. But it was necessary.

And besides, I've always had a connection to magpies. Perhaps because of their nature of thievery. If I was going to realize my hope, I will need them.

Hope. It was all that kept me from drowning in madness, in boundless hysteria.

But now, even that is fading, fading away...



Chapter 1

Rosa had seen the gradual extinction of her job when the machines first started appearing. Everything was manufactured in mass and the artistry of blacksmithing was being replaced by the commercial brutality of engines and gadgets. Why that was, she did not understand. She still remembered the days of her childhood, when she watched in awe as her mother struck at the iron with experienced arms. Her mother was the woman of her life.

Blacksmithery was a job that required both patience and finesse, and her mother had both. Metalworking had never been considered a job for a woman, and people often responded with a scoff, but Rosa's mother was good at what she did, and everyone knew it. Those days had been the pinnacle for the blacksmiths. The people came to Rosa for everything- from knives to horseshoes, chains, nails, weapons and even sculptures. She loved seeing the yield of her hard work, the masterpieces she had created, and over the years, she had stockpiled a whole room of her victory.

Rosa's days of glory did not last long, however, as over the years, she realised that she was the only blacksmith left in town. Initially, everyone knew her as the medieval woman who lived in a castle, but imperceptibly, everyone forgot about her. Rosa did not care what other's thought about her. She had lived her life to the fullest, and she had done everything she had vowed to do in life.

Instead, Rosa worried about her profession. *Who would take over? What will become of the legacy of blacksmiths?* She hadn't seen another blacksmith for years, and she couldn't shake the feeling that if she died, the craftsmanship of metalworking would die with her. Day by day, she despaired. She was confident of her abilities, and she knew what she could bring to the world if she was given a chance. She wanted to rekindle the fire of the olden days, of smelting and forging, but she thought of the machines that could finish a month's work in a day.

Helplessness.

Rosa had thought about finding an apprentice, but it felt like years since she had last stepped outside the castle gates. The last time she had gone out, she had almost been hit by a car. She was archaic, and she knew that if she ever stepped outside she would be mistaken for an exhibit at a museum. So there Rosa remained, a solitary character in the midst of a rapidly developing society.



Chapter 2

As the morning crept closer, Addie, hair dyed silver and wearing a navy wetsuit, walked towards the beach, lime green, patterned surfboard under her arm; the ocean was calmer at this time of day, just as the sun began leaking over the horizon, casting lazy, pale shadows across the sand.

She knew she had never been born to be a surfer. She was born to be a mechanic, just like her father.

However, she was forced to earn a living off her surfing, having learnt her skills from her parents, who had disappeared five years ago. She started surfing at the age of five, competing in many world-renowned competitions. This did not change the fact that she was an orphan, therefore she forced herself to study hard to be someone who can survive in this world. Addie had no support, no parents and only some friends, she witnessed the extinction of many industries, many people and many companies. She knew the best way to protect herself was to never say a word against anyone.

In her youth, she remembered her dad telling her stories inside the wooden house, telling her how this world changed so much for the past decades. Her dad had been a famous mechanic, who commented engineering as something that was so wonderful it could make everything on Earth to be the way you wanted.

Her mum had also been a mechanic, filled with the youth and passion she'd had since childhood, and Addie had no idea how her family ended there, living in a wooden hub next to the ocean. Her parents were her aspirations: her father would take her out surfing during daylight and when it got dark, they would return home, and dinner would already have been prepared by her mother. They were her world; and her memories of them were tinged with lucid warmth and nostalgia.



Their idyllic life did not last long; not long enough for her to fully understand her parents' struggles. The day of her fourteenth birthday began just as any other, and yet by the end of the day, her familiarity- her *home*- had been cast into oblivion.

There she was, home alone, not knowing how she could possibly survive. On her own. No goodbyes, just radio silence and their tiny house.

The injustice of the situation still struck her with force every night.

After five years of supporting herself and learning to survive on the principle, carefully choosing her words and her expressions, Addie was tired. She'd waited for years for word from her parents, holding out on her own, and she still found it confusing; why had they left? She had no doubt that they were likely dead by now.

