

“To let my imagination grab my pen”

Perceptions of Learning within the Writers-in-Schools Scheme

Jane O’Hanlon BA MA

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Co-Principal Supervisor: Dr Mary Shine Thompson
Co-Principal Supervisor: Professor Michael O’Leary

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Appendices

The Alchemists' Niece is a twenty-eight thousand (28,000) word novella written by seven students, (transition year girls) who participated in a Writer-in-Residence programme in the spring of 2013, and which formed part of the study. Written in the fantasy genre the story concerns recently orphaned Alice Oswald who has to go to live with Wilfred her (very reluctant) alchemist uncle. Containing familiar tropes, this is a coming of age story about relationships, family, love, danger, betrayal and redemption.

It is a sample of creative writing produced by students who took part in the study and the completed novella is presented here in its original form. The seven students involved worked together as members of one of five (5) groups within a class that was drawn from three (3) TY groups within the school with the writers-in-residence programme forming one of their modules for that year. The work on the novella was begun by the students in the sessions with the artist-writer, working in collaboration and consultation with the artist-writer and each other, from the beginning of April to the middle of May 2013. This collaboration continued throughout the six (6) one-and-a-half-hour creative writing workshops that made up this (typical) residency. Students also continued to work on the story outside of the sessions, bringing the work in to be 'workshopped' by the artist-writer and the other members of their group. The final manuscript was edited by one of the students in the Poetry Ireland office, during a TY placement in June 2013 and the researcher did not have any input into the preparation or proofing of the final document.

The Novella is presented here in its original form, with no emendations, corrections or further proofing, as a sample - and an example of:

- the creative work that can be produced when students work with an artist-writer, over an extended (even though relatively short) period of time
- what can be produced through the creative writing process even within the high stakes environment of the second-level classroom
- the way in which the students' writing, as the 'product' of the creative writing workshops, can act as a boundary object capable of bridging and fulfilling rigorous curricular demands with regard to both the aesthetic and the academic modes of learning for students, teachers and artist-writers within this environment
- the collaborative nature of the arts learning process
- the possibilities inherent in arts learning for harnessing students' engagement.

This piece of writing, or artefact, highlights the interdependence of (rather than the false dichotomy between) the process and product in arts learning, and is offered here as evidence of what can be achieved through the creative writing process at second level.

²⁸ Copyright for *The Alchemist's Niece* remains with the authors who are known to me.

THE ALCHEMIST'S NIECE

A 28,000 word novella by composed by seven authors

I was utterly distraught when mother died. The days that passed afterwards were a blur. I was told little about what would happen to me, only that I was to live with my uncle as he was the only family I had left. I'd never met him or heard of him; mother never spoke of a brother. I have to say I was a little anxious about it although there was a certain thrill about this new chapter in my life, something from a Bronte novel or an adventure I dream of when I'm alone. There is something certain, almost as certain as the clock striking twelve. This will be an interesting meeting.

*

"No no no NO!" he roared, carelessly throwing half of the ingredients on his counter on the floor.

Wilfred Oswald held his head in his hands. He was sat at a large mahogany table, surrounded by glass jars, pots, small engraved boxes and vials. A small cauldron was bubbling softly beside him under a low lit flame. The room was dark and he was alone. He raised his head and consulted the book he had been resting on. The book was worn and the pages frail and though he was general very careful with his books, he carelessly sifted through its contents in the hopes of finding something, *anything* that would help him achieve his aims. He glanced at the simmering pot and stirred it once anti-clockwise. He was close, he felt sure of that. But still, something vital was missing. "Think Wilfred, think," he chastised himself. He turned to the grandfather clock beside him and read that it was long past midnight. He groaned and once more rested his head in his arms, and he fell quickly into a troubled sleep.

*

He awoke suddenly to a vicious rapping at the door to his shop. Wilfred was the proud owner of the best apothecary in all of London (if not the country). It was filled to the brim with all sorts of potions and remedies, ingredients and strange substances. All anyone would ever need in the alchemy business.

He rubbed his tired eyes. He had been dreaming of a large red and golden bird with sparkling amber eyes and the most magnificently long scarlet tail feathers. "A phoenix," he muttered to himself drowsily, getting up to see who could be calling at this late hour. "Wait a second," he thought, "phoenix feathers?"

Maybe it was the fact his brain was asleep or he had inhaled too many weird fumes from the cauldron that night but without a second thought Wilfred reached for a scrap of parchment, his favourite quill and his ink well and scribbled the words "Phoenix Feathers" in dark green ink.

The rapping on the door started again and he went to the door, opening the spy hatch.

What he found was not what he expected.

And maybe if he had have just slept through the insistent rapping this whole ordeal may never have happened and everything would've turned out exactly as planned but that is not what happened. This is:

What he found on his porch was a small stocky man in a crumpled grey-blue suit. The man wore small spectacles and a bowler hat that seemed to be covering the man's thinning hair. Behind the man stood a girl, no more than eighteen years old, in a plain, unflattering dress and unruly chestnut hair. She was not looking at Wilfred but was gazing around the moonlit street with a curious expression. Her attention was brought forward when the man cleared his throat and she picked up the battered suitcase that was resting by her feet.

“Good evening Mr Oswald. I do hope you’ll forgive us for arriving at such an ungodly hour but alas, it was quite a trouble trying to find you,” the man smiled but got nothing but a cruel look from Wilfred in return.

“And who do I suppose you might be?” he questioned.

“Do forgive my manners, I am Jacob Pibbs of Pibbs and Johnson Incorporated and I’m sure you are already acquainted with Miss Alice,” Pibbs gestured to the girl behind him.

“I cannot say I have been granted the pleasure,” Wilfred sneered.

“I do beg your pardon Mr Oswald but you were contacted by one of my associates notifying you upon our arrival were you not?” Pibbs looked at him like a confused squirrel, pushing his spectacles further up his nose.

“I’m afraid you must have the wrong Oswald. Goodnight,” Wilfred said as he began sliding the spy hatch closed.

“But you’re Violet Oswald’s brother are you not?”

The voice was small, timid and soft. The girl looked up at Wilfred or at least the small section of his face that was still visible through the spy hatch.

He looked her straight in the eye and for the first time in a long while, worry streaked his face.

“I’m her daughter,” the girl said.

And then he saw it. She had the same pale green eyes, the same shaped face, the same worried creased between her eyebrows. Their similarities were uncanny.

“May we come in Mr Oswald? We have some urgent matters to discuss,” Pibbs spoke firmly. Wilfred closed the spy hatch, sighed and unlocked the door.

Wilfred led them into his shop. He lit an oil lamp so they had some light. The girl, Alice, looked around the shop in astonishment.

It was full of weird and wonderful ingredients in different containers of all shapes and sizes. A weighing scale was on the counter and different weights were littered around it. The walls were made of large shelves, each piled high with different medical wonders. She couldn’t read any of the labels in the dimly lit room. She would have to investigate them at a later stage.

“Well go on, what is this business you speak of?” Wilfred asked, taking a pipe out of a drawer behind the counter. He began puffing steadily on the pipe, worry causing a crease in his brow.

“Well, I don’t know any other way to say it so you’ll have to forgive me. I was not aware that I would be the one to tell you this. As I said my assoc-”

“Oh just spit it out, for God’s sake man!” Wilfred interrupted impatiently.

Pibbs looked aghast but composed himself quickly. “Your sister, Mr Oswald, passed away quite suddenly two days past. She had been suffering from tuberculosis the autopsy discovered. Quite a severe case indeed.”

“Violet’s dead,” he mumbled to himself. He brought his attention to Alice.

“And her daughter?”

“Yes, I was just getting to that. Being under the legal age and having not married, Alice is to be handed over to her closest living relative as she is in need of a guardian.”

“And what if her closest living relative has no desire to look after whatever his sister left behind?”

Pibbs once more looked shocked. “Mr Oswald, the young girl has just suffered from a terrible loss! You can’t possibly turn her away at her hour of need!”

“I can try.”

“Well I do hope you’ll forgive me Mr Oswald but that can’t happen. You being Alice’s uncle and only living relative are under strict obligation to care for the young lady until she is of legal age or is married. I will need you to sign this form and then I will be on my

way.” Pibbs pulled out a typed piece and handed Wilfred a fountain pen. Wilfred grabbed it and signed it reluctantly, glaring at his apparent niece as he did so.

“That settles it then. I shall visit in the next week or so to see how Alice is settling in and to make sure everything is up to scratch,” he looked pointedly at Wilfred. “I trust you’ll be happy here,” he smiled at Alice taking her hand.

“Well it’s been a true pleasure,” Wilfred said to Pibbs sarcastically, “but I trust you really must be getting on your way.” He pushed Mr Pibbs out of the shop and back onto the porch.

“I suppose I better be going, yes. You have the number of my office Alice. Do call if you need anything,” he said just as Wilfred shut the door on him.

*

I walked into the cluttered shop, the smell of must filling my nostrils. It was an organised chaos. The shelves were cluttered but it seemed as though everything had its place. From the colourful concoctions claiming the shelves as their home to the bizarre ingredients dwelling around the room, books lining the tables with stories kept and secrets sealed to the odd furnishings and finally, the heavy brick of a desk sitting at the top of the room covered with a blanket of work and research.

Mr Pibbs was being forced out of the vicinity by my estranged uncle. He returned to his study and led me up to the attic. He rambles on about rules and how not to interrupt him in his study. I nod, but my attention is elsewhere. He slams the door of the small room, causing the dust to shift and flutter to the ground and my imagination brings me back to the curious shop downstairs. Sighing, I lie back on my bed and wonder what this life will bring me.

*

Wilfred decided he would have to resume his work once Alice was asleep. He would lock her door to make sure she would not walk in on him as he looked for the various books he will need. One more ingredient and his elixir would be complete. Just one more.

He returned to his study and found Alice peering at the various ingredients on his shelves, flicking at glass jar and making an excruciatingly irritating “ding” noise. He cleared his throat and she abruptly stopped, not daring to look him in the eyes.

“You will be sleeping in the only available room in my home. Bring your belongings and follow me.” He turned on his heels and she hastily picked up her suitcase and followed him out of the study and up a narrow staircase. The house seemed to be filled with all sorts of oddities. There were bottles and empty jars littered around the rooms she passed on their ascent.

Wilfred pushed open a small door and had to stoop in order to enter. The room was dusty and overflowing with items that seemed like they should have been thrown out a long time ago. Large books with decrepit bindings rested in piles along the walls. A broken vase that could’ve had a certain kind of glamour if it was given a nice polish was lying against a sunken mattress that was set on a bed with a broken frame.

“This is where you will be staying. You will go straight here after supper and will not leave until breakfast in the morning. You are free to roam the streets during the day as I am a very busy man and will not have you disturbing my work with childish nonsense.” Alice simply nodded and Wilfred left the room, slamming the door without as much as a goodnight.

Alice sighed. So much for a great adventure.

*

Wilfred had stayed up most of the night looking through his extensive library for one book. His study looked ransacked, books torn off the shelves and left opened and

unattended. He went through the books he had upstairs in his rooms but he still couldn't find the book on mythical creatures.

"I must be ludicrous," he muttered as he sifts through another book but it was in vain. As light seeped through the curtains and birds twittered in their wake, he reached for the phone by his desk. He quickly dialled a number and panted down the phone. He heard a click and a voice.

"It's Oswald. I have a job for Badger."

The voice paused before speaking. "Badger will meet you in your shop at ten o'clock sharp." Without another word, the phone clicked off and the line went dead.

Wilfred sighed, and began to once more to search through his books.

*

By the time ten o'clock came, Wilfred had just finished searching the last room on the fourth floor, without a wink of sleep since Alice arrived on his doorstep.

He could hear Badger's signature knock as he left the room and looked up the last staircase, the one that led to the attic and swore under his breath.

He ran downstairs and heard the bell for the apothecary tinkle and there stood Badger. He was middle aged, short and stout and wore a suit that matched his character. Sleazy.

"Morning, Oswald," he grinned his fox smile.

"Good morning, Badger," Wilfred panted. "Shall we?" he gestured towards the study and Badger followed him in.

Wilfred flopped into his chair, exhausted but he straightened himself as Badger sat down opposite him.

"Now I'm a busy man so let's get down to business. You got a job for me?" Badger asked with a thick cockney accent.

"Y-yes, I do. If you could just give me two minutes," Wilfred said, getting up from his chair, looking towards the staircase.

Badger looked up at him from his seat and pointed at the grandfather clock. "Tick tock," he smiled slyly.

Wilfred nodded and leaped towards the stairs. He climbed up the five staircases as fast as he could, tripping over the oddities that littered the house.

He ripped the door of the attic open and casted a sweeping glance around the room until he registered Alice was staring at him wide-eyed. She was sat cross-legged on the bed, reading the book Wilfred had spent his night searching for.

He strode across the room, yanked the book out of her hand and dragged her to her feet, gripping her arm tightly.

"I thought I told you to be as far from this vicinity as possible during daylight hours," he demanded, squeezing her arm tighter.

"Ow! You told me I was free to roam the streets if I wished. You did not say I wasn't allowed to stay here!" she grimaced, trying to break free of his grip but he would not relent.

Instead, he pulled her with him down the stairs. As they entered the study (Alice stumbling and squealing out her obvious distaste at being manhandled), Badger watched them curiously. Had Wilfred not been concerned at the fact his niece wasn't off and about in London town maybe he would've noticed how Badger was suspiciously standing beside Wilfred's shelf of most precious ingredients.

"But. I. Want. To. Stay. Here!" Alice protested as she was shoved out onto the street, Wilfred slamming the door in her face.

"Let me in!" she shouted, banging on the door. Wilfred breathed out deeply. He slid open the spy hatch on the door, peering at his sulking niece. "You are acting in an unbelievably

uncivilised manner and I have business to attend to. You may return when working hours have ended. Good day.”

“But-” she started but he had slid back the spy hatch and she was left on the porch.

“Just my luck,” she muttered under her breath.

“You look like you’re in need of a bit of assistance, my love.”

*

“Now, back to business,” Wilfred smiled as he re-entered his study and found Badger exactly where he left him, sitting back in his chair across from Wilfred’s desk. Wilfred sat into this desk placing the large book down so both he and his associate could see it. Badger leaned in closer to get a better look.

Wilfred opened the book and found the page he had bookmarked when he had first purchased the volume – he was a naïve connoisseur of alchemy at the time – and the pure thought of mythical creatures had delighted him.

“I need this,” he said pointing at the image. Badger lifted the book so he could read the inscription beside the illustration.

“You must be kiddin’ me mate. The boys and I are good, but we ain’t this good,” he chuckled.

“I have faith in your...cunning abilities,” Wilfred replied, no expression gracing his features. Badger smirked and tore the page out of the book. Wilfred did not even flinch.

“In that case, I’ll see what I can do,” Badger said, rising from his chair. “I’ll send one of my associates with details of when and where and in what way we will be compensated.” Wilfred simply nodded and with no more words exchanged, Badger departed.

Badger strode out into the street and cursed his inattentive assistant before blending into the crowd of people that were roaming down the cobbles.

*

I turned around to find a boy there. A boy with dark hair, kept nice and neat under a bowler hat, and dark blue eyes like the sky after a storm. His tall brooding expressions held well by his strong jaw and broad shoulders. The moment I saw him I became infixed. My curiosity struck again by this stranger, like a young Heathcliff of the Yorkshire Moors. I was held there by both my curiosity and surprise of this handsome stranger.

*

It was unusually obvious that he was not as eloquent as his attire may have suggested. He did not stand straight, slouching to the left causing his immaculate brown pinstriped suit to crease at the sides. He also courted with his hands in his pockets, like someone who had all the time in the world to watch a young maid hammer tirelessly at the door of the city’s finest apothecary.

He chuckled softly, incredibly bemused at her childish ways. She was small for her age, which he presumed was close to his own but he only formed that assumption based on the fleeting glance he caught as she was thrust out of the apothecary by its owner.

She huffed as she got no response from her knocking and he could hear her soft mutterings but could not distinguish the words she was using.

“You look like you’re in need of a bit of assistance, my love,” he spoke up, catching her off guard. She turned and faced him, a hint of embarrassment burning her cheeks and turning the rosy before she shrugged it off and crossed her arms.

“Well I certainly don’t need a spectator if you don’t mind,” she retorted.

“I like her already,” he thought and smirked. “I certainly hope not, my fair lady, as I’m sure soon enough half of London would be crowding around this very spot.” She glared at his remark but he only smiled.

“Now, onto more pressing matters. Not bragging or anything but I know every man that has ever gone through the doors of that very shop there but I don’t think I’ve seen anyone

like you and I certainly haven't seen anyone kicking up that much of a fuss to go back inside. The ol' Oswald isn't exactly what you'd call the friendliest fellow."

"Well I happen to be his niece," Alice stated. The young assistant looked taken aback.

"You? No! Well I'll be damned, pardon my tongue, m'dear but you're not half scary enough to be related to that sack of rotten potatoes!" He managed to raise a chuckle from Alice although she tried her best to hide it.

He took off his bowler hat and squinted at her, looking her over intensely. "Either this light flatters you in all the right ways or you are a sorceress with extensive beautification powers, and then and only then might I be able believe you are the dearest, darling niece of the grand and terrifying Wilfred Oswald!" he beamed at her and this time she let herself laugh at his foolishness.

"And so Mademoiselle Oswald, by what name shall I have the pleasure of calling you?" he inquired replacing his hat atop his head.

"Alice," she smiled. "And you?"

He bowed lowly in front of her. "Marcus de Carabas, at your service. So tell me Alice Oswald, what are you up to on this fine spring day?" he asked offering her his arm.

"Well I've just been thrown out as though I was litter onto these cobbles as you have just witnessed and I have to admit I am not familiar with these parts."

He nodded at her understandingly. "It just so happens that I know these streets like the back of my hand, although I've never extensively noted what was on the back of my hand so that's quite a strange expression. Getting off topic, I would be more than happy to offer my services as your personal tour guide of ol' London town." He smiled and offered her his arm.

"In that case, I shall have to gratefully accept your offer as my escort," she curtsied and took his arm. He beamed a toothy grin and the two headed off down the street. They looked a rather unusual couple, him in a finely tailored suit and her in a simple, unappealing dress and yet, they looked the most content.

*

Wilfred began to return his books to their homes but left the now torn book open on his desk. He was exhausted and had half a mind to close the shop for a day in order to catch up on his sleep but he did not want Alice to saunter in beaming and telling him she was well within her right as office hours were over.

He groaned at the thought of her being here. He was perfectly fine on his own and always had been. He had no pictures of his parents or sister, no keepsakes from his childhood. Nothing that would remind him of the life he left so many years ago.

He had been from a poor background. His father unemployed and drank whatever money he got his hands on, his mother cleaned the houses of the wealthy in their area and his sister, well, they never saw eye to eye.

"And once more I have to deal with her consequences," he thought to himself. He suddenly became very angry at his sister. He threw the book he had been holding on the ground and slammed a fist onto the counter, knocking over some vials. He cursed her, and then berated himself for it. It's not her fault, one part of him thought; she didn't contract tuberculosis on purpose. But then a darker voice replied; she probably didn't have the child on purpose either.

He had to get rid of her. He couldn't wait for her to be of legal age. She had to be at least sixteen and two years would be agonizingly slow with her around. "What was Mr Pibbs saying about her marrying?" he muttered to himself. He had enough on his hands at the moment and finding her a husband would be incredibly time consuming. What sort of fine gentleman would find any interest in the rude, untidy, dim-witted and boisterous girl? It couldn't be done. Then again, it might get her out of the house faster.

He rubbed his tired eyes and decided he couldn't measure ingredients correctly in this state. He went outside and turned the sign on the door so that it read in swirling emerald handwriting: 'Closed.'

*

Alice could safely say that she had had the best day of her life. Back with her mother, she rarely left the house other than to go to the market if her mother was unable to or if she had money, to buy books. This was a whole new experience.

Marcus had shown her all around the city; they strolled along the Thames where she got her first look at the Tower of London, they went to Oxford Street where Alice watched powdered women and finely tailored men shop in some of the finest boutiques she had ever seen. Women glided through the city in glamorous dresses with corsets and bustles and seemed almost fictional.

She had told him a lot about herself, where she had lived while her mother was still alive, their family background and what it was like living on virtually nothing, and of course, she told him what living with Wilfred was like. He listened to her intently, not once interrupting her.

Just as they were making their way back to Wilfred's apothecary, Alice saw something that caught her eye. She grabbed Marcus' hand and dragged him into the shop. He had been taken off guard and had to fix his hat when he entered the shop and was left deserted by Alice.

They had entered a book shop, one unlike any Alice had ever seen. The shop was huge and completely filled with shelves and those shelves held pristine editions of as many books as she could possibly dream of. A ladder was beside every shelf so that one could reach the volumes at the very top shelf without having to stretch. Alice could not contain her glee. She stroked the spines of the books fondly, taking some out and admiring the hardback covers. There were desks at the back of the shop where some people were reading and she soon grabbed a pile of books and brought them to a table.

Marcus followed her around, not being in his usual territory. He picked up a book at random and brought it over to her and began flicking through the pages. Alice looked up from her book as he sat down next to her, leaning back on his chair.

"I'm sorry, I must be so rude. New books make me feel like it is Christmas," she smiled, her happiness making her eyes sparkle.

"Don't be daft, it's perfectly fine," he smiled but he seemed distracted. He kept glancing nervously towards the door. Alice's smile faltered.

"Is everything alright, Marcus?"

"Yes, yes," he said, "I'm terribly sorry but I have to dash. I've just remembered something..." He began to walk towards the door, hurriedly.

"Wait!" Alice said loudly, earning some glares from nearby readers. She got up and hurried after him. "When will I see you again?" she asked, following him out of the shop. He turned and smiled. "Oh don't you worry, my lovely. I'll be around." With a tip of his hat and a wink, he ran off down the street.

*

Alice spent the rest of her day in the bookshop, desperately trying to distract herself with the lovely books that lay waiting for her on the shelves but her mind was riddled with thoughts of Marcus. Why had he run off so suddenly? Surely if he didn't want to come into a bookshop they could have left and she could have come back at a later stage. It didn't make any sense.

She sighed, resting her head in her hands. Their lovely day had come to an abrupt stop. The book shop was closing and she would soon have to return to the apothecary and to her cracked uncle.

She rose from the desk and began to return the books to their appropriate shelves. She smiled and thanked the book keeper as she left and headed for the apothecary. It was only a short walk down from the bookshop and she found her way easily. The streets seemed less vibrant without Marcus leading her through them, less exciting and full of wonder. He knew such wonderful secrets of the places and people, pointing out to her things of interest.

She noted that the apothecary was closed for the day and tried to push the door open but it was just as locked as it was when she left it earlier. She rapped three times, praying that this time her uncle would let her in although she wouldn't put it past him to pretend no one was home. However, after a moment she heard footsteps, the spy hatch opened and closed swiftly and he unlocked the door.

He greeted her with a grunt and went into his study, closing the door behind him. She followed him and knocked on the study door. He opened the door angrily and stared at her furiously.

"For heaven's sake, what do you want?!" he shouted down at her.

She stood her ground and looked him back in the eye. "I was wondering uncle, what might be our arrangements for dinner?"

He closed his eyes and rubbed his temples furiously. "Oh I don't know, go make something for yourself. I presume you know how to cook? Just, leave me to my thoughts." For the umpteenth time he slammed the door in her face.

Alice made her way to the kitchen which was down the corridor from the study. She had skipped breakfast and had had luncheon with Marcus that afternoon so this was her first time stepping foot in her uncle's kitchen.

For a ridiculously unorganised house, Wilfred Oswald's kitchen was spotless. There was not a plate or spoon that was out of place, nor a single crumb on the work tops. Brass pots and pans gleamed hanging from the wall and the last rays of sun streamed in giving the kitchen a lovely home feel that Alice didn't realise she was missing.

The only problem with the wonderful kitchen was that it was empty. Alice opened all the presses and drawers and the only food she could find was some pasta, a handful of over ripened tomatoes, some cheese, a bit of butter, two eggs and half a pint of milk. She decided she would have to improvise with dinner and visit the farmer's market tomorrow. She knew where it was as it was one of the first things Marcus had shown her.

She found a bowl and broke the two eggs into it. To her relief they hadn't gone bad and with that optimistic thought in mind she found a whisk and began mixing. She poured in some milk and grated the cheese into the mixture. She got down a frying pan and greased it with the small amount of butter she had. She lit the fire in the hearth and added another log every few minutes until it was soon a blazing heat.

She chopped the squidgy tomatoes as best she could and added them to the eggs. Once the mix was ready she brought it over to the hearth and heated the frying pan over it. Once it was hot enough she slowly poured the egg mix onto the pan making it sizzle. She grabbed a wooden spoon and mixed so the food wouldn't burn. The aroma caused her stomach to grumble hungrily. The food was ready in a matter of minutes. She split the eggs in half between two plates; one for herself and one for Wilfred. She poured the remainder of the milk into two glasses sharing it equally. She placed her own plate on the table with a fork and carried her uncle's to his study.

She knocked quickly, trying her best not to spill any food. After a while Wilfred appeared at the door, brandy in hand.

"What is it now?" he asked.

"I just thought you might like some dinner. There wasn't much in the kitchen so I just put together some scrambled eggs," she gestured with the plate. Wilfred looked down on it with distaste.

"Not hungry," he stated and shut the door behind him.

"Fine then," Alice muttered and went back to the kitchen. She ate her own meal (and the majority of Wilfred's too) in silence, wondering how on earth a man like him could be related to her, or her mother for that matter.

Violet Oswald was probably the sweetest and gentlest person Alice would ever meet. She wouldn't dare hurt a fly and wouldn't so much as think a cruel thought. When Alice was a little bit younger than she was now, she used to think ill of her mother for it. Although sweet and kind, she never much got that in return especially of those who she pined after. She had such splendid beauty, men couldn't resist her and she couldn't resist their charm. Alice's father was not the only one to take advantage of this fact. Violet was a hopeless romantic; falling in love as suddenly as falling down the stairs, with similar trauma. No matter what words were exchanged between Violet and her suitors, it was always the same. Violet and Alice were left alone with Violet more heartbroken than ever.

Alice rubbed her eyes. She would not think about that anymore. She knew better than her mother did. And then her mind wandered to Marcus. His smile and how he was so kind and generous, guiding her when she felt lost. No, he was not like the men Mother loved. He wasn't deceitful or sly. She would see him again, he knew where she was and they would have more adventures through this wonderful city.

She continued to think of all the things they would do together once he returned. She smiled to herself as she washed the dishes, thinking of how he floated in on a daydream and caught her by surprise.

She skipped her way up to the attic as by now night had fallen. She would go to the market tomorrow and he would be hanging around waiting for her, probably doing something foolish like juggling apples. She laughed to herself.

With these good thoughts in mind, she had the best night's sleep she'd had since her mother passed away.

*

Wilfred wasn't much of a drinker but anxiety had driven him to the point of pouring himself a brandy, or two and now he was on his third. He had just gotten up for the third time to close the door in the girl's face.

"She really doesn't get the general idea, does she?" he groaned sitting back down in his chair. Hopefully she wouldn't bother him for the rest of the night.

No, the girl wasn't what had him drinking. True, her presence in his home didn't help the matter but no, she was nothing more than a moth fluttering about the place. His real worry was Badger.

He had only once called upon Badger's services before and it was not the sort of thing he wanted to do often. Badger was the most notorious conman in the country and his reputation meant more to him than all the gold he could get his greasy hands on.

Had Wilfred made the wrong choice in asking him to find his missing ingredient? He really hoped not. Badger and his gang of misfits were not people you wanted to get mixed up with. If they saw something that would benefit them, they would take it and you'd be a fool to try and stop them. Wilfred saw the curiosity in Badger's eyes when he showed him the book and it worried him fiercely.

Hopefully he would just think the only reason Wilfred would possibly want a phoenix feather would be to place on his shelf. Badger wasn't too interested in personal profit; he could be rich without much thought. But if he knew what Wilfred was planning to do with the feather, if he found out about the elixir that's when things could go horribly wrong.

Badger was a powerful man. He already ruled Britain's underworld. But with a potion that could keep him young forever, who knows what he would do.

*

To Alice's disappointment, she did not find Marcus at the farmer's market. Nor did she find him loitering outside the apothecary or wandering the streets. If he was in London he wasn't looking for her.

She spent the next few days in the bookshop, praying he would skip through the doors but he never did. She soon began to question her memory. Was that him who she passed in the street? No, he wasn't stocky and his hair was darker. And soon thereafter, her mind would taunt her. "There are plenty of beautiful women in London. Why would he come back to you?" She tried and tried to shake these thoughts away but they wouldn't leave. And still she wondered why he ran off so suddenly the day they met?

A week after he found her knocking on the apothecary door she began to lose hope. If he wanted to see her he would have surely found her by now. She was probably no more than a forgotten memory in his mind. She roamed the streets mindlessly, nothing taking her mind off him. She retraced their steps where she had laughed with him, her arm around his.

"It is one cruel thing to be left with nothing," she thought, "but even crueller to have been reminded what it was like to have something good and have it snatched away from me with a tip of a hat and a wink."

On one of the rare occasions when Wilfred ate with her, he silently noted how glum she was in comparison to a week ago. At least pensive, she didn't bother him half as much. However she ate little of the food she prepared for them and just stared absentmindedly at her plate for the majority of the meal before excusing herself.

"Hold on a moment," he said as she stood up from the table. She said nothing.

"Would you *please* take that ghastly look off your face," he drawled, "It does not help with your...unfeminine appearance." Alice glowered at him, her cheeks growing red.

"I mean, the similarities between you and your mother are uncanny. She would constantly be pouting and moping around, doing absolutely nothing for herself. I thought I'd left all that behind until you came along," he continued. Anger began to rise steadily in Alice but she spoke calmly.

"My mother did a lot for herself, I'll have you know. She raised me perfectly well on her own."

Wilfred looked her up and down and sniggered. "Please my niece, you look as much a wreck as she did. But come now, I'm sure not the same. She was always so...desperate for men's affection. I swear she was probably the most pathetic person I've ever met."

"Don't talk about my mother that way!" Alice shouted, hot angry tears blurring her vision. Wilfred stood up and stared down at her.

"How dare you raise your voice at me in my house," he boomed and she cowered at his intensive stare.

"I could cast you out on the street and you would be just as pathetic and desperate as she was, if you aren't already," he sneered.

"No you can't. Mr Pibbs has seen to that. You can't throw me out until I'm eighteen."

But Wilfred only smiled mischievously. "Or married my dear, and I can have that arranged. Now get out of my sight." He pushed her out of the kitchen and she ran straight to the attic.

She slammed the door and kicked the bed frame and shouted from the pain. Tears were streaming down her face freely now.

Wilfred could easily pawn her off for any old bugger who asked her hand. She thought nothing could be as bad as living here but no, there could be much worse. This thought didn't reassure her.

What was she going to do? If she ran away she'd let her uncle win but was that really as bad as staying here? She had no way to make any money, she was never any good at sewing, and she would have to live on the streets. Maybe she could become a chambermaid. That wouldn't be too awful, right?

And like every night for the past week, Marcus returned to her mind. He was her only friend in the world, if he was even that. By now he would've almost certainly forgotten her. As Wilfred most bluntly stated, she wasn't the most feminine or stylish of women. She was plain and loud. She wasn't anything special.

"Well then," she thought to herself, wiping her face with the sleeve of her dress, "if I'm not beautiful or gorgeous than I shall have to be wise and insightful. Uncle Wilfred will not get the better hand over me. No more crying, no more sadness. I will try to look my best and I will stay in this house not a moment longer than necessary. He will not get under my skin so easily next time."

With that thought she went down to the third floor where the bathroom was. She filled the tub that lay against the wall on four feet half full with tepid water. She stepped out of her clothes and grabbed the soap by the sink and the scrubber bush. Gingerly, she stepped into the bath.

She began to scrub at her skin furiously, removing all dirt, grime and dead skin. She washed her hair thoroughly with the bar of soap, rinsing it and then again with the soap. She removed the dirt from under her nails, behind her ears and between her toes. Once she was finished, she allowed herself to soak in the now cool water before grabbing a rough towel and drying herself off.

Clean and refreshed, she went to sleep ready for the new day and the new Alice.

*

Wilfred had been having nightmares.

Every night he would be unable to sleep, tossing and turning for hours on end and finally when he managed to doze off, his dreams would be plagued with Badger's cruel smile and images of his sister's rotting corpse.

That night's nightmare had been different.

He was wandering through a dimly lit street, lost and carrying a package. He began running, fear coursing through his veins. He swiftly turned a corner and ran into a wall of thugs. Huge men towered over him and tried to grab the package out of his hand. He took a step back and opened the package, revealing a glass flask. The flask contained a deep purple liquid. Wilfred opened the flask quickly and chugged back its contents in seconds. He smiled at the thugs before he started coughing, choking, stumbling. The potion was supposed to make him strong but he was dying in this alley way. The thugs grinned.

"Weak old fool." The words seemed to come from nowhere but kept on being repeated.

Wilfred began to plead, grovelling at the feet of the goons but they wouldn't listen. One of the men took out a similar potion from the inside pocket of his suit, took a quick sip and grinned. All at once, the thugs turned into replicas of Badger.

"Looking for this, mate?" they said in tandem.

"Please..." Wilfred gasped, no air left in his lungs.

"Shows over Oswald," they said before walking away, leaving Wilfred grasping at thin air.

*

"Hello? Anybody home?" Badger snapped looking at his young assistant. The boy snapped his attention back to his boss, looking apologetic.

"I swear to God, what's the matter with you? Come on, focus."

Badger led them off onto a narrow side street. The air was cold here, the shadows of the buildings kept streets like these hidden unless you knew what you were looking for. They made their way into a small tavern. Badger nodded at the barman who pointed at a door leading to a back room. They entered, the young assistant making sure no one followed them in, locked the door behind them.

The back room was once a large storage room, used for storing barrels and bottles. Now, it had become a meeting place for those who don't want people listening in on their operations. It was dimly lit, with only a small oil lamp on a table. They sat down and the bartender brought in two pints of lager.

"What's the deal boss, why'd you drag me down here?" the assistant asked tiredly. Badger never told anyone anything until they were most definitely alone.

"What? I can't just bring you here for a pint? Drink," he said gesturing with his drink. The assistant took a sip but didn't look amused.

"What's the real reason?"

"Ahh, you're no fun. I'm worried about you, mate. 'Can't have any of my boys down in the dumps. Now what's got your knickers in a twist?" Badger chugged his pint so that only half was left.

"It's nothing, just tired 'is all."

But Badger stopped smiling. "Good. Now stop being tired because I've a job for you and I need you to bloody well focus. That Oswald's up to something and I don't like when old dogs like him start coming up with new tricks. I need you to get in there somehow. Find out what he's up to and let me know if it's of any interest to me," Badger's eyes gleamed.

"And for Christ's sake, chug that down in the next 30 seconds or I'll force it down you another way."

With that the young assistant clanked glasses with his boss and they both finished their drinks with a satisfied 'Ahh'.

*

Almost overnight, Alice Oswald became a different person. She no longer wore her hair down and unruly, instead it was brushed a pinned up into an elegant bun. She wore her best dress and pulled the sash tight to accentuate her waist. She bathed every night, never having to scrub as hard as she did previously as she no longer let herself get as dirty as before.

She went to Oxford Street and Knightsbridge and studied how women walked, talked and acted in public. She began to walk straighter, improve her posture and speak more articulately. She was quickly becoming a proper lady.

The thing that bothered her the most (and the hardest thing to acquire) was clothing. The clothes that she had were drab and unflattering especially compared to the glamorous and extravagant dresses that some of the women were wearing. Even common girls around her age had a better sense of dress than she did.

She began a search for a middleclass seamstress. She would have to ask Uncle Wilfred for money (which was not something she was in favour of doing) but he may relent if she put his pride on the line.

"Why should I, a respectable man earning a respectable wage by means of a respectable profession, be forced to pay for you, an ungrateful nuisance, to go out squandering said wage on flimsy dresses to no doubt try and impress some no good ruffian?" Wilfred asked, smoking a pipe in his study.

"Because uncle, seeing as you force me out of the house everyday it has become apparent to the general population of London that we are related and I for one don't think you'd be too impressed if the general population of London associated you with that unstylish mess of a girl," she said gesturing towards what she was wearing. She had learned that the only

way to get her uncle to do *anything* in her favour was to either praise him, insult herself or an even mix of the two.

Wilfred weighed the options in his head. If the girl wore more flattering attire she had higher chances of appealing to a suitor and therefore would be out of his house faster. "Alright, I will give you enough money for three moderately priced dresses and that's it. If you rip, or stain or God only knows, lose one of them I will not be replacing them! And you can pay me back by tidying this house. I want it spotless in return!"

Alice only smiled as Wilfred handed a small pouch of gold coins. She skipped out of the apothecary and down the twisting streets. She had found a fine seamstress only yesterday which had simple but sophisticated dresses on mannequins in the window.

The women smiled, recognising her from the day before and began taking her measurements. Within the hour Alice had ordered her three dresses; one in a light blue, a pale pink and a mint green. She paid the woman and was on her way, skipping down the streets and heading to her little hideaway.

*

"Good day to you Mr Oswald," said Mr Pibbs as he stepped into the apothecary, the sound of the bell tinkling behind him. This time he wore an atrocious burgundy suit that made him look like a bloated berry.

Wilfred was at his counter, weighing various ingredients and only registered Mr Pibbs' appearance with a slight nod in his general direction.

"I trust Miss Alice is quite well?" Pibbs inquired, placing his brief case (which was also an awful purple colour) on the counter beside Wilfred. Wilfred looked up, wearing his annoyance at the solicitor's presence all over his face.

"She's not here if that's what you're asking," Wilfred stated, returning his attention to measuring accurately.

"Well where is she then?"

"For God's sakes Pibbs, how should I know? The girl wanders the streets by day and stays in her room by night!"

"Well then I trust the two of you are getting along splendidly," Pibbs squawked.

"Actually," Wilfred began. He loved to show people how they were wrong. It was up there on his list of favourite things. "You missed her by about an hour. I just gave her money to go and get some lovely new frocks for herself as I wouldn't want my dearest niece to go around London looking like a shrew," Wilfred continued using his most sickly sweet voice.

"T-that's wonderful to hear," said Pibbs, taken back. "I'm glad you two have warmed to each other. Now I do apologise for the quick visit but I must be off. Good day." Pibbs tipped his hat and Wilfred gave a small courtesy from his stool. As Pibbs left the shop Wilfred simply rolled his eyes.

"What an old coot."

*

It was almost a month since he had met Alice and he missed her more than he cared to admit. He didn't know what was wrong with him. Always the flirt and ever the charmer, that was his tag line. And now, well he wasn't too sure.

Work was driving him round the bend. Things had been chaotic, much more so than usual. But now, he finally had a chance to go find her. Although, that did mean visiting old man Oswald, a task he did not enjoy. Nonetheless, he had to see her.

He walked with a skip in his step to the apothecary. He chuckled at the memory of her banging at the shop's door. He was almost there when the door opened and a woman in a sky blue dress came out. Her chestnut hair was up off her face showing off her pale neck and heart-shaped face. His eyes lit up when he saw her and he dashed towards her.

He tapped her on the shoulder with the umbrella he had been carrying and while her head was turned, he ran around in front of her. Once she saw who it was her eyes opened wide and she crashed him into a hug. He picked her up and swung her around, grinning ear to ear.

Setting her down, he bowed. "My lady," he greeted.

"Marcus, where have you been hiding?" Alice beamed.

"I do apologise most sincerely, my dear but my work has been a little erratic lately.

However, I'm yours for the day if you have nothing better to do with your time. And if a simple invitation is not enough, I was careless not to mention how dazzling you look in blue."

"You do not have to buy me with flattery Mr de Carabas. Lead the way," she said and he took her hand and the flitted down the street.

The sky was heavy with clouds and threatened to burst. They ran down the cobbles and out onto open streets, jumping on a horse and cart which Marcus paid a shilling for and it led them to the Thames.

As they strolled down the banks Alice filled Marcus in on the entire goings in the house of Oswald.

"Alice you have to get out of there. The man is a raving lunatic. The only thing he cares about is himself and his potions."

"I can't, I'm under age. I just pray he won't do something truly horrible like sell me off to the first man he sees," Alice said. She didn't like thinking about what Wilfred could do to get rid of her.

"I'll pay a halfpenny for you," Marcus teased, sticking his tongue out at her and earning himself a playful shove.

"But in all seriousness m'dear, if you really need to get away from the Oddball you could always stay with me, I mean you don't have to but if you wanted to. It's only a little while from here and you can still see you uncle, well if you wanted to and-" Marcus began to babble and his ears were turning red. He scratched the back of his neck but Alice just laughed.

"Are you getting a bit flustered there, de Carabas?" she teased.

"Me? No, no it's just the sun. It's hot." He loosed his tie and collar but his ears remained red. Just then the rain came down heavily and he opened the umbrella hurriedly to shield them.

"Just mu luck, my hair will be ruined," Alice groaned.

Marcus simply shook his head and returned a stray piece of her hair behind her ear. She looked so shocked by the gesture, as if it were somewhat sacrilegious. He was about to apologise when she pulled his face towards him and quickly kissed him.

It only lasted a moment but they were both shocked at her actions, leaving them breathless.

"Hmm, umm, yeah," Marcus started.

"I'm sorry, I don't kno-" she began.

"Do you mind the rain?" he interrupted.

She looked confused. "No why?"

"Oh good, because of this."

With that he threw the umbrella on the ground, cupped her face and kissed her. It was less rushed this time, and she kissed him back. They broke apart and laughed at how sodden they both were. Bloody English weather.

*

Badger entered Wilfred's study without knocking. He was that sort of guy. Wilfred looked up and tried his best not to show fear. He wasn't doing a very good job. His reoccurring

nightmares had left him on edge of news from Badger. He had not been looking forward to this encounter.

Badger wasn't a particularly scary person. He had a temper like most of us do and he was quite unpredictable. Unpredictable men are not ones to be trusted with power and Badger was the dictator of criminals.

"We got it," he smiled his cunning smile.