She had learnt the basics of mechanics from them; it helped that she had an unusual affinity for engineering, tinkering and the likes. However, not many people, if any at all, were willing to give a job to an orphaned teenage girl who claimed to be skilled with mechanics.

This was her life. Surfing in small competitions for a living.

And it was far, far from what she wanted.



Chapter 3

The air in the castle smelled musty; rust and mold clinging to the surfaces of furniture and walls. Old, broken furniture and books were piled in one corner, a huge box of tools piled in another. The old blacksmith no longer had the energy to sort and fix everything.

The castle still held some of the grandeur and elegance it had possessed years ago, except no-one ever got to see its sun-bleached walls and dusty hallways; over the years, it had become carefully shrouded and hidden by the ever-extending forest of towering eucalypts, the dry, dusty green canopies shadowing the earth.

Her routine had long since become dreary and monotonous: waking up in the morning, walking down the stairs that makes a pitiful squeaking sound every time she stepped on the third and ninth step, spreading butter and cheese on a slice of bread, waiting for customers to come, eating another slice of bread for lunch, waiting for customers that never come for another few hours, eating another slice of long-since stale bread, going to bed.

It was just a normal Monday morning. The blacksmith forgot to take her pills, deciding to sleep in. "No one is going to come anyways," she thought.

Creak.

The familiar sound of the aged stairs. Rosa ignored it and continued closing her eyes.

Creak.

The sound of the stairs woke her up from her dream completely.

"Is someone here? That's **nonsense**, no one visits an ancient blacksmith."

Still, very slowly, she got out of bed, slipped into the pair of woolen slippers she had been wearing for years.

Don't worry, old lady. Stay in bed. A distant but calming sound of a young girl echoed through the castle.

Rosa dropped back to her bed, breathing heavily, for there was not a soul in the castle that she could see. *Do not be shocked. I am the Magpie. I am here to seek help.*

"I am just an old, abandoned blacksmith, I can't do anything. No one needs me. If it is the castle that you wanted, please leave." Rosa wheezed into the air, lining up desolate facts that she had long since accepted. Things that she had always wanted to say, despite society's constant refusals to listen to the words of an old lady.

Rosa. I am the Magpie; a spirit, or a goddess, whatever you would like to use to refer to me. I understand your troubles, I really do; if you help me, I will be indebted to you. The spirit pleaded sincerely, I will not harm you. Trust me. I need you to build something for me. You are the last of the blacksmiths.

"I am old, my hands shake; I cannot make anything anymore."

Yet you are the only blacksmith left alive on this earth. You can help me, and you will. Her voice is mellifluous; calming and sharp. Powerful. Pleading.

"I need a helper." said the blacksmith.

The spirit left the house without a clue, soaring through the air to seek for the helper she had requested.

The heavy spirits of the Magpie felt like a child drowning helplessly in midair, burdened by her desperation in finding her true freedom. Barely managing to fly over the rainforest that was surrounding the ocean, she left the smell of eucalyptus; the air was getting saltier and more violent. The scent of the ocean.

The Magpie gazed down at the golden sand, the blinding sun and the ripples reflecting the sunlight, iridescent and warm. The ocean seemed monstrous; writhing and dyed in a rich, Aegean blue, salty foam spraying into the wind. The light refracted off the surface of the waves, pearly and almost luminous. There was something that was even shinier, so bright that she couldn't decipher it. The spirit glided down through the air and approached the ocean. It was a young girl. A surfer. The person that the Magpie was searching for.

Through Addie's eyes, Magpie could see the spirits of a mechanic. Creative, yet willing to embrace failure. Dauntless, yet precise. She was the one. Most importantly, she had the hands of a creator: graceful, arching fingers, nimble and light.

The spirit approached her as she threw the surf board on the beach and fell back onto the sand, panting. Carefully, she edged closer.

Hello, Addie. The spirit tried her best to not sound too imposing.

The girl lifted her head, turned around yet everyone seemed to be doing their own work. Standing slowly, she began to head towards the edge of the beach, making her way home.