"M-marvellous," Wilfred stuttered. "Where are the feathers?"

"Just one, Oswald. That's all that's available." Badger sat down and removed a shilling from his pocket and began to move it between his fingers.

"Improves dexterity," he explained and Wilfred nodded.

"S-so, how much do I owe yo-"

"We'll get to that in just a second," Badger interrupted, "but right now, what I really *really* want to know is why you want these feathers? I don't think you're the type to collect ingredients just to look at them, so what's the big plan?"

"You must be mistaken. It is just a dream I've always had. As a boy I was fascinated with birds and when I came across one as rare as a phoenix I simply needed to be in possession of one of its magnificent feathers," Wilfred lied but Badger didn't seem to buy it.

"Forgive me for not believing your magical childhood tale but I know you well enough that you don't want nothing to do with your past."

Wilfred was speechless. He had never spoken to Badger about his childhood. How could he possibly know that he wanted nothing to do with the life he left behind?

As if reading his mind, Badger continued. "You must know by now I have sources, Oswald. I dug up some dirt on you and I know you're type. So with that in mind, let me make this abundantly clear. You won't get your *oh so precious feathers* until I know what you're up to," Badger picked himself up to leave. When he stood at the door, he turned back and smiled his sly smile.

"Unless," he said, a wicked glint in his eyes, "I come up with a better form of compensation." Badger left the apothecary, leaving Wilfred in a cold sweat.

*

Marcus led Alice back to the apothecary just as dusk was settling. She thanked him for the wonderful day and they departed with a kiss. She entered the apothecary and Marcus was left alone. Or so he thought.

He sighed happily before a hands grabbed him from behind; one covering his mouth, the other pulling him into the shadows and down an alleyway.

He struggled for all it was worth but it was useless. He let himself be dragged through the lonely streets until he was pushed against the dead end of an alleyway.

"Thank you for that Roland."

Badger emerged from the shadows grinning like a mad man.

"De Carabas what a surprise! How lovely of you to join us. We were just having a pleasant discussion about how big a bloody twat you are. Care to have your say on the matter?"

Marcus glowered at Badger. "What is it now boss?"

"Oh you can be such a moody little brat when you want to be. Why don't I get the same lovey-dovey treatment you show your little lady friend? C'mon, gimme a kiss and let's make up," Badger mocked, pursing his lips and fluttering his eyelashes and Marcus pushed him away.

"Well then in that case, what in hell do you think you're doing?!" Badger roared, his eyes blazing. "When I tell you I need a job done you sure as hell better do it! I did not tell you to go and get cosy with the first lass you see. You're a good-for-nothing lazy little street rat and that's all you'll ever be if you don't do what I say. I took you under my wing, like

the decent man I am, made you my personal assistant and this is how you repay me? Playing happy couples with some floozy?”

“She’s not a floozy!” Marcus spoke up, “She’s Oswald’s niece. And I am doing the job because now I’ve got my foot in the door.”

“I’ll have my foot up your arse if you don’t get your act together. I want information by sun down tomorrow evening and if you don’t have any I swear I will leave you on these streets beaten up and broke.”

Marcus simply nodded, not daring to look at Badger. Badger grabbed him by the collar.

“Yes boss,” Badger said through his teeth, bringing his face right up to Marcus’.

“Yes boss,” Marcus replied meekly. Badger let him go, turned on his heels and walked back down the alleyway with Roland in tow.

Once they were gone Marcus held his head in his hands and let out an angry cry. He kicked the wall and cursed Badger under his breath. He must have had someone following him the entire day. He would have to see Alice again and somehow get into the apothecary but how could he look around for information with old man Oswald there? He would have to make things up as he went along. At least he was good at improvising.

*

“You’re late.”

Wilfred looked up from work bench at Alice. He had been readying the rest of the ingredients he needed for elixir after Badger left. Badger would have to give him the feathers soon and when he did Wilfred would be ready. He might be only days away from getting what he always wanted: eternal youth.

He had been searching for ways to make this elixir since he first began studying alchemy. He studied the writings of known alchemists all across the globe but none led him any closer to finding the proper components of the elixir.

One of the most irritating pieces he had read while researching was an account on Nicolas Flamel. Flamel was a 13th century alchemist and claimed to have discovered the elixir of life. He shared the elixir with his wife and the two claimed they were immortal. However, when Flamel’s wife died he wrote that the elixir had not given her body immortality but her soul. It was all load of rubbish in Wilfred’s opinion.

Alice looked a mess. Her hair was down and raggedy, the ends wet and her new blue dress was muddy at the bottom. Besides all this she was smiling dreamily like kitten full of milk.

“Sorry uncle,” she merely replied, “I just lost track of time.”

“My niece will not be roaming the streets of London at night. My reputation is already tainted enough because of you.”

But the insults simply bounced off her. “Will I start preparing dinner?”

“I have a stew brewing on the hearth,” he replied no longer paying much attention to her. He had begun scribbling his notebook and took no notice in Alice coming around to where he was sitting and peering over his shoulder.

“What is this, uncle?” she asked, startling him.

“Good grief child, don’t sneak up behind me like that! It’s nothing,” he snapped, tidying the pages and shoving them into the top drawer of his desk.

“Uncle Wilfred, have you ever considered teaching me a bit about your potions and whatnot? I’m sure I could lend a hand measuring the ingredients in the shop.”

“Nonsense. This is a reputable business and a woman such as yourself could never master the fine art of alchemy.”

“Oh come now, it’s only weighing some ingredients! I do that all the time in the kitchen. There can’t be that much of a difference,” she replied, crossing her arms.

“It’s not *just weighing*! You have to be incredibly precise with the calculation of ingredients. Too much of this could give you boils all over instead of curing your cold, too

little of that and you could lose all your hair instead of getting rid of a headache. And who would end up in a noose if that happened? I would but not until I had strangled you for ruining me.”

“Then teach me! Teach me your wise and wonderful ways,” she pleaded.

“No, now leave me to my studies,” he said, taking out a book and ignoring her. She huffed and left, heading for the kitchen. She gave the pot of simmering stew and a stir before sitting down by the hearth. She wasn’t too disheartened by her uncle’s rejection. She knew he would eventually teach her something ‘to make her more useful’. She would just have to continue flattering him a little longer and he wouldn’t have much choice.

She took out two bowls from the press and began serving up the stew. She brought one of the bowls and a spoon into Wilfred’s study (he continued to ignore her) and left it beside him on his desk.

She ate her own stew in silence (she was much more content with this arrangement than sitting with Wilfred in silence). Once finished she washed the dishes and collected the dirty bowl and spoon from Wilfred (still ignoring her). She then climbed the five flights of stairs to her small attic bedroom. She examined the ends of her dress which would have to be washed in the morning.

Chuckling at the day’s events she went to bed smiling. Hopefully tomorrow would be just as good as today.

*

Wilfred dreaded the idea of Badger coming to visit him again so seeing as he did not have to be in the apothecary on Saturdays and Sundays since it was closed, he left as soon as he had had breakfast.

Alice however, was not aware her uncle was hiding from his associate and woke up pleasantly to find the house was empty. She squealed with delight. This was an opportunity she couldn’t refuse.

She decided to explore the rooms upstairs as she had only ever stepped foot in her own room and the bathroom. What she found in every single room was books. Each room had its own shelves which were filled to the brim with hardback books, clothbound books, manuscripts, you name it. Alice was engrossed. Wilfred was a massive book collector and she was completely unaware of it.

She was delving into a complete works of William Shakespeare when she heard the bell for the apothecary counter ding loudly and she nearly had a heart attack. She returned the volume to its shelf, cast a quick look around to make sure there were no signs of her being there and ran down the stairs to the shop. She had thrown on one of her old dresses as she figured she would be in for the day due to her uncle’s absence and her hair was down and uncombed.

Roaming around the shop, Alice found Marcus. He beamed as he saw her come in, tying an apron around her waist. She held her hands on her hips.

“What are you doing here?” she asked quizzically. She knew Marcus well enough to know he wasn’t particularly fond of encountering her uncle.

“Well I looked for you in all your usual hiding spots and I couldn’t find you so I decided Oswald must have locked you up in a tower and had a wicked dragon guarding you so I, being the noble and handsome knight in pinstripes decided to come and rescue you,” he bowed humbly.

“Thank you but there’s no need for any rescuing today. My uncle left the house earlier this morning and I don’t think he’ll be coming back for a while. I was exploring the upstairs rooms when you almost gave me a heart attack by ringing that bell,” she gestured towards the counter.

Marcus grinned. "Exploring, eh? Well I guess I could trade in my shiny armour and become an adventurer. Who knows what you'll find in this place."

"Books mostly," Alice replied leading him behind the counter to the house part of the building. She was about to go upstairs when Marcus caught her arm and brought her back. "What's in there?" he asked pointing to the room beside the staircase.

"Oh that's just Uncle Wilfred's study. It's mostly just potions ingredients and journal entries. I've been in there tons of time to know that it's not that interesting."

But Marcus didn't listen to her and instead he went into the study, Alice reluctantly trailing along behind him.

"Marcus there's nothing good in here," she said attempting to pull him back to the stairs but he was stronger than her. He turned and grabbed her hands.

"Come on Alice, I bet there are some weird ingredients in here like the hopes and dreams of children kept in jars. Oh, or maybe a list of all the things in the world he hates. No, actually that wouldn't be here as it would go on forever." Alice laughed.

"Okay. Five minutes and then we're going upstairs," she said and he kissed her nose. Alice began peering at all the odd ingredients, looking more closely at the labels than she did the first time she stepped into the study. Meanwhile, Marcus was going through the drawers of Wilfred's desk.

He found multiple notebooks, all of them filled with scribbles and doodles of alchemy symbols. He wouldn't be able to read them without arising suspicion from Alice so while she wasn't looking he slipped the notebook that was at the top of the drawer into his suit-jacket pocket.

He joined her at the shelves of ingredient, tapping them with a cartridge pen he found on the desk so they made different types of sounds.

"Okay maybe you were right, there wasn't much here," he smiled. "Upstairs?"

They spent the morning looking through the other rooms upstairs, Alice taking great enjoyment in all of the new books she found (Marcus mainly helped her with getting down books from the highest shelves). He was itching to look through the notebook so when bell sounded for noon he told her he must be going as he had work to do.

He gave her a quick peck on the cheek saying he may be back later on in the day –if the notebook wasn't up to scratch – but he more than likely would see her during the week. He let himself out and almost sprinted down the streets to the tavern he and Badger had gone to only a few nights previously. He nodded at the bartender and went to the backroom. The room was brighter in the daytime but nonetheless, he lit the gas lamp and began sifting through the notebook's contents.

He spent hours in that room, trying his best to decipher codes and symbols until finally he came across something of interest. The notebook had been crosshatched and so making sense of any of it was a task in itself but there was one page that wasn't written over. It was a list of ingredients and at the end was a question mark. Emblazoned around the list were various different kinds of alchemical symbols. He decided it had to mean something (mainly because the rest of the notebook may as well have been written in in hieroglyphics). He closed the notebook and put it back in his pocket. He left the tavern and headed for the bookshop Alice loved so much. He only hoped Wilfred hadn't returned and she would be there.

Thankfully it was virtually empty. It was open until six on a Saturday meaning he only had a little over an hour to find what he was looking for. He wasn't much of a reader and didn't know a lot about bookshops so he went up to the man at the desk and inquired about a book that translated alchemical symbols. He was led to a row of books on alchemy and the bookkeeper handed him one that fitted his needs.

“Thank you,” he said, gratefully taking the book from the man. He sat himself at one of the desks and opened the book. He took out the notebook, making sure the bookkeeper didn’t see him with it. “I can’t be too careful,” he thought to himself as he flicked to the page with the list and symbols.

There were blank pieces of parchment and fountain pens on each of the desk and Marcus began deciphering them, writing out the meaning of each symbol on a piece of parchment. He worked tirelessly, his hand cramping but continued on. By the time he finally finished it was almost six o’clock. He smiled at his work.

Badger would be a happy man tonight.

*

Wilfred returned late that night. He had successfully avoided Badger throughout the day, travelling around the city and never staying too long in any one location.

He found Alice drinking tea in the kitchen and nodded at her upon entering, pouring himself a cup. They sat in silence for a moment before he cleared his throat and spoke up.

“I trust you had a pleasant day?” he inquired.

Alice looked shocked but replied quickly. “Yes, I was in town again.”

“I hope you were in before dusk tonight.” That sounded more like her uncle.

“Yes I was. I made vegetable soup if you’d like some?”

“No, I’m quite alright thank you.” That didn’t sound like him.

“Are you alright Uncle Wilfred? You look a bit peaky.”

“Yes, yes I’m fine. Alice I’ve been thinking, tomorrow evening I will begin teaching you basic alchemy.” It wasn’t an offer but a statement.

Alice was utterly shocked and she didn’t hide it. She thought she’d be pestering him for weeks if not months to teach her but he relented in a matter of hours.

“Um, yes of course. Wonderful,” she managed but she was flabbergasted.

“Well I’m retiring for the night. Goodnight Alice,” he said leaving the kitchen.

“Goodnight Uncle Wilfred,” she said quietly, almost to herself. She let out a breath she didn’t realise she had been holding.

What had come over her uncle? Ever since she came to live with him he had never shown her even a shred of decency and now he was planning on being her teacher. He had to have some ulterior motive.

And she was somewhat right.

Wilfred went to his study and began documenting his plans for Alice. Maybe he wouldn’t have to get rid of her altogether. If he taught her the ways of the alchemist he could put her to good use. If she was bright and caught on quickly he would put her in charge of the apothecary for soon he would be famous and travelling the globe. Of course he wouldn’t share his secret but he would be sure to flaunt his power over humanity. If however, Alice was as dim as she came across then he would just have to marry her off to the first fellow he found for her.

It would take time trying to teach her all there was to know. Wilfred had an incredibly talented potion’s master take him in as his apprentice when he first moved to London. He spent his free time in bookshops learning as much as he could outside of his master’s apothecary. His employer would often scam people for what they’d purchase, watering down various substances, mixing flour into different medical powders, and was the reason for many maladies back when Wilfred was working for him. He passed suddenly and left the majority of his wealth to Wilfred as he had no family and never married. Wilfred was perfectly fine with this arrangement. He sold the small apothecary and bought a new one in the heart of London and as many books as he could purchase. He gained the rest of his wealth through trade and knew if he retired now he could live comfortably until the end of his days.

Despite all that he did not want to shut down the business he had spent his life building. He had never imagined himself settling down –he wasn’t much of a family person – and yet, he always hoped some young and talented apprentice would come along and would be able to carry on the business. He never imagined it to be a woman and had definitely wouldn’t have considered Alice until this point. She did at least show an interest in the subject.

*

“You little minx,” Badger grinned as he read through the pages of Marcus’ almost illegible handwriting.

“Is it alright?” Marcus asked worriedly. He always found it hard to read Badger’s expressions. He could seem happy one minute but that may just be because he was about to rearrange your insides with a dagger.

“You did well, de Carabas. You always do pull through,” he smiled ruffling Marcus’ hair. Marcus flattened it back down straight away.

“So what do you need me to do now?”

“Now look who’s all eager to get down to business?” Badger teased. “No, we won’t need you for another day or two.”

“So what will I do in the meantime?”

“Don’t worry your pretty little head. Go lay about with your lady some more.”

Marcus got up to leave the tavern, picking up his hat and putting it back on his head. Just as he was leaving he heard Badger speak once more.

“We may use for her yet.”

*

Alice spent her Sunday out with Marcus as it was a beautiful day and she didn’t feel like being cooped up snooping around her uncle’s home.

Summer seemed to come early and in a hurry this year. They took a long train ride in the morning to Brighton. The train was hot and stuffy and full of people who had the same idea they did.

They arrived in the middle of the day and headed straight for the beach. Alice had never been to the beach (or taken a day trip anywhere in her life) and Marcus all but spoiled her. He bought them both ice cream cones from a stall and held both of their shoes as they paddled in the cold Irish Sea. Her eyes lit up with the creamy taste and she ate it in a matter of minutes, her mouth covered in its remnants.

He chuckled at her childlike ways. She hoisted her dress above her knees and splashed about in the salty water. He had rolled up his suit trousers but still managed to get them soaked with her antics. He splashed her back in return and it soon amounted in a full scale war.

Once they were both soaked to the skin they began building sandcastles with their hands, competing to see who could make the bigger one.

“I think I win,” Marcus said triumphantly. His castle was up to his knee while Alice’s barely reached her shin. She looked nonchalantly off into the distance before kicking his castle so it was nothing more than a pile of sand.

“Whoops. I guess I win,” she said sticking her tongue out at him. Marcus faked looking annoyed before kicking her sandcastle in revenge.

“Now no one wins,” he stuck his tongue back out at her.

They had to leave shortly after building their castles in order for Alice to be home in time for her first alchemy lesson. They got the train back to the city and Marcus walked Alice home. He kissed her and departed and she stepped into the apothecary to find a sight she had not expected.

She raced over to her uncle who was sprawled out on the floor, blood trickling from a wound on his head. She checked his pulse –alive but unconscious. She half thought about calling Marcus back for help but he was probably well on his way home by now and she didn't think it wise to leave her uncle in this state. She couldn't carry him all the way into his study so she dragged his limp form and managed to heave him onto his chair and sat him in an upright position. She hadn't had much medical experience but she decided the first course of action would be to try and revive him. She ran out to the shop and began opening different jars and tubs, trying to find the most poignant substance she could find. She opened one and held her nose immediately before carrying it into her uncle. She held it under his nose for a few moments. He coughed and his eyes fluttered open. He was quite dazed and looked at Alice with a confused expression.

"What-?"

"Hush," she said. She went over to where he kept his brandy and poured a glass for him. "Drink this. I'll be back in a moment and explain then."

She went to the kitchen and wetted a towel. When she returned she noted how pale her uncle was. She went over to her and dabbed the wet towel against his forehead. There was a large lump above the cut and he winced at the little pressure she placed on it. She went back out to the shop and returned with a bottle of iodine. "This is going to hurt a bit," she said as she poured a small amount of the brown liquid on the towel she had been using. He swore loudly when she dabbed it on his cut but didn't scorn her. "I came home and found you lying unconscious on the floor," she said as she disinfected his wound. He didn't look at her, keeping his gaze to the floor. She sighed.

"Do you remember anything that happened before you passed out?"

"It's all a bit...blurry," he mumbled. That was a lie, he had a pretty clear recollection of how he got himself into this state but he did not need Alice to find out about what happened. He groaned in pain as the lump on his forehead began to throb. He tried to shift but when he moved pain spread from his abdomen through his body.

"Did they hurt you anywhere else?" Alice asked, worriedly. She had never seen anyone in such a bad state before. Wilfred didn't say anything; he just simply gripped his middle. He lifted his shirt and there was a large yellowish-purple bruise forming. Alice gasped when she saw it and immediately ran into the kitchen to get another tea towel. She wetted it with more water and placed it on his side to help ease down the swelling.

When she was sure he was injured no further, she went into the kitchen to fetch a cushion. She propped him up against it, wanting to make him comfortable. She made them both a cup of strong tea and brought a stool in from the kitchen so she could sit down beside him. The study was a mess. Bits of glass and spilled ink covered the floor. Wilfred's desk was covered in shredded bits of scribbled paper and the grandfather clock's face had been sliced up.

"They took everything..." he mumbled into his cup.

Alice looked at him with a saddened expression. "Don't worry Uncle Wilfred, they only took some of your equipment and some of the jars of ingredients are missing but it could've been a lot worse."

He shook his gravely. "No..." he sighed.

Alice looked at him questioningly. "There's something you're not telling me."

He looked at her dead in the eyes. He was middle-aged but his face looked as though it had taken on years since earlier that morning. His tired green eyes bore into hers. "There are some things you aren't to know."

*

He had been hiding from Badger once more, sipping bourbon at a local tavern when a large thug-like man entered the pub and sat down on the stool next to Wilfred. Being slightly on edge, Wilfred downed his drink and left the tavern, moving on to a different hiding place but the man followed him out of the pub. Wilfred had tried his best to seem calm but he began to panic immediately and walked briskly down the cobbled street only to have the man continue on after him. The man was large but quick on his feet and soon caught up to Wilfred, placing a large meaty hand on his shoulder.

“Mr Oswald, Badger would like to see you in your little apothecary.”

“But, sir, it’s Sunday. The apothecary is closed,” Wilfred said shakily.

The thug grinned with yellow-stained teeth. “We conveniently work out of office hours.”

The man escorted Wilfred roughly through back-alleys and darkly lit streets until they finally reached the apothecary. The door was unlocked and they walked in to find Badger sitting in Wilfred’s study, sifting through a notebook. Wilfred’s eyes opened wide in shock and began gaping like a fish, trying to find words to distract Badger from the book but Badger just smirked.

“Someone’s been keeping secrets from me, Oswald.”

Wilfred still didn’t know what to say. How did Badger get into the apothecary? He told Alice to lock it up when she was leaving. She would pay for this. Wilfred was shoved roughly into the seat opposite Badger. He finally managed to compose himself.

“Badger, s-surely none of this is really necessary. It’s just a book of a-alchemy theories. Nothing special,” he smiled weakly.