Addie. Wait. The spirit chased after her, *I am the Magpie. A goddess. I am not trying to lure you into any harmful, nor precarious situations.*

The girl stopped walking, slowly turning to face the Magpie's translucent, wavering form.

“What can I do to help you?” she whispered hesitantly, not wanting people to see her talking to thin air.

I need a body; something to live in. I was once a God, but without a corporeal form, I am reduced to this state, without any physicality. Without power. I would like to become real again, not this barely verisimilitudinous excuse for an existence.

The Magpie paused, and a sense of grief escaped her eyes that no one could see. I needed a blacksmith to create a vessel for me, and yet I have only found one. The last in the entire world. She is old and frail, barely clinging onto whatever livelihood she has. She needs help to create again. We need you.

Addie was touched by the Magpie's sincerity. As someone that had the true freedom that everyone wanted desperately, yet unable to be the person she longed for – an engineer- she understood why it was that the Magpie had come to her.

“I will come.”

The Magpie's features twisted into something resembling a smile, if magpies could smile. *Thank you. Follow me.*

Their journey was not long; the Magpie lead the surfer towards an odd patch of forest, so close to the city, and yet completely shy from the impacts of industrial civilisation.

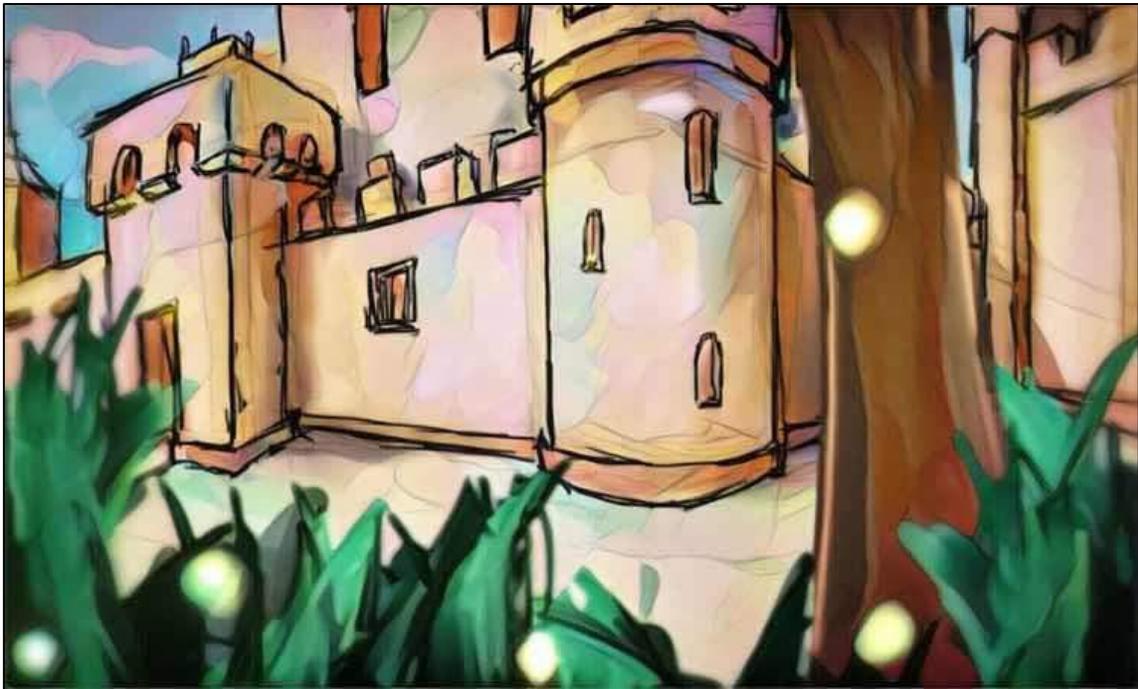
Along the way, they conversed in all tones of banter; the Magpies whispery yet acerbic remarks against Addie's sun-drenched laughter and quirky quips.