Badger smiled. “You see, I would believe you but you don’t play the happy potion’s master very well, Oswald.”

“Well I really don’t think you should be nosing about in other people’s business,” Wilfred stated bluntly and instantly regretted it.

Badger’s eyes grew dark. “Let me tell you a little something, Oswald. I base my business, my whole lifestyle, on trust. Need a bit of assurance that everything’s top mark. So I don’t like my clients keeping secrets from me and you just so happened to have climbed to top of the list of things I don’t like.” Wilfred shrunk lower into his seat and Badger continued.

“You think this is all fun and games. Get that conman to go looking for something people think is legend and he won’t ask any questions. How stupid do you think I am?! What sort of fool do you take me for Oswald?!” he shouted, rage glistening his features. However, he shrugged it off and gave a smile.

“But hey, I did what I had to do. Have to get my nose in to these things. Don’t put the blame on me, you made me do it. Had to get my hands all mucky to dig up the dirt on you and oh boy, Oswald, you’ve dug yourself into an extremely deep hole.” Badger’s eyes sparkled like he just got the Crown Jewels as a Christmas present.

“Let me get right to it and say you’re not the only one with thirst for immortality. My family have been looking into that little goldmine for centuries. And so, I humbly thank you for putting it right where I could grab it,” he said and showed Wilfred the page of ingredients he had spent his life trying to put together.

Wilfred put his head in his hands closed his eyes tightly. He was so close; this couldn’t be happening, not now.

“Now, if you don’t mind us. We’re going to go ahead and get our payment for our little feathers.” He nodded at the thug. “Take anything that we need and anything that looks valuable.”

Wilfred shot up in his chair and ran out of the study after them. “You can’t do this!”

Badger grinned his wicked grin. “It’s just business. Roland, make him understand.”

Wilfred turned around, his eyes terrified, just before Roland delivered the hard punch to his head, knocking him out cold. He slumped to the ground and Roland stepped over his form.

Badger handed him the list of ingredients. "Get everything here and any equipment we might need." Roland nodded and began scouring the shelves of ingredients, placing them in a large bag once he found what he needed.

Badger returned to the study and his eyes roamed around the room. Any trinkets he found he placed in his pocket. He flicked through Wilfred's notes in his drawers before shredding them to illegible pieces. He smashed ink wells and empty vials on the floor and taking a dagger out from a secret inside pocket, ripped the face of the grandfather clock to shreds. He stepped over Wilfred's body, giving him a hard kick in the abdomen as he left. "Sleep well, Oswald."

*

"And when you left I found him lying on the floor and he had a cut on his forehead and I just got such a shock. I'd never seen someone so badly hurt before." Alice told Marcus the events of what happened last night as they walked hand in hand along the banks of the Thames.

"Well I guess someone was bound to eventually give Oswald the tussle he deserved," Marcus shrugged smiling. Alice let go of his hand.

"What do you mean by that?" she asked somewhat sourly. Marcus just shrugged again.

"The man's a basket case, Alice. He probably tried to con some poor woman and then her husband gave him some compensation."

"He was unconscious, Marcus, if I didn't get to him he could've been in a much worse state!"

"Alice, the man is horrible and wicked and bonkers. You know that better than anyone! Why are you suddenly so protective of him?"

"Because he's the only family I've got left!"

"Hey, I have no family and I'm fine with it!"

"I'm not like you," she said refusing to look at him. He tried to take her hand but she took it back. He stepped out in front of her and she looked at him with disdain.

"Alice, I'm sorry. You know I didn't mean anything bad by it. You're in shock about the whole thing but don't worry. Whatever happened to your uncle has blown over and it's not going to happen again." He wrapped his arms around her and held her in a tight hug, rocking her gently.

"Come on, we'll go get something to eat. One of those cakes from the other day that you said you liked." She nodded quietly and let him lead her back into the city.

They wandered through the now familiar streets, busy with the midday hour. Children bumped into them as they ran past, playing games and being scorned by the upper class. Suddenly Marcus breathed in sharply. "Are you alright?" Alice asked worriedly moving in closer to him. He shook his head.

"I just thought I saw someone. It's nothing. Come on, the coffeehouse is this way."

They went into the darkly lit coffeehouse with its mahogany furniture and soft leather chairs. Marcus ordered a black coffee for himself and got Alice tea and the cake she had discovered the previous week.

They found a free table in a dark corner of the shop. Alice's eyes grew big with the sight of the cake. It was a cream pastry that tasted of sugar, vanilla and cinnamon. She tried her best to eat in a lady-like fashion but found she'd much rather eat it satisfyingly than elegantly. By the time she finished it her mouth was covered in sprinkled sugar and cream and he chuckled.

"Can we go to the bookseller?" she asked, sipping her sugary tea.

“Once we’ve finished our drinks we shall head straight there, madam,” he smiled, taking a big gulp of his steaming coffee, unhindered.

They drank quickly and left the coffeehouse, walking down the streets with a new found spring in their step, hand in hand once more.

“Hey, I know a short-cut,” Marcus winked, leading her through the gap between the buildings. But just as they were about to turn onto the street with the bookshop, they were stopped in their tracks.

Two large men towered over them and blocked their path. Alice stood behind Marcus.

Marcus looked at the two men with dead eyes.

“Let us through,” he said, he voice toneless.

“Sorry kiddies, no can do,” one of the two grinned. Two more guys came up the alleyway from behind them and Marcus grabbed Alice protectively.

“Ms Oswald you’ll be coming with us,” the other stated. The men from behind grabbed Alice and yanked her away from Marcus. She tried to scream but one of the thug’s large hands was clamped around her mouth.

“Alice, no!” Marcus tried to chase after her but the two thugs held him back. She was carried away on the shoulder of one of the thugs, kicking and whacking his back, her eyes screaming but Marcus couldn’t do anything.

When she was out of sight, the thugs let go over Marcus and gave him a thump on the back.

“Very convincing performance, de Carabas.”

He smiled and followed them out into the brightly lit street. “Thanks.”

*

It was nine o’clock and Alice had not returned home. Wilfred had prepared a meal of roast beef, boiled potatoes, carrots and gravy and hers had grown cold hours ago.

He considered going out looking for her but that seemed far too daft. The girl would probably be getting up to all sorts of nonsense. And yet, after last night he assumed she would be returning home earlier from now on. Maybe she looked more compassionate than she actually was.

He had a bandage around the wound on his forehead to stop it from becoming infected and the throbbing had subsided to no more than a dull ache. However this whole ordeal did nothing for his paranoia. Badger was ruthless and reckless. He did not want to have to encounter him again.

He sipped a brandy in his study, still trying to make sense of his shredded research. It was useless. Badger had made it so. He discovered this morning that Badger had also taken the majority of his equipment and all of his most precious ingredients. There had been no point in opening the apothecary for business as he didn’t even have a scale to weigh ingredients anymore.

He picked up a book and read it by the fire in his study, glancing at the door every now and then. It did not help take his mind off Alice but it did mean that when she eventually appeared it would not look as though he noticed her absence.

“Where is she?” he mumbled to himself, pouring his fourth glass. The alcohol made him sleepy and he slumped in his chair, his eyes straining to stay open. He quickly dozed off, tossing and turning in his chair.

He did not hear the assistant come in.

“Alice?” he garbled, waking up abruptly. It felt like only minutes since he had fallen asleep but the fire had been reduced to nothing more than glowing ash. He looked around the room and jumped in his chair upon seeing a man in a brown pinstripe suit and bowler hat in his study.

"She won't be home tonight, Mr Oswald," the man said. Wilfred couldn't see his face, the shadow of the bowler hat made it almost impossible to see his eyes.

"Why not?" Wilfred asked irritably. He was more frightened that this stranger got into his house than angry. He could've sworn he locked the door before retiring for the night...

"We need you to do something for us. Well, not we so much as Badger needs you to do something."

Wilfred's face paled at the mere mention of his name. "No-" he began to say but was cut off immediately.

"You will make us the elixir," the man said, "and I'm not trying to sound melodramatic but I know Badger and seeing as he told me to tell you that if you don't comply you won't see her again, I'd take his word for it."

Wilfred tried to muster up some courage but failed miserably. "What if that suits me fine as I may not want to see her again?" he said in a gasped voice, almost to himself.

He could see the young man in the bowler hat smirk. "Badger can always find other methods of persuasion. If you choose to comply, take the apothecary open sign off the door. We'll know as soon as you do."

The man left without another word, disappearing as silently as he had entered.

*

I was carried over the man's shoulder, trying my hardest to release myself from his grip but it was to no avail. He carried me through dark and unfamiliar street, where dark characters lurked in doorways and on curbs.

I was tossed carelessly into the back of carriage and as soon as I was inside it began moving, jostling my body around the interior. I managed to hoist myself up onto a seat and found a man was sitting in the carriage with me. I recognised his face from somewhere but I couldn't put my finger on it. He looked at her and smiled.

"Alice, isn't it?"

He tried to reach for my hand but I moved myself as far from him as possible. There was something disconcerting about the gleam in his eyes.

"Don't be bitter, sweetheart. Your uncle is being a bit...uncooperative lately and you will do us the honour of being our leeway," he grinned.

"You're the one who attacked my uncle, aren't you?" I stated and the man just shrugged, still smiling.

"Accidents happen, I can't be blamed."

"Whatever you're thinking of doing with me you won't get away with. Marcus will find me soon enough."

"De Carabas? He's a good kid, knows how to get a job done but I doubt he'll be playing your knight in shining armour for this fairy-tale, princess."

"What do you mean? How do you-" I ask quietly. No, it couldn't be...

"He works for me, kid. He's my wonderful assistant but he also dabbles in lying or 'theatrical arts' as he calls it. I don't care, as long as he does what I say."

I fell silent, letting his words sink in. All those days together, all the time I spent thinking of him when he wasn't there. I touched my lips and felt his there. I could feel my face heating up and my eyes began to prick but I would not cry. Not in front of this wicked man. Not for that scoundrel. I would hold my head up high. I still had some dignity left in me. I can keep it together. I refused to speak or listen to anything the man said for the remainder of the journey.

"We're here, sweetheart."

He opened the carriage door and I was led into a rundown mansion. We had to be near the city as we hadn't been travelling for too long but all I could see were fields.

“Roland will lead you to your quarters. Dinner’s at six. Wear something pretty,” the man cackled as he walked away.

“Wait!” I say before he gets the chance to walk away. “Who are you?” He bows low, a move I recognise.

“Badger at your service, malady.”

*

Badger lived in a rundown mansion living like a king. It was an old red brick house, abandoned by a wealthy family who more than likely now own a similar house with a factory nearby. Many upper class families moved closer to rivers so they could build steam powered factories. The house had soon been taken over by squatters. Badger found it soon after. Nothing was ever outside of his circle of knowledge.

The house served two functions. The first being it was where Badger resided; the second was that it was the castle where the underworld was ruled. It was constantly filled with crooks and conmen, slappers and ruffians. It was a place to do business, trade items (and sometimes people) and a place to settle disputes. Badger was king of a castle full of dirty rascals.

The house was where Marcus had first been taken to when Badger took him in. He lived there for years, growing up in its halls and learning the ways of the world he had plunged into. His accent became mixed with the people who were found in the house. They’d ruffle his hair or give him a pat on the back as he scampered around doing meaningless errands for the cook or sometimes when Badger was too lazy to get something or tell someone to walk off a cliff.

Marcus had worshipped the ground Badger walked on. He would beg like a pup to be taken on jobs but Badger always refused. He told him he needed to learn the system before he would be able to get anywhere in this kind of world. And so Marcus took it into his own hands to educate himself. He began talking to anyone and everyone who would listen to them. He’d pester them with questions: What do you do? Tell me stories when you were doing a job. What’s it like? Did it ever go badly or take an unexpected turn? What’s Badger really like? He wanted to know everything.

And strangely enough no one really minded. The girls fawned over him, kissing his cheeks to make him embarrassed. The men treated him like a younger brother, telling him to avoid the girls at all costs. They’d spoil him, give him a few shillings here and there, give him a taste of their drinks when no one was looking, they even let him smoke a cigar when he was eleven (he hated it and never touched tobacco again). They were his odd family and he liked it that way.

He had run away from his real family at the age of eight. His father was an abusive drunk and his mother was not much better. He had planned it for a while but never thought he would actually go through with it. He loved planning tricks but the only thing that bothered him was that the fun was in the planning. The night in question started as many other horrible nights did. His mother and father had had another fight about Lord knows what. They lived in a tiny one roomed flat so it wasn’t as if Marcus could easily ignore it. His mother left in an angry rage and his father drank himself to unconsciousness while Marcus pretended to be asleep. As soon as he was sure he could leave unnoticed he packed his few belongings in a pillowcase and made a run for it. He managed to hitch a ride on a farmer’s cart into the city but from there he lived on the streets, sleeping in doorways and begging for food. He knew neither of his parents would come looking for him and he was right. Two weeks after he had run away he began stealing. One day he pickpocketed money off a man but he wasn’t quick enough with his getaway and the man caught him. He was about to throttle him when Badger intervened, almost certainly saving Marcus from being strangled.

Badger took Marcus under his wing. He gave him a new last name and a new identity. When he was sixteen, Badger began taking him out on escapades as an apprentice and he got the hang of things almost immediately. He was smooth and quick, able to talk his way out of any situation and needless to say, it came in handy. Badger gave him a share of whatever profit they made and after a year and a half of working the trade, he managed to buy himself his own place. He packed his belongings and left the rundown house and moved back into the city.

Returning to the rundown house often made him feel nostalgic and he would long for the days of running around its halls. He returned usually to take a break from city life and to clear his head. Today however, he returned on request.

His childhood bedroom looked the same as it always did –messy. The curtains were half open, the bed unmade, old clothes lay strewn around the room, papers covered the desk and there were piles of chipped plates and broken cups scattered around the room.

He placed a small suitcase of belongings on the bed, removed his bowler hat and loosened his tie. You didn't want to look too respectable in this house. He rolled up his sleeves and tucked his hands in his trouser pockets, his shirt braces on show.

He shut his door and headed down the stairs to greet old friends. They commented on how much he'd grown, on why he doesn't visit more often and how he was as cheeky as ever. He'd smile and laugh and ask if they'd seen Badger to which they replied he's in his study which meant to not go looking for him. Marcus thanked them and headed for the kitchen to say hello to Cook.

Cook was a skinny little guy who wanted to prove himself to the king of the castle. Badger told him to make him a sandwich if he wanted to prove himself. He did just that and proved he was a pretty decent chef and earned the title and position of Cook. Marcus and Cook had a love hate relationship over the years. Marcus had a tendency to steal all the jam and chocolate from the kitchen and Cook would end up with getting an earful whenever Badger wanted something sweet. Since Marcus moved out and the jam and chocolate was safe from his sticky fingers, they got along much better.

Marcus went into the kitchen and said hello to Cook, sitting up on the counter top and tearing a piece of bread roll for himself. Cook nodded and didn't look up from chopping the vegetables.

"Careful you don't stain your nice suit," was all he'd say but Marcus knew he kept the kitchen spotless. He was finicky like that.

"What's Badger up to?"

Cook was the only one who ever knew if Badger was up to something when he went to his study. It wasn't really a study at all, Badger just liked to call it that. It was more his private quarters than a place to research. It did have books and a desk and other study related objects but it didn't really function as an office for Badger. It was usually where Badger took meals, drank and schemed.

"He's thinking about what to do with the girl."

Marcus simply nodded.

"Did you give Oswald the message?"

"Yes. I don't know if he'll follow through with our demands though. He doesn't give a crap about the girl."

"Unlike someone I know," Cook looked up from his chopping and winked.

"Hey don't wink at me! It was nothing, just a bit of flirting. The usual tomfoolery I'm known for."

"I don't know de Carabas. I had Roland in here a week ago pouring the whole story of this whole thing out to me over stout."

"Roland doesn't understand the concept of clouds."

“He is more brawn than brain, I’ll give you that but I can see it in your eyes de Carabas. You like this girl. And now she’s tied up upstairs. Some guys have all the luck,” Cook chuckled, putting the chopped vegetables into a pot of boiling water. Marcus got up off the counter top. “Look, if you see Badger tell him I’m looking for him.” “Oh Marcus, did I hurt your feelings? I only joke, you know that. I’ll give Badger your message but I don’t think he’s seeing anyone tonight.” Marcus nodded and left the kitchen. Cook hadn’t noticed him take the pot of jam from the shelf. He snuck past everyone and went back up to his room. He was still a kid at heart.

*

Wilfred stayed up all night thinking about the man who had visited him. How could Alice be so careless enough to get herself kidnapped? *Just like how you were careless enough to get ambushed by Badger and his men*, replied one part of his brain. His head began to ache once more. How did he get into this mess?

His lifelong goal had been taken from him. All he had ever wanted to be was the greatest alchemist of all time and the key to that was immortality. He would no longer be a great potion’s master but the one and only great potion’s master. He would all the fame and glory of a thousand kings. He would’ve found an heir to his throne and then would’ve retired to countryside, somewhere near a lake so he could watch the ducks swimming. Now he was left with nothing. Back to square one. Only this time, he had Alice in mind. What would Badger do to her if he didn’t do as he said? He shuddered to think. Badger was unpredictable at the best of times; who knows what he’d be capable of. He couldn’t help Badger out. He *wouldn’t* help Badger out. Badger was the last person who should have the secret to immortality in his hands. Wilfred knew that Badger knew little to nothing about alchemy and that’s what confused him in the first place. How did he translate and then comprehend the alchemical symbols in his notebook in such a short space of time? The notebook must have only been missing for no more than a day and Badger surely wasn’t the studious type. Wilfred prayed to the heavens that Badger hadn’t bribed or threatened another alchemist to do the translating for him. If the Alchemist’s Guild found out what Wilfred had been up to he’d almost surely be hanged for dabbling in the dark arts. Once he’d have the actual elixir of life they wouldn’t care so much -they’d be kissing his feet for answers- but attempting to make the elixir of life could be considered witchcraft and that could only lead to a public death.

He had never wanted to become an alchemist for the love of ingredients, medicine or healing people. No, he had done it for the discovery, the learning and the gaining. Alchemy was an art with so many layers still to be uncovered and Wilfred vowed to uncover them. Yet here he was, sitting alone in a darkened study, a bandaged head, shaking and sipping brandy to calm his nerves. He was nothing but an old man with a few weird substances kept in glass jars.

And yet for a while he was an uncle. He had some sort of responsibility and grown accustomed to the life that had been forced upon him. Only that night had he noticed it was the first time he had made dinner for himself in over a month. Alice had been doing nearly everything for him. From cooking to cleaning she just took it upon herself to get done. He sighed and noted he had never thanked her for it.

No matter for his wish had come true. Albeit, not in the way he had planned but she was gone and it was as though she had never been there. He was his own man once more. He would just have to hope Badger never figured out how to make the elixir and then everything would work out fine. He could find all the ingredients again, the phoenix feathers would be tough but if Badger could find them so could he. He had enough money kept hidden upstairs to go travelling again and he had enough comrades around the globe to house him.

“Why am I sat here sulking when I could be planning my next expedition?” he muttered into his glass but he could not bring himself to stand up and fetch a quill and some parchment. It was all too much for one night.

“*But what about Alice?*” his mind kept reminding him. He growled angrily and threw his glass on the floor, brandy and broken glass flying everywhere. He held his hands in his hands. And then he remembered.

He stood up abruptly and ran to the narrow staircase. He climbed the five flights of stairs hastily and went to Alice’s room. Two dresses were hanging at the end of her bed, a pile of books beside it. He went to the books and began tearing through them; looking for something he only vaguely remembered seeing. And then he found it.

It was a small photograph. Discoloured and bent, it was a picture of a young woman. She wore a lacy dress and was laughing at what looked to be the person taking the picture. Her chestnut hair was blowing in the wind and her green eyes were lit up with delight. On the back of the photo written in scrawled hand writing said: My darling Violet, with love, your Will.

And true enough it was Violet. She had grown since Wilfred had last seen her –she was only eighteen when he left. In this picture she must have been in her late twenties.

He smiled at the picture and scorned himself. Then the thought occurred to him that she was no longer alive and tears began to burn his eyes.

“I’m sorry,” he whispered angrily.

He returned the picture to the book, shut it and went back downstairs. He went out into the cool summer night and took the sign off the door.

He stayed awake all night and waited.

*

I was being kept under lock and key in a small bedroom upstairs. When I put my ear to the door I could hear the loud breathing of the man guarding my door and knew there was no hope of me getting past him. A white nightgown had been placed on the bed for me but I had no intention of sleeping. Not that I could in this place.

Once the door had been locked I threw myself on the bed. I cried into my pillow, glad to let the emotion out but also conscious not to let the thug outside hear my trauma. I did not intend to let the man, Badger, know my true feelings.

How could Marcus do this to me? To Uncle Wilfred as well! I always knew he felt nothing but disdain for my uncle but I thought it was to do with having had a bad experience of trying to buy something in the apothecary but nothing that would lead to assaulting and then kidnapping his relatives. She had never thought to ask why he disliked her uncle. She never thought anything when it came to him.

I had become my mother, and that thought terrified me. I let myself become infixed by a mysterious man who had pranced into my life unexpectedly. I took none of the precautions I said I would take when it came to men and I berated myself.