"Did you say she lived in a castle? There aren't even any castles in Australia, are you just leading me on here? If I find out you've been pulling

my leg this entire time, I'm going to be real angry. You know, I heard that roast fowl is real **delicious**, why not magp – *oh.*"

Completely out of the blue, they arrived at a literal castle in the middle of the forest; it looked like something from a medieval storybook. Sandstone walls and tall, crumbling arches. Perfectly anachronistic.

This is our destination.



Chapter 4

They sat together, blueprints scrawled across the desk.

Addie hummed thoughtfully, processing Rosa's words.

"Alright," she conceded. "But how about we connect *this* and *this*," she begins, tracing the delicate lines of circuitry with a calloused, charcoal-smudged finger. "And if we only use the steel alloy for the frame, filling it in with other synthetics, it should be lightweight and more functional. Do you think you can do that?"

Rosa looked over at her, following the graphite lines carefully, age evident in her eyes. She nodded.

"Good. Then, let's get started."

Days passed in mere moments for them, the odd pair both fully immersed in their work for the first time. For a good, long week, the strange, tarnished castle was alive once more; the sounds of metal being welded, a skeleton of an avian body coming together in a mesh of circuits and wires, synthetics and metal.

Rosa was in charge of the metalwork and frame of their collaborative creature; she sat together with Addie for many long nights, sketching out plans for materials, drawing out the logistics of how to incorporate everything they needed. She was learning how to adapt her traditional skills in blacksmithing to Addie's delicate, advanced work in mechanics.

Addie focused on making all the joints work; allowing the vessel they created to have the full range of movement they desired. Neither of them were sure how much change the introduction of the Magpie's spirit would induce in the body they were creating, so she was dead-set on making sure that all the little parts of the framework would work properly- wings, beak, feet.



Over the course of the days, Addie and Rosa became exceedingly familiar with each other; with the added familiarity of the little incorporeal bird-spirit, they were a tightly-knit team, passing around mugs of tea and having sporadic meals with one another.

“If we create a body like this for you, will you need a power source? Or will you be able to animate it by yourself? You’re more than just a consciousness, correct?”

Rosa’s words seemed to ring out in the wooden silence of the room.

Slowly, the Magpie hopped down from her familiar perch at the window, inky feathers catching the warmth of the sun’s light. She nodded once.

Addie let out a brief exhale in relief. So at least they wouldn’t have to find a power source for the body.

Once I have a fully physical body, my powers will return. Do not worry.

She frowned. “Why couldn’t you have just taken over another body? Why did you have to get us to do it?”

Would you rather I not have let you two meet?

“But-“ she paused. “That’s true. There’s not much out there for me, in the first place.”

Rosa placed down her tools from the corner of the workroom. “I am in the same position. In the first place, blacksmiths are a profession that should have died out long ago. My occupation was always in **danger** of becoming completely extinct. My mother made sure to tell me that, too, back when she was still alive.”

All will be well, I promise. Even has a god without the full extent of her powers, I can tell you that much.

The two women both gave themselves a reassuring nod, before turning back to their own devices.

“Tell me, Addie,” said Rosa. “Why is it that you have such extensive knowledge of robotics, and yet you had to rely on surfing for a living? You are far too overqualified to have been struggling in such a fashion.”

Addie tilted her head, brushing away tools and spare parts to get a better look at the skeletal framework of the wing she was working on. “I

guess," she mused, pausing in thought. "I guess, after I was orphaned, I wanted to be able to do something, not just surfing. Because surfing reminded me of them. My parents. So I studied hard at the only other thing I was good at, mechanics, and tried to make myself useful, by fixing microwaves and other small things like that. My parents only taught me the basics, so I had a lot to learn. Once I got out of school, no-one really acknowledged my skills, because I was young, I suppose, so I turned back to surfing."

The two humans turned to look at the little bird, who seemed to be watching them curiously.

"Your turn now, Magpie," joked Addie. "Tell us your tragic backstory."

The Magpie huffs and turns away, preening its feathers with an air of indignance.

I have no obligation to tell you anything about myself. However, if you really want to know, I was not always like this. It has been eons since I was human, but I still remember what it feels like to have a body, to have power.