“You should’ve known better!”

“You did this to yourself!”

“After all that has happened, you fell for a boy just like your mother did! You’re going to end up just like her!”

My mind continued to hurl abuse at me and the tears flowed freely. I had no one until he came along and look what he’s done to me. What am I to do now? What will they do to me here?

“Maybe Marcus will see what he did to me and help me...” One part of my mind said, the optimist but the other side retorted:

“Don’t waste your time thinking he’ll be your knight in shining armour! He’s a crook and liar! You need to start thinking about saving yourself!”

I sniffed and wiped my face on the sleeve of my dress. I looked around the room but there was nothing there that could aid my escape. I tried to open the window but it was locked and there was no sign of any way to open it. I was trapped.

There was a knock at the door and a moment later the man guarding the door came in.

"Dinner is served Ms Oswald."

"I'm not hungry," I said, and removed my glare from him, focusing on the rolling hills outside my window. They were just like the ones we had seen on the train.

"I think you'll find that Badger normally doesn't request people to join him for dinner and you had better do as he requests."

"I told you I'm not hungry, nor do I intend on seeing Badger again."

"You either come now voluntarily or I drag you by your pretty locks," the man stated bluntly.

I crossed my arms over my stomach and followed the man. We walked down the stairs and the eyes of those in the main entrance of the house followed us. All conversations stopped by the time we reached the bottom step. The staircase faced the main entrance to the house and was situated in the middle of a large entrance hall. Around the walls of the halls there were chairs and a few tables that sat men playing poker and women gossiping. They all stopped what they were doing as we walked past, their eyes boring into us. The characters in the house were strange and dark. The men wore finally tailored suits but wore them carelessly and the women were all dolled up in corsets and lacy dresses that spilled like a waterfall of frills and fabric.

We left the entrance hall swiftly which I was thankful for and I was led down an unlit corridor. At the very end of the corridor was a door and the man pushed it open for me but did not follow me in. I walked in cautiously. It was an office, I assumed. There were shelves with books shoved in haphazardly beside a large window that overlooked the same view I had from my room's window. A fire had been lit at the hearth and there was a tray of food and drinks on a coffee table opposite a large leather settee.

I sat down precariously, not sure what else to do. There was no sign of Badger.

"The guard did say he never usually requested visitors for dinner," I thought, fiddling my thumbs. I was becoming anxious.

I heard a door slam close and jumped in my seat. I stood up and turned around and saw Badger take off his jacket and put it on a coat rack.

"Sit down," he said, turning around and smiling. I sat down slowly, hands in my lap, trying to steady my breathing. Keep calm.

Badger came around and sat on an armchair to the left of the hearth. He gestured towards the food.

"Please, eat. You're my guest."

"I'm more like your prisoner," I spat out. He shrugged.

"If you'd rather be chained up in the cellar, I'm all for it but I'll give you the option anyway."

I said nothing but took a plate and put a small amount of chicken, mash potatoes and vegetables on it and nibbled on the food.

"I thought so. But we're not here to talk about what my fine cook has prepared for us."

Badger went to a press and pulled out a bottle. He uncorked it with his teeth and took a swig straight from the bottle. I did not disguise my distaste. He took the bottle with him and sat back down.

"Now, I want to ask you what you know about your uncle's line of work. What does he get up to in that dusty old shop?"

I shrugged. "I don't really know. He never told me much about alchemy. He was going to teach me but then you and your gang of miscreants attacked him."

Badger looked at her with contempt. "Sweetheart, I'm sorry my business got in the way of you playing happy potion times with your uncle but as you'll soon understand, my needs come first."

"Why do you care about what my uncle's been doing?"

He paused. "Your uncle got in with the wrong sort of people on a deal. Those people were myself and my crew. And he was getting involved in something we liked the sound of, so we stepped in."

"You're a bunch of crooks, that's what you are," I retorted but he only tutted.

"So un-ladylike. I expected more from Oswald's niece. Oh wait, no I didn't because you're just some poor little orphan kid aren't you." He sat down beside me and I moved to the other end of the couch. He rested his arms behind his head and put his feet up on the coffee table causing the dishes to chatter.

"Don't worry kid. I've a soft spot in my old battered heart for kids like you. Hell, de Carabas was begging on the street when I found him."

I winced at Marcus' name and Badger took note.

"Sorry sweetheart. Forgot there were, ehh, trouble in paradise as they say," he grinned wickedly. I did not reply.

"If it makes you feel any better, I'm sure the ol' heartthrob is upstairs crying over you too. Although last I checked he was messing about with the ol' cook inside," he nodded towards the door behind them.

"I never know with de Carabas. It's so hard to tell what he's feeling these days," Badger continued, still grinning as madly as ever.

"He's winding you up," I thought, "Just don't reply and don't let him think he's getting to you."

"But we're not here to talk about lovesick adolescents such as yourself. No, I just wanted to let you know that we have contacted your uncle and have made him an offer." When Badger got no response from Alice he continued.

"We have asked him to agree to our demands of doing a little bit of that hocus pocus crap he gets up to in exchange for your safe return."

"He won't agree. He's wanted me out of his house since I first arrived."

Badger shrugged once more. "Those are my cards so I'm putting them on the table. If it makes you feel any better, I don't want you here either, sweetheart. But I'll put up with having to keep you here for the time being. If your uncle doesn't comply," Badger winked at her, "we'll have to think of a different arrangement."

*

Had Marcus known that Alice would've been locked up in the room beside him he would have insisted that he returned to his own flat in London instead of spending time back in the rundown house.

His mind must have been preoccupied as he did not notice the guard outside the room beside his. It was only when he returned to his room after speaking with Cook that he realised someone was guarding the room and then it registered in his brain who must be behind the door.

He quickly forgot the jam he had taken, throwing it carelessly on the bed and pressed his ear to the wall. He could hear a muffled noise and knew she must still be in there.

He ran a hand through his hair. He couldn't believe Badger, although it was something that Badger would do. He was devious and took no shame in making people suffer just for the fun of it.

Marcus had never felt bad about any of the jobs he had done for Badger; not even when he heard some of the stories of larger exploits. The real world was full of deceiving crooks

anyway, they just chose not to try and hide it under a fake façade all the time. Stealing, deceiving, lying, what did it matter in the end? But this was different.

Marcus had been convinced ever since he joined Badger that what was going on wasn't wrong. Politically maybe, but everything is corrupt in politics. No, morally, he did not believe it was wrong. Badger was a criminal, wanted by many but in Marcus' mind it was because the people he'd wronged were just angry they were tricked. Badger was cunning and quick as a fox. It was hard not to be fooled by him.

But now as Marcus sat on the bed with his hands in his head he began to reconsider all that he knew. Wilfred Oswald was a greedy man. They had worked with him on one occasion before and they had him sussed before ever agreeing to do business. It was the common procedure. He thought himself above everyone else, dealing out as little of his precious ingredients as he possibly could. That wasn't moral in Marcus' opinion. The people who went to Wilfred were people who needed him and he treated them with scorn. He deserved to have what he wanted taken from him.

The first time Wilfred had called for Badger's assistance was around the time when Marcus first began going out on jobs with Badger. He had been looking for some kind of rare ointment thing, the details weren't very important. He was one of those clients that wanted to negotiate prices when Badger delivered him his ingredient. Badger was a business man, who had gone to great lengths to get himself another reliable customer and Wilfred looked down on him as if he was as common as a street rat. Badger did not take too kindly to this sort of treatment and so the men who had accompanied him (including Marcus) were told to ransack the joint. Wilfred soon got some perspective on the situation and hastily agreed to the terms and more, paying extra for them to leave. Thankfully Badger wasn't in one of his moods or the situation could have ended a whole lot differently but he agreed, handed over the goods and left with his pay.

Badger had thought Marcus a lot about the kind of people in this world. When Marcus was younger Badger would tell him stories about all the kinds of people he dealt with when he was on breaks from business. The setting or plot didn't matter, he'd say, it's the characters. He taught him how important first impressions are; "if you don't make an impact upon arrival then you may as well not be there. That can sometimes be good if you want to blend into your surroundings but when you're dealing with people who think they're better than you you have to show them where you stand."

They'd sit by Badger's hearth and Badger would tell his stories with the young Marcus looking up at him with eager eyes, holding onto his every word.

"People tend to be stuck in a little bubble of their own wants and needs. That's just human nature, de Carabas. But still, you have to look at the big picture. Most of the scumbags we deal with are only in it for themselves. They don't care about people like you and me who pick up their slack. No, they only want to live the privilege life and to ignore our existence. But wait until they come looking for something we have. That's when they notice you and the power instantly shifts. You gotta be smart in this life, kid. You can't rely on money and good looks to get you far. You gotta have your wits about you."

"But what about her? She's not like them. Why is she here?" Marcus thought. All this time they had been out to get Oswald and that suited Marcus just fine. The man was one of those people living in a little bubble. But Alice wasn't part of that life, part of that world. Why did they take her? Surely it would've been simple to have just forced Wilfred to agree to the demands without having to bring her into this?

Marcus berated himself. It was him. It was his fault. It was Badger's way of killing two birds with one stone. He was still angry with Marcus for being distracted when they were on the job, distracted by her. Badger was incredibly skilled at hiding his emotions. He could hide his fury until it suited the situation to unleash it. This was his way of showing

Marcus who was running the show, who was in charge. He was the man who called the shots.

He thought it was harmless. She would come in handy, he thought to himself. She was a surprise there was no doubt about it. When Marcus found out that she was his niece he had relayed the information back to Badger who was more than delighted to find that Marcus had found her. He was less pleased to hear that Oswald had an immediate hatred for the girl.

And then they were off. Scouring their sources for what Wilfred was searching for. It was rare for Badger to disclose the information but they had a good night in a tavern in Glasgow laughing over the old man's whimsical request. And then they were overheard. Men often came to trade in pubs and tended to listen in on each other's conversations in hopes of a business opportunity. A man approached them and pulled in a stool beside them. He talked of a friend of his from Belfast who dealt with unusual creatures. Badger and his men were sure the man had drunk too much rum but he insisted they take the telephone number of his colleague.

The next morning after nursing a heavy hangover, Marcus was told to ring this man and see what he could do for them. Marcus rang and was pleasantly surprised to learn the man was from Wales and had moved up to Belfast to continue his research in Northern Ireland. Marcus told him of what they sought and the man gave Marcus his address, telling them to meet him as soon as possible and to ring him as soon as they arrived. His name was Wesley and told them he could give them what they were after.

They quickly made arrangements and before the day was out they were on a passenger ferry to Belfast Harbour. They got off the steamboat within a few hours and headed for a pub so Marcus could ring Wesley (and so the men could settle their nerves after being on a boat). They rested in an inn and by morning they were on route to meet Wesley.

Wesley lived in a grand ivy house just outside Belfast city. They got a horse and cart to bring them to the house and were greeted by Wesley at the door. He led Badger and Marcus into his study upon arrival and left the rest of the men to help themselves to sandwiches and tea cakes. He spoke with a heavy northern Irish accent, getting straight down to business.

"What has you coming all the way over here for a few feathers?" he inquired, stirring his cup of tea nonchalantly.

"It's for a client of ours," Badger said firmly, stating his authority in his voice. "So do you have them or not?"

Wesley smiled. "I suppose I should have shown you straight to the aviary so. Gentlemen, if you would please follow me."

He led them out of the study to the back of the house. In the garden there was a large greenhouse type building. It wasn't a greenhouse though. Instead of being filled with different kind of tropical plants it was filled with different types of tropical birds. They entered the strange building and birds flew around everywhere.

"This is the tropics room. They need warm humid weather so I had to build a sort of greenhouse for them. What you're looking for is in the back."

They bent their heads low to avoid swooping colours of birds attacking their heads. The birds sang as they flew, not used to having guests in their home. Wesley brought them to a door at the end of the room which was kept locked. He searched for the key in his pocket and swiftly opened it. The room wasn't as large as the greenhouse and not nearly as colourful. There were no plants for birds to eat or hide in. The room was empty except for a perch and sitting on the perch was one of the most extraordinary creatures both Badger and Marcus had ever seen.

The phoenix's body was about four feet long, not including the tail which stretched a further five feet behind it. Upon entering, it spread its wingspan to almost the width of the room. It lowered its guard once it acknowledged that they posed no threat and began cleaning its golden red plumage, its beady eyes still watching them.

"How is that possible?" Marcus stammered, captivated by its beauty. Badger simply stared at it, aghast.

Wesley went over to the bird and stroked it fondly. "I have a friend who lives in a rural area in Tibet. They had been experiencing a lot of wildfires around those parts and they had no idea of the cause. My friend was going walking through the wreckage of one of his plantations when he heard squawking. He followed the noise and found a blackened chick lying in a pile of ashes. Naturally he had no idea what it was so he arranged for me to come to Tibet to identify it. I have a degree in zoology and was more than happy to assist. However, I was unable to identify what kind of fowl this creature was. He agreed to let me keep the bird and I brought it back to Belfast. Upon watching it grow, its plumage turned such a vibrant shade of scarlet, I knew this was an undiscovered species. Nothing like this had ever been described before." He grinned like a child and continued.

"And then she caught fire. You can't imagine the shock I got. My bird collection was only small at the time but I already knew to keep her separate from the others. She behaved so differently, it seemed the right thing to do. She was kept in her own separate aviary which was soon burnt to the ground. I had to explain to the firemen that I must have left my cigarette unattended even though I don't smoke. I soon put the pieces of the puzzle together and figured out that she was indeed of legend. A phoenix," he stroked behind her head and she nuzzled into his hand.

"I built this room separate for her. It's made of concrete so that if she does catch fire she won't burn it to the ground. She's such a marvellous beast don't you think?"

Badger coughed and composed himself. "Yeah, just spiffing. How much do you want for the feathers?"

Wesley stopped stroking the phoenix and cleared his throat. "You'll have to excuse me for asking but before I give you any of her feathers I must ask you what you intend on using them for?"

Badger didn't like the curiosity so didn't answer but Marcus was more lenient.

"They're for a client. We don't exactly know what he's doing with them."

"Well I'd advise you to find out before handing over the feathers. Phoenix feathers are said in folklore to be able to grant a person eternal youth, what with the fact they are reborn from their own ashes."

Marcus looked at Badger but he was also surprised with this new information. He could almost hear the cogs turning in Badger's head. He spoke up.

"Thank for your concern Mr Wesley but I think it's all chip and dandy. Our client is an old friend of mine and he only really want the feathers as he has a collection of exotic bird feathers," Badger lied through his teeth, "We honestly thought that agreeing to help him out was reprehensible as we didn't believe we would find such feathers but you luckily came to our rescue. Now how much do you want for them?"

"Badger, isn't it? I'd prefer to discuss business matters in private," he said looking pointedly at Marcus. Marcus simply nodded and headed back into the house. The men instantly stopped stuffing their faces when he approached, looking at him expectantly but it was to no avail. He simply shook his head and sat down, not touching the food. He couldn't believe what he had seen. That bird was beyond phenomenal. It was like something out of a fairy-tale.

Badger returned about a half an hour late, carrying a large cloaked bottle.

"We've got it boys."

They returned to Glasgow the following morning and made the long trip back to the rundown house. No one except Badger and Marcus had seen the feathers and Badger kept them under lock and key when he returned home.

When Marcus had unveiled Wilfred's recipe for the elixir of life Badger was unable to contain his glee. Yes, up until he discovered he (nor any of his colleagues) had the ability to put together such a potion, no one could understand why Badger was always in such a good mood. He came down from that high very fast. He had them kidnap Alice, while she was with him.

He couldn't do anything, he knew that the moment they blocked his past. He had seen these men wrestle each other before and it was not something he intended on getting in to. Even for her sake. He would've been beaten to a pulp and then become a laughing stock when he returned home. But he still slated himself.

She was not safe here, even with him so close by. Badger was always so unpredictable but his moods changed so quickly ever since he discovered he needed Oswald and there wasn't any doubt in Marcus' head that he would easily take this whole thing out on her. And he would not be able to intervene. You don't get in Badger's way; that was the first thing he learnt when he met him.

"But I can't just sit here and feel sorry for myself and her!" he thought furiously. He got up and began pacing the room, ignoring the clatter of plates he knocked over upon doing so. He hated to admit it. He had been warned so many times by Badger's comrades. Women were dangerous. They messed with your mind. They could make you think things you never even thought of thinking before. They corrupt. And yet, he really didn't care. There was something so wonderful about Alice. His thoughts disgusted him; he had bigger plans for the future. She was nothing but a passing phase. But he didn't want her to pass. He meant every word, every action, and every gesture when she was around. Sure, he had been playing the part at first but she had done something to him. He didn't even notice he had stopped putting on the charisma. It just came naturally when he was with her. He thought back to what Cook said and chuckled, then scorned himself again. This was not a funny situation! He'd have to get past Roland, he was guarding the door. Surely he could distract him with the promise of a brawl going on downstairs. Then he could simply unlock her door and the only person who would be suspected would be Roland and he was thick enough to forget to lock the door.

He pressed his ear to the wall when he heard shuffling. He could hear the sound of the door unlock and then open. There were voices.

"Dinner is served Ms Oswald," he could hear Roland's deep voice.

"I'm not hungry," a small voice replied.

"I think you'll find that Badger normally doesn't request people to join him for dinner and you had better do as he requests."

"I told you I'm not hungry, nor do I intend on seeing Badger again." Marcus smiled at her. She was still as defiant as ever.

"You either come now voluntarily or I drag you by your pretty locks." Marcus hissed when he heard Roland say that. He pressed his ear to the door harder and could hear her small footsteps leave the room. He was about to run out after her but remembered that she wouldn't want to see him now or ever again after what he had done to her. He remembered how badly she had reacted when he told her Oswald got what was coming his way.

He sat back on his bed and but his head in his hands.

"How did I get into this mess?" he muttered to himself.

*

When dawn came around, Wilfred changed out of his nightwear and put on his work clothes. Badger's men would be here for him soon to God knows where.

He would be forced to make the Elixir of Life for Badger. He wasn't even sure if he could make it right. Badger more than likely would not give him the right conditions that would be necessary to make such a complex potion. But he would have to try.

He jolted with fright at the sound of the bell jangling off the apothecary door. Two men had come for him. He had expected to be knocked unconscious or tied up but they merely brought him out to a black carriage which was led by two dark mares.

They opened the carriage door and he sat inside. The interior was dark and there was no window to see the outside world behind him. He was about to look back at the apothecary for what might have been the last time but they slammed the door shut and the carriage was off.

The ride was bumpy but not too long. Upon arrival he received the handling he had been expecting. The door of the carriage was pulled open roughly and Wilfred was yanked out of the carriage by large men. He caught a glimpse of the front of an old red brick manor before he was dragged along the side of the house and pushed down narrow stone steps to what seemed to be a cellar. He was pushed inside, tripped on the sill of the door and fell, tumbling over himself. He earned himself a kick in the shin before the men sneered, left the cellar and locked the door behind them.

The cellar was cold and dank and smelled of must. It was a small, dark space and it took Wilfred's eyes a few minutes to adjust. There were barrels and crates of liquors, whiskey, and rum. He sat himself on an empty crate and lay his back against the cool stone.

"I wonder if they're keeping Alice in a place as vulgar as this," he pondered. "Surely Badger only has one cellar. They're probably keeping her in the attic." Upon thinking this, he remembered while Alice was staying with him, she had been cooped up in his attic. He sighed and put his head in his hands.

Badger entered the cellar at dusk.

*

I woke up with a grumbling abdomen. I had not been able to eat in Badger's presence the night before and so had gone to bed with an empty stomach. I had had a troubled night sleep, dreaming of Badger's wicked smile and Wilfred's broken body lying limp on the floor. I tried my best to shake the images out of my head but it was of no use.

Light streamed in through the net curtains. It was to be a beautiful day and I was locked in this cell. I rose and pressed my ear against the door and could hear deep snoring from behind it. I was still being guarded.

I sighed and put on the dress I wore yesterday. There was nothing in the room to preoccupy my thoughts; no books, no furniture apart from a bed and a night stand, and no paper and pens to try and clear my head by writing my thought down. The boredom would've killed me if I wasn't so anxious about what would become of me.

Just then, I heard the door creak open slowly. I spun around and watched as Marcus squeezed through the small opening in the door. He looked tired and was no longer dressed as respectable as he once had looked. He no longer wore his bowler hat and his hair looked messy and uncombed. His shirt sleeves were rolled up and he must have discarded his jacket somewhere, revealing the leather braces holding his trousers up. He breathed out a sigh of relief when he made it into the room and grinned at Alice.

"Good thing Roland is a heavy sleeper," he whispered but I could not think of any reply. He looked at me grimly before striding across the room and pulling me into a tight hug. I tried to fight his strong hold of me but was unable to and began crying into his shirt. He shushed me and stroked my hair reassuringly.

"I'm so sorry, Alice," he whispered into me but I continued to cry. What was I to say to him? Part of me was screaming to push him away, slap him, punch him, kick him, but a different part of me was overwhelmingly glad he was here with me now.

He sat me down on the bed and took a hold of my hands. I did not look him in the eyes, fearful I would start crying again. He let go for a moment and pulled out a handkerchief from his trouser pocket and wiped my face gently. I finally found my voice.

"Why are you here, Marcus?" I asked shakily, still refusing to look at him.

"I needed to see if you were alright," he replied, squeezing her hand.

"What do you think, Marcus? How am I alright? How is all this alright? How could you do this?! I don't understand," I said angrily, tears blurring my vision once more.

"Shh, please Alice, you have to be quiet. I'm not supposed to be here," his eyes pleaded with her.

"Why should I care if you get in trouble with your gang of crooks? I didn't ask you to come here. I never asked for any of this. You did all this to me!" I retorted, the tears streaming down my face.

"Alice you have to believe me, I didn't think this would ever happen. I was just told we'd be teaching Oswald a lesson and then I got into trouble for being distracted by you and so I had to find out what your uncle was up to. I never thought they'd bring you into this!" I finally managed to look at him. I noted how tired his eyes looked, how washed out his face had become. He no longer looked like the boy who had brightened up London. He looked lost.

"Prove it then," I replied blankly.

"What do you mean?"

I grabbed his hands. "Help me get out of here. Marcus you have to help me escape. You're the only one who can-"

"Alice, I can't. They'd know it was me straight away. And even we did both manage to get away, Badger has associates all over."

"Well then if you can't help me then just leave," I stated, taking my hands back from them and crossing them across myself. He looked so abandoned.

"Alice, please-"

"Just leave!" I shouted, angry tears burning my face.

He looked at me, almost as though he was scared and scampered out of the room, closing it softly behind him. I buried my face in my pillow and shouted into it, crying hard and freely once more.

I was never going to get out of here.

*

Wilfred was brought up to the main part of the house. He was pushed through long corridors until the two reached a large room in the centre of the house. It was a large entrance hall from what Wilfred could gather, recognising the front door. There was a grand staircase in the middle of the hall with a balcony overhead so you could see the doors to the rooms upstairs. A large crowd had formed around the base of the stairs and they parted to let Badger and Wilfred through.

In the centre of the crowd was a large table, littered with different kinds of ingredients and equipment (which had all been from Wilfred's shop). A small notebook had been placed to the left of Wilfred's most favoured cauldron, left open on one page in particular. The recipe for the elixir.

Wilfred gave a groan as he was pushed in front of the table, facing away from the staircase. Badger climbed up a few steps so the whole crowd was able to see him beaming like a hyena.

"Ladies and gents!" he announced, his voice silencing all other conversations in the room.

"Introducing our guest of honour, Mr Wilfred Oswald!" There was a round of applause and laughter from the crowd but was silenced once more when Badger continued speaking.

“Now I think everyone here knows why we are gathered here today, but in case you are unaware let me get straight to it. My friend Oswald here, has oh so most graciously agreed to be of some assistance with a predicament I was having. You see, me being a noble man (Badger took a quick bow) found along my travels and most wonderful recipe that would grant the user eternal life. But me being a poor uneducated soul am unable to make said recipe. And so Oswald here will be doing the honours.” The crowd cheered loudly once more.

Badger walked back down to Wilfred. “So there’s no time like the presence, right Oswald? I’m only getting older, but not for long,” he grinned. “Get to work.”

Wilfred nodded and looked at his notes. He had only ever made the potion in theory. He had tried it with different ingredients but to no success. He had no idea if this would even work but he dared not to say that in front of Badger.

He noted that all of the ingredients he needed for the potion was there, except for the phoenix feathers. Badger must have never been able to get them. Wilfred groaned quietly. He had tried making this particular potion without adding a final ingredient and it had blown up in smoke, literally. This potion was doomed before he had even begun.

However, he got started promptly. He began to way the separate ingredient and prepared them for the mix. He weighed 6 ounces of bezoar and began grinding them in a mortar. He sliced up some pickled leeches and added it to the cauldron. He poured some salamander’s blood and lit a match under the cauldron, letting mixture boil before taking it off the heat. He added some sprigs of juniper to the mix and gave it a three stirs counter clockwise. He added the bezoar that was in the mortar into the mix. The mixture was an ugly green-brown colour with the consistency of sludge. He brought it to the boil once more and added more salamanders’ blood to get the consistency right. He added a few drops of Lethe river water which cause a poof of smoke in the mixture which got the crowd muttering to each other.

Wilfred had never had to make potions in front of an audience before. The only person who had ever watched him make potions was his potion’s master when he was a young apprentice but even then his master had agreed with him stating that potion making was a solitary task. The crowd had him on edge.

He cleared his throat and spoke up. “I have to leave the potion to simmer for three hours and a quarter.” The crowd began jeering him, becoming loud and boisterous but Badger silenced him.

“Fine. You will be escorted back to your quarters.”

Somebody came up from behind and pushed Wilfred back down the corridor from which he came. He re-entered the cellar and the door was locked once more. He wiped his brow, exhausted from the nerve-wrecking work.

“Uncle Wilfred?” he heard a voice ask softly in the darkness.

“Alice? Is that you?” he squinted but found it impossible to see in the dark.

“I’m over here!” the voice replied. He heard shuffling and was soon able to see Alice.

“Alice are you alright? Did he hurt you?” Wilfred asked worriedly, squatting down so he was at her level.

“I’m fine,” she smiled. She was wearing shackles and her arms were chained to a heavy looking crate.

“I didn’t think you’d come,” she said meekly, not looking at him. He did something that surprised the both of them. He came around to Alice and gave her a hug.

“I’m so sorry you got involved in this mess,” he whispered. She hugged him back as best she could without being able to use her arms.

“Where were they keeping you,” he asked once he released her.

“I was upstairs. They gave me my own room. It wasn’t much but I wasn’t locked up when I was there.”

“Why did they bring you down here then?”

“I don’t really know, I heard a lot of noise downstairs and then the man guarding my door, Roland, he took me out of the room, brought me down a back staircase and chained me to this crate. I heard him mutter something about you being in the manor so I assumed it had something to do with you.”

Wilfred sighed. “I’m making them the potion.”

Alice looked at him confusedly. “What is this potion that these men want so badly?”

Wilfred’s face grew weary. “When I first began alchemy I became intrigued with the writings of failed alchemists. I don’t know why but they’re failures as well-known and well-respected alchemists gave me some hope that maybe I could figure out what went wrong for them. I was only a boy and knowing that great alchemists like them could fail gave me the reassurance that if they could fail and still be great, so could I. Although failure wasn’t really an option. I began researching what they had been doing and I became fascinated with the idea of making an elixir that could stop death. It had been tried countless time but no one had ever succeeded and so I began trying.”

“It became somewhat of an obsession, I daresay. I was intoxicated by the idea of power and wealth. A potion that could grant immortality would be the most sought after in the world. I dedicated my life to finding the necessary ingredients, figuring out the necessary procedures but I never managed to get it right. The night of your arrival on my doorsteps I had a sudden epiphany. I had thought I had figured out the last ingredient so I had called on Badger to find it for me. He agreed but soon found out what I was up to. That was why his men beat me and took my ingredients and equipment. They wanted it for themselves. But they couldn’t make something as complex as this and so that’s why they kidnapped you. To get to me.”

“The potion is simmering upstairs now but I still need that last ingredient and it doesn’t seem to be there. I don’t know what I’ll do if this doesn’t work.”

Alice paused before responding. “Uncle Wilfred, what is the last ingredient for the elixir?” He gave a small laugh, something Alice had never heard him do. “I think I was delusional. I told Badger I needed phoenix feathers to complete the potion. Of course he wouldn’t have the final ingredient. I don’t know how or why my mind thought of it but I think it was just feeble attempts to try and complete it.”

Alice sat up straighter, trying to get more comfortable. “Can you give me a run through of how you made the elixir, just now?”

Wilfred looked at her curiously but didn’t object. For the next couple of hours Wilfred went into a detailed summary of how he made the elixir. Alice listened intently and asked him questions when she wasn’t sure of something. He answered her patiently and was amazed and how she managed to take all of the information in.

Just before the three hours were up, the cellar door was unlocked and Roland’s fat head emerged.

“Badger wants to see both of you now,” he said entering the room. He bent down and unlocked Alice shackles and led them out of the cellar. Alice rubbed her aching wrists and followed slowly behind them.

The crowd from earlier had dispersed. They were bored easily as nothing was happening as fast as they had anticipated. Some remained, but they were by the wall playing cards and barely took any notice of Wilfred and Alice’s arrival. Alice noticed Marcus sitting on the top step of the staircase but made sure not to make any eye contact with him.

Wilfred returned to his post and Alice stood beside him. However, Badger came up to her from behind and pulled her back onto the staircase with him.

“I just want to be sure you don’t get up to any funny business in the final stages before it’s ready,” Badger smiled before taking a large knife out from a hidden sheath in his suit jacket. He grabbed her by her hair so she couldn’t escape and held the knife to Alice’s neck. She tried her hardest not to cry out, her closing her eyes and trying not to focus on the cold steel against her bare flesh. She tried to tilt her head to look for Marcus but was unable to; Badger’s grip on her was too tight.

“Chop, chop Oswald,” Badger laughed. Wilfred nodded meekly and began work again. He consulted his notes on what next to do but it felt as though his brain had switched off. He wiped his brow, searching through the ingredients for what to do next.

“Lionfish,” Alice choked, before Badger hissed in her ear, silencing her.

Wilfred nodded gratefully and began chopping the spines of lionfish. He added it to the simmering mix in the cauldron and it began to bubble. He stirred it five times in a clockwise motion and steam began to rise. He smiled. Everything was going well. All he needed now was the feathers.

“Badger,” he started weakly, “I need the phoenix feathers to complete the potion. Badger looked at him with a bored expression before turning and nodding at Marcus. Marcus got up from the top step and brought a large glass case down the stairs.

Inside the case there were three large scarlet feathers, each strand of the feather slowly fading to gold. Marcus unlocked the glass case and took out one of the feathers and handed it delicately to Wilfred. Wilfred was in awe of what he was holding. The feather was light but warmed his hand, as if he was holding a candle. He had not been expecting it to be this big and hoped that by cutting the feather it wouldn’t alter the end result of the elixir. He cut it into three sections and added them all at once. The potion came to life when they were added; it turned a golden colour that shimmered when stirred and red steam arose. Wilfred nodded at Badger.

“It’s ready.”

*

“Well then I guess we have no use for your niece any more then,” Badger smiled and took the knife from her neck. Alice breathed out a sigh of relief but Badger pinned her down against the bannister and cut into her arm. She howled in pain and Badger just laughed.

“Like I said before; you can be so un-ladylike.”

However before he could hurt her again Marcus pushed him away from her and Badger was sprawled across the staircase. The men who had been playing cards got up suddenly and grabbed Marcus to stop him from hitting Badger. Alice fell to the ground, panting and cradling her injured arm. Blood was flowing freely from the cut, splattering her dress. Wilfred ran to her and tore some material from his shirt to bandage the wound. Meanwhile, Badger had gotten up and approached Marcus.

“De Carabas, you know I don’t like being made a fool of like that,” Badger glowered at Marcus. He ran the blade in his hand over Marcus’ face, covering his face in Alice’s blood. Then without warning he lifted the blade from his face and plunged it into Marcus’ stomach. Marcus fell to the ground, his face contorted in pain, clutching his rapidly bleeding side.

“I trust you won’t be doing it again.”

Badger returned his attention to Wilfred who was comforting Alice. “Get me a cup of that, and make it snappy.”

Wilfred got up shakily and poured some of the hot liquid into a glass tumbler that had been set out. He handed the glass to Badger who grinned at it.

He sniffed the glass and brought it to his lips. “Bon appetite!” he smiled, before drinking the golden liquid. He downed the entire glass, his face turning red with the heat. He finished it with a satisfied ‘ahh!’ before throwing the glass across the room.

“Looks like I’ve won Oswald. And now I can’t have you or your little niece running around telling people what a goldmine I now have so I’m going to have to see to it that you won’t squeal. Roland, cut their tongues out and leave ‘em to rot in the cellar.”

Roland nodded and grabbed Wilfred. He hoisted Alice to her feet and she cried out. They were about to be dragged away when Badger let out a scream.

They turned around and saw smoke coming out of Badger’s mouth, nostrils and ears. He was howling in pain as smoke began to come out of his ears. No one went near him, afraid for their lives of what was happening to him. He fell to the ground, rolling around trying to put himself out when suddenly, he burst into flames.

Someone ran into the kitchen and came back with five guys carrying buckets of waters.

The fire wouldn’t go out though. No matter what they tried it would not extinguish. After five minutes of burning it finally began to shrink until it was nothing more than a pile of burning cinders.

Then all hell broke loose.

Roland pushed Wilfred against the table, the whole contents flying across the room. He raised his fist threateningly against his face.

“What did you do?!” he roared.

“I don’t know what happened!” Wilfred said helplessly. Roland punched Wilfred in the stomach. He doubled over in pain but Roland heaved him back up by the collar and punched him square in the nose.

“I swear, I didn’t do this!” Wilfred cried.

Roland didn’t listen. He threw Wilfred to the ground and began kicking and stomping on him as if he was but an ant.

Alice had run over to Marcus who was sitting in a puddle of his own blood. She started crying when she lifted his shirt and saw the bloody wound on the side of his stomach.

“Roland,” Marcus managed to say loudly enough to catch his attention. Roland stopped kicking Wilfred and brought his attention to Marcus.

“What do you want, traitor?”

“You can’t do anything until you know who’s calling the shots now,” he coughed. “Get someone to go to Badger’s study and find out.”

Roland glowered at Marcus but nodded at one of the men to do as he said. A few moments later the man returned with a sealed envelope. He handed it to Roland who tore the letter open.

He looked up from the letter disbelievingly and threw it down to Marcus.

“Read it to me, will you?” he said handing it to Alice. She cleared her voice and read it out loud.

“In the event that I, Harry Badger, am no longer able to continue my role as leader of the establishment my family has spent their lives creating I hereby pass on my legacy to Marcus de Carabas as the only person I trust most to be my heir.

He will take on the responsibility I once had and will be the owner of everything I possess. Everyone under me until the time this letter is opened will be now employed by him.

For further details and my extensive will, contact my solicitor Mr Jacob Pibbs of Pibbs and Johnson Inc.

Good riddance,

Badger

Alice looked at Marcus with wide-eyes but he seemed unfazed by the letter.

“Roland, as first order of business I want Mr Oswald and his niece to be released and I want them to be escorted back to their home in London unharmed. Secondly I want someone to patch me up as I am loosing quite a bit of blood. While I am recovering I’m

placing Cook as my second-in-command and so you will go to him with all your death threats for me.”

Roland did not seem happy about this arrangement at all but knew better than to argue. Alice however was fine with arguing.

“No, I’m not leaving you,” she said to him, her hand covered in his blood from trying to stop the flow. He smiled weakly at her.

“Alice, as much as I’d love for you to be here with me and rule the underworld by my side, you need to look after your uncle. Also I’m bad news and you don’t need all this on your shoulders. Roland, bring them to the carriage,” he nodded at Roland who dragged Alice to her feet and began pulling her away from Marcus.

“No! Marcus! Stop!” she shouted, tears streaming down her face.

“I’ll be fine,” he said softly, watching her as she was dragged out of his house. He fell unconscious moments before the carriage pulled out of the courtyard.

*

It had been three months since Wilfred and Alice had been taken to Badger’s rundown manor. Three months since they’d had any trouble in their lives. Three months since Alice had seen Marcus.

She had cared for Wilfred once more when they arrived home. He was in worse shape than he had been the previous times but as she said, she’d had more practice this time around. Once they had both healed themselves physically (and somewhat mentally from the experience) they both got back to their everyday lives. Wilfred reopened the shop, bought more equipment and began ordering ingredients in from stockists. He allowed Alice to move out of the attic and into one of the bedrooms (the books had been moved to allow space for a bed).

Wilfred began to teach Alice alchemy as he had promised. He had started her out with basic tasks but soon she quickly progressed and continuously pestered to challenge her more. He laughed at her eagerness and told her to master the basics before getting any further.

Alice was glad to have formed some kind of relationship with her uncle. They still continued to bicker at each other but it was no longer the stubborn fights it had once been. They both learnt to get along with each other and agreed to give each other respected space. Alice was even allowed in the apothecary during working hours as long as she was either reading upstairs quietly or helping out in the shop.

With Alice being now able to work in the shop, Wilfred had more time on his hands to continue thinking of new ideas for potions (less extreme than immortality potions as they both vowed never to try anything like that again). He began taking trips around the country trying to bring his ingredients collection back to its former glory. Once Alice was capable, he would soon be sailing off to distant shores to try and find some more exotic substances to add to his collection.

Alice had grown accustomed to this new Wilfred although he would continue to surprise her on occasion. He would come home one evening with maybe a cake for after supper or sometimes even a new dress for her. She continued to do the tasks she did before all that had happened, cooking, cleaning, and polishing but now he seemed to acknowledge she was doing something around the house and appreciate her for it.

He wasn’t the sort of family she was used to, but he was better than before.

It was a rainy Thursday evening and they were having soup before dinner when there was an unexpected tinkle of the apothecary door. Wilfred looked at Alice as if to ask did you remember to put the ‘Closed’ sign up and she looked at him with the same expression.

Rolling his eyes and sighing, he wiped his mouth on his serviette and got up to see who was at the counter.

He was only gone a moment before he called for her.

"You can't do anything without me anymore," she muttered under her breath, taking her cooking apron off and hanging it by the blazing hearth. She went out to the shop and got a surprise when she saw who it was.

The person she found was none other than Marcus de Carabas in a top hat and tail-coat, grinning as broadly as ever. Her jaw dropped when she saw him. He looked as though he was the royal family's personal pianist not the new overlord of crime. She wasn't sure whether to hug him or not; she didn't want to ruin his new attire after all. He didn't seem to think about that as he raced around to her and enveloped her into a big hug, picking her up and spinning her around.

"Mind the bloody vials for Heaven's sake!" Wilfred shouted at them.

"Sorry Oswald," Marcus said, putting Alice down and tipping his hat.

"What's with the new clothes?" Alice giggled. He looked ridiculous.

"What? I'm in a very high position of power. I have to look the part you know!"

"You look like a complete buffoon," Alice laughed, reaching up to take the top hat off him.

He ruffled his hair. "I think I got one too small, my head's killing me. I think they knew I had no idea what I was doing so they gave me the wrong size."

Alice looked at Wilfred who had been trying not to be part of the conversation by examining his weighing scales. "Could you excuse us for a moment?" she asked. He simply nodded and returned to the kitchen, likely wanting to finish his soup.

"So why did you call at such a late hour?" Alice asked, sitting herself on the stool behind the counter.

"I felt the need to see you again," Marcus said blankly, as if that was the obvious answer.

"Yes but it's been almost three months. I had no idea where were you were. You could've told me you were alive at least!"

Marcus sighed. "Things have been hectic ever since Badger's been gone. There were all sorts of legal ramifications that I really don't want to get into. Then Roland tried to upheave the whole system and so he had to be taken care of. If I could've come sooner I would have, you have to know that."

Alice paused before replying. "Thank you for letting us go, by the way."

He shrugged. "I owe you more than just that."

A silence fell between them, neither of them daring to break it for what seemed like hours.

"I really missed you," Marcus blurted out. "I was told not to see you again, everyone advised me. That's something I have now, all these people giving me suggestions on what I should do. How does that help? More perspectives makes things harder to deal with and so I've been able to see you so many time but I couldn't and then tonight I was eating dinner all alone in Badger's study, my study, just like Badger used to and I didn't want to be alone. I wanted to go back to my flat and I wanted you to be there and so I had to see you."

"Marcus I-" she started but he kept going.

"Yes, I know you don't need me and that life would've been easier if you hadn't met me but for Christ's sake I'm going bonkers without you. I don't know what it is but my mind is this whirlwind of thought that I just can't control and I miss being with you and just having fun. I just had to see was there any chance that you've forgiven me and things can go back to how they used to. I know nothing ever goes back to how it was before but I just-"

She somehow managed to shut him up by kissing him. She half-thought he would break it just to continue blabbering (he half-thought about it too) but he finally loosed himself up, put his arms around her and kissed her back. He really did yap when he was nervous. She

broke the kiss and rested her head against him. "I forgave you months ago, you bloody git." She said hitting him playfully.

He squeezed her tightly and smiled, kissing her head. "I knew I should've called sooner." She broke away from him. "So what do we do now?"

He looked at her shyly. "Well, I've moved back to my flat. That manor's too big for just me. And the offer, from before, still stands."

She smiled at him. "Marcus, I really would and I do want to be with you but right now, I have to decline your offer."

He looked disheartened and she reached for his hand. "I'm nearly seventeen. Wilfred's teaching me alchemy and he has me working here. We've finally learnt to get along in some sort of way that works. I don't want to lose what I've just gained. We have all the time in the world to live together but I don't know how long Wilfred will abide me for. When I'm eighteen, ask me again and the answer should be different," she kissed his cheek.

"And in the mean time?" he asked.

She grinned at him. "You can buy me books and food."

He pulled her close to him. "I love you," he grinned.

She looked shocked but found she could say it back easily. "I love you too. Hold that thought." She went into the kitchen and found Wilfred cleaning up their dishes.

"Is it alright if I go out with Marcus for a little while? We won't be too late," she asked, her eyes pleading.