They didn't ask the Magpie for anything more.



Chapter 5

The bright gleam of metal shone delightfully in the dimly lit room as her spirit filled the delicate contraption. Faint **hums** of the circuits whirred and the magical atmosphere **cracked** with boundless entropy. Addie and Rosa marveled at the ripples of energy set off like waves after a sunken pebble, still awestruck by the Herculean elegance contained in such a petite bird.

"Wow," Addie breathed, not taking her gaze off the hybrid being. A light, whimsical voice answered her exclamation.

Wow indeed. If a Magpie could look proud, satisfied and gawky all at once, her expression captured it perfectly. There was a mischievous twinkle in her eyes as she stretched out her wings and gave them an experimental flap. She could feel her own heartrending anticipation, the pulsating beats of each flap as she hovered in the air despite the rigid minerals that created this body. It was a joyous thing, to experience air as a viscous medium, not quite drowning and definitely thinner than water.

Finally free! From seconds which turned into years, into eons. She felt young again, released from the prison cell of watery existence. Suddenly she could feel the world as it truly existed, not as a ghost or shadow but feel the churning of the heart and the laughter that accompanied it.

Rosa laughed at the Magpie's antics. It was like a child who had learnt a new word and couldn't stop using it. Truly she was glad to have helped the goddess and share the easy partnership with another person who understood the creativity and precision ingrained in the fundamentals of blacksmithery.

The unbidden question loomed through her wise mind, old with age. *What does my future hold?* Even worse, did she have a future? Carefully, she turned the thought around and examined it in her mind. This world didn't have a position for engineers, much less antiquated blacksmiths. Rosa supposed she would live in ruins of the long lost castle, but perhaps now with some foolish hope for wandering strangers to stumble upon her mansion, once in a blue moon.

The Magpie smiled as much as a magpie could (which is not at all), eerily knowing. *Thank you both, sincerely.* She tilted her head observing Rosa and Addie. *Would you like the tragic backstory now?* Pride stopped her from sharing her rapture, however she guessed that they already knew.

Addie brushed her pale hair. This was a dying art - all her attempts searching for a mechanical career ingrained the truth in her. How is it that no one wanted something so beautiful, the free forming ideas becoming a tangible reality? Hesitantly, an idea formed in her mind. If they could teach - educate - people and make them see the wondrous transformation of material simply through the intellect of the mind... Her heart lifted at the thought.

"Magpie?" Addie was sure that this plan would work. This was why she loved engineering. With the right tools, there's always an answer. The Magpie paused in mid-stretch, looking every bit as regal and majestic as a queen surveying her people. Addie relayed her plan to both of them, noticing the approving look from Rosa. Her confidence rose.

The Magpie looked thoughtful. Perhaps this was a good idea, after all, the more artistry the more beauty there is in the world. Blacksmithery was on the verge of extinction too. Vertigo alone would make it fall into the chasm. With benefits of earthly bodies to inhabit, the idea was tempting. Not that she would be so selfish as to make it her only reason, though. Rosa and Addie watched with hopeful gazes, Rosa's old eyes coloured with a wistful tint.

Slowly, the Magpie nodded.

Addie and Rosa gasped with delight. Salvation would reach the fading art of blacksmithery - the science of engineering - after all. Instead of sailing through the murky waters and thundering storms, there was a beam of brightness from the light house.

The Magpie regarded their embrace with satirical humour. Salvation had also come to the endangered Magpie, so it seemed.



Who do you go to for help if you need a body?

The Magpie is teetering between two states of existence; a Goddess stripped of her powers and stuck living as a ghost of her former powers, without any physicality.

She longs to become *real* again; to have the powers she had as a god.

Blacksmithing is a profession which should have long since died out; Rosa is the last of her kind. She is lonely, wasting away in a castle that seems like it's been taken out of a children's medieval storybook.

And Addie was orphaned several years ago. She barely scrapes by with her occupation as a surfer, even though she has the skills of an experienced mechanic. She wishes for an opportunity, a chance to use the talents that she has.

Will the Magpie be able to save their futures?



12.08.16