He nodded. "Not too late, okay? I do worry."

She grinned and ran out to Marcus and grabbed his hand.

"Let's go on an adventure."

Appendix 2 Audit Trail

Final core category derived from the data: “Perceptions of the role of the WISS in creating a learning environment supporting student’ learning”.

The series of Tables below outlines the strategy employed in coding the data obtained from students, teachers and artist-writers over the course of the study. The first table below displays the final core category “Perceptions of the role of the WISS in creating a learning environment supporting student’ learning”. This core category was derived from the three (3) sub-categories which are (1) communicating and collaborating (2) thinking and learning and (3) developing self-efficacy. These sub-categories present the overall perceptions of learning of students, teachers and artist-writers arising directly out of the five (5) theoretical (or selective) codes as they emerged through the process of constant comparison. These theoretical codes are (1) communicating (2) working with others (3) information processing (4) critical and creative thinking and (5) being personally effective and they reflect the Key Skills at Senior Cycle (NCCA, 2009). The Theoretical/Selective Codes were derived from the six (6) original identified axial codes (1) communication (2) engagement (3) environment (4) learning (5) literacies and (6) self-efficacy. Axial coding is the GT method for breaking down data into manageable themes, codes and categories (Charmaz, 2006; Chong & Yeo, 2015). The following set of colour coded Tables outline the identification and generation of the initial 83 open codes, which were broken down into the final set of six axial codes. All codes and categories are colour coded for identification of themes within these tables containing the initial eighty-three (83) open codes which also provide *in vivo* examples from participants in the middle column (to illustrate why the particular choice of code occurred in that instance), with the relevant axial code displayed in the right-hand column.

There are also seven (7) uncategorised open codes or themes which emerged as part of the initial open coding. They are listed here because they emerged often enough to be of note, however, their occurrence was significantly less frequent than those themes listed in the final eighty-three codes. These codes were: (1) Ability (2) Aim (3) Funding (3) Money (4) Junior Cycle (5) Impact (7) Principal and might prove to be of interest to other researchers.

Audit Trail and Coding for Final Codes and Categories

Source: Artist-writers and Teachers and Students

| AXIAL CODES derived from initial 83 Open Codes listed below | SELECTIVE / THEORETICAL CODES which mapped on the Key Skills at Senior Cycle | SUB-CATEGORIES derived from the Key Skills at Senior Cycle | CORE CATEGORY derived from Open, Axial, Theoretical Codes and final 3 Sub-Categories |
|---|--|---|--|
| Communication | Communicating | Communicating & Collaborating | |
| Engagement | Working with Others | Communicating & Collaborating | |
| Environment | Working with Others | Communicating & Collaborating | Perceptions of the role of the WISS in creating a learning environment supporting student' learning |
| Learning | Information Processing | Thinking & Learning | |
| Literacies | Critical and Creative Thinking | Thinking & Learning | |
| Self-Efficacy | Being Personally Effective | Developing Self-efficacy | |

Open Coding for Categories and Themes

| Open Codes (Learning) | Examples | Axial Code |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| Artefact/product | achievement, pride | Learning / self-efficacy |
| “Craft” | writing, redrafting, editing, proof reading, the reader, excellence, graft, punctuation, toolkit, bag of tricks, journals | Aesthetic Learning / Technique |
| Creativity | | Creative learning |
| Genre | creative writing, short story, poetry, drama, film | Aesthetic Learning |
| “Group Work” | “No, I wouldn’t change the groups” | Collaborative Learning / Self-Efficacy |
| | “It got a lot better because of the teamwork” | Communication |
| “Ideas” | | Creative Learning |
| “Imagination” “the imagination opens” | | Creative Learning |
| Learning experiential learning | “participatory” /collaborative / “by osmosis” / “It’s experiential....it creeps up on you” | Learning /” experiential” / exploratory /affective |
| Long term | deeper | Learning |
| Listening | | Learning/ Social Literacy |

| | | |
|--------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| “Product” Artefact | | Learning/ Creative Learning |
| “Rigor” | | Aesthetic Learning |
| Transfer | the learning carries through | Learning / Communication |
| “Work” | | Learning/ Engagement / Product |

| Open Codes (Engagement) | Examples | Axial Code |
|-------------------------|--|----------------|
| Engagement | fired up, thirsting, spark, outside school, stirring them up | Engagement |
| Energy | | Engagement |
| “Enjoyment” | happy | Engagement |
| Enthusiasm | | Engagement |
| Entertainment | | Engagement |
| “Excitement” | | Engagement |
| Attention | paying attention | Engagement |
| “Good” | “It was good” | Engagement |
| Resistance | | Engagement neg |

| | | |
|-------------|--|------------|
| Willingness | | Engagement |
|-------------|--|------------|

| Open Codes (Self-Efficacy) | Examples | Axial Code |
|----------------------------|--|--|
| “Confidence” | confident | Self-efficacy |
| Empowerment | | Self-efficacy |
| Interest | “Boring” | Self-efficacy neg |
| Permission | breaking the rules, censorship and gatekeeping, prescription | Self-efficacy / Permission/ Parameters/ Dilemmas |
| “You learn individuality” | Resilience, “confident”, “confidence”, “happier”, “more engaged”, “yes I can”, “self-esteem”, interested, security, self-worth, “presence in the world”, “empower”, not being afraid, “fun”, socialisation | Self-efficacy / Free from Fear/ “Yes I can” |
| “Trust” | | Trust / Self-efficacy |

| Open Code (Environment) | Examples | Axial Code |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------|
| Atmosphere | “calm”, “lightened up”, “organic” | Environment |
| “Audience” | class | Environment |

| | | |
|-------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| “Awareness” | | Critical Literacy |
| Comfort | “comfortability” | Environment |
| Context | | Environment |
| “Contract” | | Environment / Parameters/Negotiation |
| Curriculum | embedded | Environment / Learning / Teaching |
| Environment | class, space, classroom, | Environment |
| “Exam” | focus, personal response (LC) | Environment / Standardised Assessment |
| “Fluid” | | Environment |
| “Free” | ‘It was very open’ ‘You are more opinionated’ | Environment |
| “Fun” | | Environment |
| “Inclusive” | | Environment |
| Interaction | “interactive” “interacted” | Environment |
| Mutuality | | Environment / Relationship /Trust |
| “Open” | | Environment / Trust |

| | | |
|-------------------------|--|--|
| Parameters | | Environment |
| “Pressure” | | Environment /Dilemmas / Examinations / Time |
| Professional Identities | | Environment / Negotiation/ Identities & Roles |
| “Relationship” | teacher/writer, teacher/student, student/student | Environment / Communication / Trust / Relationship |
| Relax | “free of angst” | Environment/ Relaxation/ Free from fear |
| “Sample answer” | short story, personal writing, creative writing, descriptive (essay) writing | Environment / Examinations / Standardised Assessment |
| Structure loose | | Environment / Parameters /Permissions/ Negotiation neg |
| Student | | Environment |
| Teacher | | Environment |
| Time | personal, homework, timing, school year, earlier, timetabling | Environment / Dilemmas / not enough / timetabling |
| “Workshops” | | Environment / Studio |

| | | |
|--------|--|----------------------|
| Writer | “a real writer”, “a specialist”, “a professional”, “somebody that’s not dead”, relevant, “buzzy”, “bubbly”, “a fresh mind” | Environment / Studio |
|--------|--|----------------------|

| Open Codes (Communication) | Examples | Axial Code |
|----------------------------|--|---|
| Communication email | | Communication / email / meetings / planning |
| Feedback | | Communication /Collaboration |
| Follow up | | Communication |
| Negotiation | | Communication / Collaboration |
| Partnership | communities of practice; interaction,relational aspects | Communication / Collaboration / Relationship /Pedagogy |
| Pitching | | Communication / Pedagogy / Planning/ Communication |
| Planning | | Communication |
| “Scaffolding” | | Communication / Teaching |
| Pedagogies | | Communication / Teaching |

| Open Codes (Literacies) | Examples | Axial Code |
|-------------------------|--|--|
| Articulation | | Oral Literacy |
| “Bonding” | making friends, mixing | Emotional literacy |
| “Excellence” | standard, beauty | Aesthetic Learning/Literacy |
| Expression | | Expressive Learning/Literacy |
| “Empathy” | | Emotional & Critical Literacy |
| Literacy | Emotional Literacy, Social literacy, Reading literacy, “Oral literacy”, Literate, “Literacy & Numeracy Strategy” | Literacy / emotional/social/oral/reading |
| “Oracy” | talking, telling, oral language, “It was more talking than writing I would say” | Oral Literacy |
| “Passion” | | Emotional Literacy |
| Performance | | Expressive Literacy |
| “Reading” | reading literacy, “They need to be literate” | Reading Literacy |
| “Respect” | | Social literacy |
| Social | | Social literacy |

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|-----------|---|----------------------------------|
| “Story” | | Oral Literacy /Written Literacy |
| “Writing” | | Literacy / Creative writing |
| “Voice” | finding a “writing voice”, oral literacy & language development | Written Literacy / Oral Literacy |

Uncategorised Open Codes: Ability, Aim, Funding, Money, Junior Cycle, Impact, Principal

Appendix 3 Tables of Additional Quotations from students, teachers and artist-writers

These Tables contain additional quotations from teachers, artist-writers and students (in that order) on themes that emerged from the data. The theme is noted on the left-hand side of the Table, with the comment in the large middle column along with the source (with reference to Appendix 5). The comments are included to illustrate the rich data received from participants on various themes during the course of the study and to provide more background data to Chapter Five.

Tables of Additional Quotations

| Sub-topic | Quotation from the teacher | |
|---------------|---|--|
| Artist-writer | <p>“I think it was a very quiet effect that ‘Joan’ had, now when I reflect on it. Because when she came in to read the poetry, she would make all the movements and intonations and all that, at first the girls were giggling but in a way it showed them that they too could do that and not care” (‘Deirdre’ teacher interview (2), Bay School: Appendix 5).</p> | |
| | <p>“Yeah. I would say that’s essential to the process. And I suppose how can you dictate that? I don’t know. I would have found over the years here that ‘Ivan’ as a Writer in the classroom, is extremely flexible and easy to work with. That has created an understanding between himself and ourselves as Teachers who are involved and it has changed the process slightly. It has allowed us, because that trust and openness is there, there are times when I know I have been able to say things to him and ask him to do particular things, because, like I said, I felt I could. There is that ability between us to communicate. I would have seen that as vital to the process improving, I suppose, if you like, over the years. Or maybe not even improving but tailoring to our needs” (‘Patricia’ teacher interview: Appendix 5).</p> | |
| | <p>“we have great confidence in each other. I can walk in and I know I’m not interrupting or I can interject or I can say nothing. If I say nothing ‘Will’ knows I’m not in the corner sulking or I’m not correcting tests over in the corner, I’m always just watching and if I make an interjection, it will be.... he doesn’t even look to see what I’m going to say, he’ll take it. We understand each other very well and it’s great. I build him up a little bit, before he arrives, with the students. I have it taken down now but I had a poster up there of an interview ‘Will’ did with some magazine and there were pictures on it and the interview so I had it up on the wall. The posters are taken down now because this room might possibly be used in case of an emergency during the exams so you can’t have posters up. I had to take</p> | |

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| | down all of my things but ‘Will’s’ head is usually up there somewhere so they see that he is somebody (laughing)!” (‘Charlie’ teacher interview (1), Hill School: Appendix 5). | |
| | “I think I should be more in contact with ‘Ivan’ from the outset rather than coming in four weeks into the project and ‘Ivan’ coming to me asking has anyone given me anything at all. They need to realise that they have something to do, they have a role to play in this and I have a role to play in this but I don’t think I exploited my role as much as I should have done” (‘Ann’ teacher interview (2), Bay School: Appendix 5). | |
| | “Like I said, I think I should talk to ‘Ivan’ at the start, generally see what he is doing in the two classes. That’s not always possible because you might have a class before he comes in but even by virtue of an email, a few lines, ‘Ivan’ what are you planning to do in this? Is there anything I can do to help you? You’re fine, you are sitting in the back of the room, you could very well do your own work and not pay attention to what they are doing if you wanted to. I think my role has to be more of a Liaison, an intermediate between ‘Ivan’ and the students. Whereas I only acted as an intermediate when the clock was ticking. Panic! They have nothing to produce” (‘Ann’ teacher interview (2), Bay School: Appendix 5). | |
| Imagination | “the confidence of the imagination” (‘Charlie’ teacher interview (1), Hill School: Appendix 5). | |
| Writing | “If it can be presented as a bit of fun, serious fun but fun, this is fun. And every Writer that writes, they are writing because it’s fun. They have to write, they can’t help it, but its fun. If they don’t write they won’t enjoy life so eventually they begin to realise that if they are going to enjoy life they are going to have to write. They might learn that when they are age 7 or 70 but eventually they learn it. That’s why a Writer that comes in is important too because this Writer has, at some point in their lives, realised that writing is vital for their existence and they can convey that, usually subconsciously but the kids get it, that writing is important. It’s not just filling pages. How many pages do I have to write? No, it’s can I | |

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| | survive if I don't? Which is a totally different way of looking at it" ('Charlie' teacher interview (1), Hill School: Appendix 5). | |
| | "but a Writer will come in and will do and say and think things in a classroom like that, that you won't as a Teacher when you are not a Writer. So it's looking at the creative process from the point of view of a Writer. Somebody who is involved in it full time, somebody who is professional in it I suppose, if you like" ('Patricia' teacher interview: Appendix 5). | |
| Oracy | "Some of the braver ones learn how to ask him questions as well (laughs) and I shouldn't say brave there at all but I suppose some of the more confident students learn how to ask him questions about writing that you would only ask of a Writer, that you wouldn't ask of a Teacher" ('Patricia' teacher interview: Appendix 5). | |

| Sub-topic | Quotation from the artist-writer | |
|----------------------|--|--|
| Learning environment | “a pleasant room with good acoustic and furniture that can be easily moved around and no schoolbags! Just no schoolbags!” (‘Joan’ artist-writer interview (2), Park School: Appendix 5). | |
| ‘Product’ | “I think having respect for the actual issues is important and that we don’t deal with superficial models of hunger and famine, those poor people over there, let’s give them more money, isn’t it sad? We are giving quite a sophisticated, challenging, complex approach to these issues. I’d rather get them to write something quick and fast in response to that and move on. Em....If I tried to get one person to work on that poem and develop that poem, and work on it line by line, it not only becomes laboured and potentially it doesn’t even get any better, but possibly even the theme starts to feel laboured....I think it’s important, yeah....just get the balance between developing them as creative writers, as imaginative writers, as being articulate in speech and in writing. Finding a voice in speech and in writing and.... marrying that with becoming more aware of themselves and others as people, as citizens in a global context. If those two things are going together, I think it’s working. I wouldn’t really want to feel that they had become great writers but don’t really care about the issues or they are really fascinated about the issues and all we did was talk about the issues but they didn’t get a chance to articulate their response. The hope is to be able to squeeze in time for both” (‘Will’ artist-writer interview (2), Hill School: Appendix 5). | |
| Teacher | “But this particular Teacher is great because she is not only really interested but she is really observing and she is listening and she is talking about what she is experiencing and she is wanting to put it into practice herself as well which I don’t feel it’s my role to show her.....to model something for her...you know....because what I do.....I think I just do what I do because that’s me. So I don’t think it’s up to me to model something but <u>she</u> sees it like that. She seems to be saying ‘I like what you’re doing, I want to implement it | |

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| | <p>myself’ and that’s not what I would have set out to do. I wouldn’t set out to say ‘here’s a Teacher and I can show her how to do something’. I would never think of it like that. But it is interesting to see her watching and saying ‘oh I like that’ and ‘I like the way you have handled the situation’ and that’s very interesting for me to get that feedback from her.</p> <p>It’s very informal, but I do get....I but I feel it coming back to me. ‘Oh yes, I like what you’re doing’” (‘Joan’ artist-writer interview (1), Park School: Appendix 5).</p> | |
| | <p>“One of the schools, the school in N, the kids are fifth years and are writing about journeys. Several of them wrote very, very emotional pieces, very personal pieces which they let me read. We didn’t read them out. They let me read them as I went around the class. And I only found out afterwards, from the Teacher. People wrote about grannies who had died, two girls wrote about fathers who had committed suicide. They didn’t write about it directly but it was there and when.... I thought it was fantastic that they were able to share this with me first of all. The following week I went in and the Teacher said to me that one of the girls had gone for a walk after the class and she thought about it and she decided that having written what she had written she was going to start going to counselling about this. Seemingly, according to the Teacher, she had been resisting this and everybody had been thinking really she needed to.... do something” (‘Will’ artist-writer interview (1), Hill School: Appendix 5).</p> | |
| | <p>“Well you see....In a way there is very little that you can do about it. It isn’t really what you tell the Teacher or what you go in with or how you conceive the thing. You can tell the Teacher how you conceive the thing, yes of course, and they have something to work with. But.... if the Teacher isn’t already really interested in the project and already really engaged and really wanting it to work, no matter how often you tell them or how much you tell them about what you want or require or need from them, you’re not going to get it” (‘Joan’ artist-writer interview (2), Park School: Appendix 5).</p> | |

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| | <p>“Teachers are always very aware of how much effort they have taken to get up in the morning, maybe getting themselves out, maybe nothing to eat, getting the uniform on that maybe wasn’t too good from the night before and getting into school. They are making a big step to actually get into school let alone somebody wanting them to write a fairy story” (‘Jan’ artist-writer interview: Appendix 5).</p> | |
| | <p>“He understands me as a Poet, Dramatist and Song Writer and appreciates that em.... but he also is interested and cares about the project, the issues and....We do have an understanding that has been built upon over the years I think where almost, like, we don’t have to talk about it so much because we are feeding off what we did last year and the year before in terms of an understanding of what we’re doing. So, I think it’s very important. On the other hand, I could go into a brand new school and have done before and meet a Teacher I have never met before and they could be totally into the project, energised and excited about it and you immediately have a good working relationship and the project is very successful, you know. So, that can happen as well” (‘Will’ artist-writer interview (2), Hill School: Appendix 5).</p> | |
| | <p>“That’s their universe. They are spending a lot of time managing and a lot of time doing paperwork so often you are a blow in. Now, that’s not necessarily a bad thing. You show up and you are really creative and then you leave and the Teacher has to deal with the fall out. There needs to be a lot of respect put in place for that. Teachers can often be quite happy to have a visitor come in, it feels like a gift and a break for them. The downside of the break is that many Teachers have sat there, again not always through Poetry Ireland experience, but have used it as a chance to correct papers, talk on the phone, that kind of thing. That’s quite difficult in a story telling performance because the kids are getting two messages” (‘Caroline’ artist-writer interview: Appendix 5).</p> | |
| | <p>“I think most of the Teachers know me, so if they see me wondering around they say hello and I have a very good relationship with the Head Teacher now built up over the years,</p> | |

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| | <p>who I know appreciates the work I do in the school, em....coming here doing this with Poetry Ireland and she knows the way in which Gerry and I have developed this within the school and I think it's something she values very much as being part of N" ('Will' artist-writer interview (2), Hill School: Appendix 5).</p> | |
| | <p>"Interested, engaged and respectful. Somebody who gets that I'm a stranger coming in, that it might be a little bit difficult for me, they pave the way. They are present in the room and they are aware and engaged in the scenario as in they are listening to the story and they are not distracted but also that they are not overly controlling. There's a mutual appreciation I suppose is the ideal situation. Now, if teachers are prepared, as in they have been given enough notification or whatever, they are often there at that lovely middle ground of paving the way for you and sitting there engaged because there is lots of follow up they can do with it" ('Caroline' artist-writer interview: Appendix 5).</p> | |
| | <p>"But this particular teacher is great because she is not only really interested but she is really observing and she is listening and she is talking about what she is experiencing and she is wanting to put it into practice herself" ('Joan' artist-writer interview (1), Park School: Appendix 5).</p> | |
| | <p>"Oh yeah, of course, yeah. I suppose the main thing it does for me is that it makes me feel very comfortable and it encourages me in what I'm doing, so therefore I do more of it. Do you know what I mean? I would tend to say yes, this working. And I'm getting feedback that it's working, I'm getting it from the students themselves and I'm also getting it from the teacher and that makes me.....I suppose I rise up then.....it probably brings me up a level I would think....in what I'm doing" ('Joan' artist-writer interview (1), Park School: Appendix 5).</p> | |
| | <p>"I think the kids wouldn't have been as great as they were if they didn't have such a great teacher. The teacher was really respectful of the kids and yet able to you know, pull them</p> | |

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| | up and keep them on their toes but in a very relaxed kind of way. There was mutual respect, I felt, in that place. That I think is what made it. There was an atmosphere of mutual respect” (‘Joan’ artist-writer interview (2), Park School: Appendix 5). | |
| Preparation | “I work on it. I work hard on it during the week. I want to make this as good as possible so I really work on it during the week.... I would spend a good while on it. It’s not something that you read in five minutes and say you should do this, that or the other. I would read and re-read....I spend hours. I really do. I put everything I’ve got into this, especially when I discover how good they are. I give them all of my time. I really do. I would work, how will I put it in hours, I could work on somebody’s story for an hour and that would only be to create suggestions but I have to get it right. I have to go through it again and again. Some stories I get straight away where they are lacking but yes I do take a long time over them. I go back over them again before I come here” (‘Zoe’ artist-writer interview (1): Appendix 5). | |
| | “Well I suppose there are two things I have to do, one is I have to educate myself and then I have to motivate myself. In a sense I have to parallel the experience I hope that they will go through. In a sense, because I’m a writer I’m coming at it slant, as Emily Dickinson said, she said ‘if you are going to tell the truth, tell it slant’” (‘Will’ artist-writer interview (1), Hill School: Appendix 5). | |
| | “I spent about ¾ hour this morning at my computer, thinking about the kind of things I was going to ask them to think about. These are things that I would always, you know, bring into a group anyway so it’s not as though I was making it up out of nowhere but I was just drawing it altogether for myself. Talking about genre, talking about point of view and talking about the narrator, the stance of the narrator. That’s the planning I did for this morning” (‘Joan’ artist-writer interview (1), Park School: Appendix 5). | |

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| | <p>“I resisted it at first, in my early days. I thought ‘no, it’s not for me’ but I have to come to enjoy it very much so. I learn from it. It makes me go to things, it makes me prepare. I have to pull out Moby Dick and I have to pull out a poem I haven’t read in a long time to prepare for the class. You have to articulate your thoughts about it. Last week I took Sailing to Byzantium, that’s not something I would have done if I wasn’t teaching in a class so it made me think about the ‘perne in a gyre’ and what it meant” (‘Ivan’ pilot artist-writer interview, Bay School: Appendix 5).</p> | |
| | <p>“The hardest part comes after it’s over because I have to correct all of their stories. That’s the hardest work I get. They email them to me and then I start to edit or sometimes I have to send them back and ask them to fix a little piece so there are three or four drafts that come to me so if there are 25 in a class I am getting maybe two versions of each one at least so I’m getting 50 maybe 70 times it comes to me. It’s keeping track of that and sending them on to the Teacher and getting them all into that book is the hardest part” (‘Ivan’ artist-writer interview (1), Bay School: Appendix 5).</p> | |
| Trust | <p>“Well it means that I feel very comfortable about moving on. I don’t feel that I have to win them over. Mean, you do in the beginning, a little bit, you feel that you have to win them over, and I think that job is done. You have to do it at the beginning of the whole residency and then you have to do it again at the beginning of each session. But I feel that using the poetry actually does that for me and now that they have got a confidence about their own response to the poetry, I don’t have to work at that. It just happens. I bring the poem in, we talk about it and we move on and they are in the zone once we have had the little talk about the poem. They have moved out of their everyday lives and they are into this....this more creative zone. The transition seems to be quite natural that way.</p> <p>So, it means that I’m more comfortable and because I’m more comfortable about it I feel that I work better with them because I feel I’ve got them. I feel that they are on my side” (‘Joan’ artist-writer interview (1), Park School: Appendix 5).</p> | |

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| Talking/Oracy | <p>“I want them to get access to their imaginations and I think that in general the....the value of oral work in creative writing is underestimated. I have found that there is a huge amount of creativity in oral work. The more they talk, the more they kind of almost manipulate the story. It’s a bit like kneading or something, the story begins to sort of come together, the way you would knead bread, through talking. And I think oracy is really at the heart of it. So that’s what I want them to do. I want to give them that experience of being able to talk a thing through, rather than always having to....” (‘Joan’ artist-writer interview (1), Park School: Appendix 5).</p> | |
| | <p>“The other reason that keeps me going is that I have noticed our kids are not confident out in the world. The communication thing is lacking to say the least. I really think that this could be just the beginning of that road to giving somebody confidence. Throw back your shoulders and take on the world, look people in the eye honestly and get rid of those gauche, shy, awkward and let’s face it ignorant, hems and the haws” (‘Ivan’ artist-writer interview (2), Bay School: Appendix 5).</p> | |
| | <p>“I give them these little challenges that they do together and that really does start their imagination going. Then when we get talking about the creative aspect of writing they are in to it. When they go home, I give them things to do at home and they know exactly what they’re doing. It does really work. I would never ask anybody to come in cold and sit down and write a story. It wouldn’t work. You know yourself, when you sit down to do something, I know myself, for writing, you have to be in the mood for it, you have to get yourself going if you have been doing something else” (‘Zoe’ artist-writer interview (1), Grove School: Appendix 5).</p> | |
| | <p>“in fact I don’t mind cynical if it’s energised cynical, if it’s articulated cynical because then you can engage with them. If someone listens to what I say and responds to what I’m talking about in terms of hunger and world issues and they have say a quite a cynical attitude that could be combined with say a quite politicised attitude or a rebellious attitude</p> | |

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| | <p>which to me is grand if they are willing to articulate it in a way which is helpful, which feeds into what we are talking about and that can be quite good ‘cos it gives you something to work against too. I think sometimes it’s good for me to be challenged by other opinions” (‘Will’ artist-writer interview (2), Hill School: Appendix 5).</p> | |
| ‘Product’ | <p>“I think when working with a group of 25-30 in a school context, to bring the whole group together along, my own experience is that if I start to do that it becomes laboured, it becomes difficult and you can’t give enough attention to the different needs. So I try to come at it, if you like, with a fresh perspective each week, something new, something different so that they’re always a little bit surprised and eh.... We can all move along together at a certain pace or speed which feels exciting, energised and interested where the material also doesn’t feel laboured. I think if you are going to write a poem about hunger, sometimes, for me it’s almost better to leave well enough alone, and then move on and write a play about it and write a song about it and look at the issue. I think having respect for the actual issues is important and that we don’t deal with superficial models of hunger and famine, those poor people over there, let’s give them more money, isn’t it sad? We are giving quite a sophisticated, challenging, complex approach to these issues. I’d rather get them to write something quick and fast in response to that and move on. Em....If I tried to get one person to work on that poem and develop that poem, and work on it line by line, it not only becomes laboured and potentially it doesn’t even get any better, but possibly even the theme starts to feel laboured” (‘Will’ artist-writer interview (2), Hill School: Appendix 5).</p> | |
| | <p>“Well I think what’ll happen is the stories will get written! And they’ll be at varying levels of success but they will get written and that’s the thing, that they do write something, em.... and that they’re happy themselves that they’ve got at least part of the way towards.... achieving what they wanted to do. And I would like them all....I would like each group to actually produce a story at the end, and they usually do. I don’t think I’ve ever had a group....I don’t think I have ever had a class where any of the groups just gave</p> | |

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| | <p>up and said ‘no I can’t write it’. If we start off with five groups we end up with five stories. So, I don’t....I don’t really expect it to be any different and certainly I feel that they’re going someplace with them.</p> <p>They were all able to give very good accounts today of how their stories are shaping up and they were able to say ‘no I don’t know that yet’ but nobody said ‘I don’t know that and I don’t know how I’m going to resolve it’, they just said ‘I don’t know that yet’. It’s interesting. I’d say ‘how’s this going to work out?’ and they’d say ‘we haven’t got that far yet’ and that’s.....but they were quite confident that they were going to be able to do it so I have no reason to be concerned. I am quite positive about it” (‘Joan’ artist-writer interview (1), Park School: Appendix 5).</p> | |
| | <p>“I like to have some sort of product. A one-off visit is great. You go in and you do your thing and you hope they will remember. I like to try and leave them things they can look up on the internet, I like to leave them with projects started that they can finish so that it’s not just that this woman floats in, hello, how are you, away she goes, ‘I remember we had a Writer’ I want them to remember and actually they do. When you do follow ups, you will find that, they will remember.</p> <p>The residency scheme gives you a chance to do something much deeper where you have usually some sort of a ‘product’ at the end, should it be performing for their parents, those ones I had yesterday were telling stories to the infants when they were minding them and that’s great. The most unlikely characters were doing it as well” (‘Jan’ artist-writer interview: Appendix 5).</p> | |
| Emotional literacy | <p>“Emotional literacy is key to learning. It’s key to overall learning. If you are an abused child, and there are a lot of those, abuse can be anything. Verbal abuse, sexual abuse, physical abuse, bullying, racial abuse, it could be anything. Emotional literacy gives you tools with which to combat or overcome these things. When you do a project with people in disadvantaged neighbourhoods we are decreasing our chances of criminal activity</p> | |

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| | <p>because you are increasing their self-worth. Art changes the life path of that child and it gives them a glimpse of what's possible because we are so limited. Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences is key here because we are so limited in education thinking, numerically and linguistically, these are not the only intelligences. There are now 13 that are listed. By giving art or sports or any of these things as an option, people start to see what they are capable of. Therefore, their capacity to learn increases because they no longer see learning as guilt, shame, 'I'm worthless', that kind of thing" ('Joan' artist-writer interview (2), Park School: Appendix 5).</p> | |
| Collaborative learning | <p>"I think the collaborative thing is great, now maybe for older kids, maybe for people older even than transition year, it might be better to work with them individually but up to that stage I think the collaborative thing is so fruitful and productive, I would really....I wouldn't be really advocating doing individual work, I prefer the collaborative thing" ('Joan' artist-writer interview (2), Park School: Appendix 5).</p> | |
| Imagination | <p>"My role yes. First of all it is to get their imagination going. They have imagination, that's why they're here. Get their imagination going and then give them something to use their imagination on. This small short thing that we did in the beginning and then gradually that has elongated into producing great stories. That's what I see as my role. I am encouraging them. I never stand up and say 'Gosh that's not a good paragraph' or 'you shouldn't do this or that', that's not what it's about. You tease them along, you nurse them along and that really works" ('Zoe' artist-writer interview (1), Grove School: Appendix 5).</p> | |

| Sub-topic | Quotation from the student | |
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| Curriculum | <p>“...as it’s (the residency) used as, in X anyway, preparing you for your Leaving Cert....I think it would be better, personally, as preparation for the Junior Cert because of the way the Leaving Cert is structured. It’s mostly reports and newspaper articles and stuff that comes up, there’s only usually one or two short stories on it and not many people attempt them because they’re generally the hardest ones on it. If people do, the markers are just reading the same thing over and over again so we don’t get the marks. Whereas, at Junior Cert you have a lot more option to write a short story. So I think maybe if you put it, like, a few years below it could be more beneficial but that’s my opinion. Like, I was never good at writing essays so maybe it is beneficial for people who do write short stories in their Leaving Cert but I think it could be better for Junior Cert level” (‘Amanda’ student interview: Appendix 5).</p> <p>“I think if we had it (the residency) now though, in sixth year, I’d say a lot of people would just rather a study class so that they could do their homework. ‘Cos it’d be almost.....I’d say a lot of people would think it would be a bit of a waste of time, right now, whereas in fourth year you have so much time to do things like that. Whereas, in sixth year you are just ‘oh my God!’, even though it would be a great break but other people would obviously take it as an extra, like, bit of stress because you might have homework in it and it’s just adding to it” (Student focus group (2), Park School: Appendix 5).</p> | |
| Sharing their work | <p>“Ivan’ always told us to take what somebody else has done, but adapt it to your own style. So, you would read somebody else’s, and take their ideas but make them your own work. And that was definitely something that helped me when I was writing my essays” (Student focus group (2), Bay School: Appendix 5).</p> | |

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| | <p>P1: Yeah...I liked getting involved and listening to other people's points of view, not only just...yours.</p> <p>P2: Yeah, the group work. It was the team work that was overall.....you were getting everyone's point of view. I think that helped us.</p> <p>P3: It was good when 'she' was coming around to us and helping us. If she read one of your paragraphs and she said it was good, it gave you the confidence to keep on going and write more.</p> <p>And, like, when you finished it and you had that achievement that you did it in a group that you wouldn't normally be with, but you did it in the end. That was good</p> <p>P4: Yeah...the group work was good because you did get to write with people that you wouldn't usually go for. You would, like, you'd just go for your friends if they said just go into groups. If you go with people that you don't really talk to you get to see things from their perspective as opposed to other people that you have something in common with” (Student focus group (2), Park School: Appendix 5).</p> | |
| | <p>“Yeah. I think B, the Poetry winner, ‘him’writing a poem....I just never expected him to be able to, like, write a poem and it was just so out of the box and different. It was really good. It actually made you think about other people in the world. I think it was in the other class [as well that] we got to see...the German student writing a full English essay and actually being....and it was a really good essay but to see him writing it, in full English, proper grammar and everything. We wouldn’t be able to do that in his language. It was just a complete surprise” (‘Amanda’ student interview: Appendix 5).</p> | |
| | <p>“You saw people’s styles of writing as well” (Pilot Student focus group, Bay School: Appendix 5).</p> | |

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| | <p>“Yes, we don’t usually read our work in class so that was definitely different. You got to know what everyone else was writing about as well and it gave you ideas for your story” (Student focus group (pilot), Bay School: Appendix 5).</p> | |
| | <p>“If one story was read out and he said it was really good and hard to compete with you would feel that you didn’t want to do it anymore because you wouldn’t really be able to write as well as that” Student focus group (1), Bay School: Appendix 5.</p> | |
| | <p>“I liked the way you got [feedback from] someone else other than your mam or your dad who would always say ‘oh that’s a great story’, someone who knows how to write” (Student focus group (1), Grove School: Appendix 5).</p> | |
| Artist-writer | <p>“he is definitely eccentric” (Student Focus Group (2): Appendix 5).</p> | |
| ‘Different’ | <p>“P1: You work different in the class as well.... I don’t know, you are more opinionated.</p> <p>P2: More interactive when she’s going around. A teacher will just go around one on one, as we’re in a group, it’s easier. When she gives her opinion it’s constructive criticism instead of just saying ‘change this’, she was helping us and giving us ideas about it.</p> <p>P3: It was very open. Since a lot of the schools are grade oriented and so – exams! This wasn’t like that at all because there were no exams in it. There was nothing to work towards, that made it more free and people were more open to do what they wanted with it. Whereas in an exam situation, we’ll say you are writing essays for English, you would hand it up to a Teacher and they would say ‘grammar, spelling mistakes, your ideas aren’t clear’ but as it was a creative writing class you were more free to make mistakes and then build on them” (Student focus group (1), Park School: Appendix 5).</p> | |
| | <p>“P1: It’s definitely different. It’s more interactive. You can bounce ideas off ‘him’ and ‘he’ will give you ideas. It’s more structured. Whereas you will just write a short story,</p> | |

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| | <p>hand it up and wait for your results to see whether you have done bad or good or whether you need helpful criticism. It was more hands on, you could talk to your friend and say ‘I don’t know what to write here, can you help me?’ and they would help and ‘he’ would come around and help. You felt more free, you could speak about stuff and be more creative with other people around you.</p> <p>P2: Yes, we don’t usually read our work in class so that was definitely different. You got to know what everyone else was writing about as well and it gave you ideas for your story...</p> <p>I think it was good, I learned from other people doing good things as well” (Pilot Student focus group, Bay School: Appendix 5).</p> | |
| | <p>“PI: Also he showed us some of his writing and his is very different, it’s very contemporary style of writing. You could see that people were thinking ‘oh he can write about something he likes, I can do that too’. A lot of poems were written and they were really, really good. Some were to do with sport because that’s something the guys were interested in. It was really nice to see that, people doing things that they probably wouldn’t normally do....</p> <p>P2: Yes. With a teacher teaching you, it’s different to when ‘he’ was teaching us. It didn’t feel like learning. It was very relaxed” (Pilot Student focus group, Bay School: Appendix 5).</p> | |
| | <p>“Actually one more thing I was thinking about was, in the classroom, if I answered something and it was an okay answer, then that was [how] everyone answer[ed] whereas with ‘him’, you weren’t allowed to say ‘oh what she said’, you had to challenge yourself, to think for yourself, so then everyone had their own opinions in the class which was different. A lot of the time a lot of our English class would have the same answer for the poetry</p> | |

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| | question and another English class would have the same answers but when ‘he’ was in everyone had different opinions” (Pilot Student focus group, Bay School: Appendix 5). | |
| | <p>“P1: [It changed] when we were writing the stories I think.</p> <p>P2: Yeah, you could kind of feel it...</p> <p>P1: It got interacted, we were doing it with ‘her’ and we were getting involved. ‘Cause, like, it's different when a Teacher.....well not a Teacher but a person is standing there telling you what to do, to where you are actually doing it. You get a sense of it yourself.</p> <p>P2: An you could, kinda like, see yourself improving as the, like.....each week went on, so..... You know, it was good.....” (Student focus group (2), Park School: Appendix 5).</p> | |
| | <p>“P1: You learn individuality. Everybody is different, like. You could see things from a whole different perspective, like, than your best friend even, someone that you are really close to and you think [that] you are really alike. She could see something completely different to you. And like, that's good I suppose...</p> <p>P2: Yeah....I don't know.....’she’ kind of gave us a different outlook on how you start to write something. It did help. But, I don't know.....like, for you.....after fourth year, moving onto fifth and sixth, you...never really have a chance to just write whatever you want, you always have a topic to write on.</p> <p>P3: There was a lot more freedom, whereas with the Leaving Cert you are obviously given a topic and you are told to write about it, kinda thing. Whereas there was so much more freedom where you could just put your hand to paper and just keep going” (Student focus group (2), Park School: Appendix 5).</p> | |
| | “P1: I thought it was a help because it got you thinking about different ideas and different ways to write different things. Say what ‘she’ was saying about the first-person narrative, some people might not think of writing that in an essay, some people might just | |

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| | <p>write an essay about someone else and not put it in your own context. That was good going into fifth year because when you start doing creative writing, personal writing and writing descriptive essays, you can change it around. So, like, it gave you the skills to actually know what the difference is between the three and then pick which one you are going to put with each essay...</p> <p>P2: It really broadened your mind because as we said other people got to watch films [during their particular TY module] and it [the creative writing module] got us concentrating more and ready for fifth year” (Student focus group (2), Park School: Appendix 5).</p> | |
| | <p>“P1: Then there was another aspect that I remember that was really interesting. He came in with pictures of places like Chernobyl and then over in Africa of starving children. He told you, you are looking at that and the first things that pop in your head he wanted me to deny them and not think about them and write almost the polar opposite to those. So I’m looking at this poor child who is malnourished over in Africa and I have to write down happiness, fun and great life. It was really weird. It really took us out of our comfort zones but it did help go against gut feelings and natural instincts when you look at something. It was a different aspect to English but it was really interesting, so it is one definite thing I remember.</p> <p>P2: Yeah, that was one element. Towards the end we did a song.</p> <p>P1: Yeah.</p> <p>P2: There was the song writing. We broke up into three or four groups. While probably it was bit awkward and a bit self-conscious, the finished products weren’t really there but I don’t know, we just had really good fun trying to get them organised and all set up. The one thing that I would take from the whole workshop would be, not even when it comes to my English but just in general, like a lot of things in T.Y., we just kind of bonded more.</p> | |

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| | <p>We were altogether and it was really good just to, as (the other student) was saying, when we got to read out our different poems, hearing ‘his’ description was just fantastic!</p> <p>P1: (laughs)</p> <p>P2: You get to pick up different aspects. He [the artist-writer] looked at it this way, rather than looking at it from another perspective and it’s just to become more aware” (Student Focus Group (2): Appendix 5).</p> | |
| | <p>“Yeah. I think Nick, the Poetry winner, Nick....writing a poem....I just never expected him to be able to, like, write a poem and it was just so out of the box and different. It was really good. It actually made you think about other people in the world. I think it was in the other class but we got to see him, the German student, writing a full English essay and actually being....and it was a really good essay but to see him writing it, in full English, proper grammar and everything. We wouldn’t be able to do that in his language. It was just a complete surprise” (‘Amanda’ student interview).</p> | |

Appendix 4 Plain Language Statements (PLSs) and Informed Consent Forms (ICFs)

The variety of participants within the study necessitated the generation of several different versions of the plain language statement and accompanying consent forms, particularly since the participants included ninety-one (91) teenage under eighteen (18) years of age, their teachers, the artist-writers, school principals and a range of identified experts. This required the generation of a range of ICF's and PLS's, explaining the study and which outlined and requested differing levels of participation and examples are set out below. They were distributed to all those who participated in the study, including principals, teachers, parents/guardians, students and artist-writers and also to those identified experts consulted during the course of the study. The consent forms and plain language statements were individually designed to cover the involvement of the various participants and were distributed before any observations, focus groups or interviews were conducted.

PLS & ICF Generic

Exploring perceptions of learning within The Writers-in-Residence Scheme

A request for the participation in the above research project, which is being conducted by Jane O'Hanlon (EdD student) with the Education Department at St Patrick's College, Drumcondra. This project will form part the researcher's EdD thesis, and has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee and the Department of Education, St Patrick's College, Drumcondra.

Date

Dear

I am currently a student on the EdD Programme in St Patrick's College, Drumcondra, part of which involves the carrying out of an in-depth a research project. It is my intention to take this opportunity to research the Writers-in-Residence Scheme. The project will be conducted under the supervision of Dr Michael O'Leary, EdD Course Director with the Education Department, St Patrick's College, Drumcondra and Dr Mary Shine Thompson, former Dean of Research and Humanities in St Patrick's College, Drumcondra.

The focus of the study is the conduct of research on the Writers-in-Residence Scheme, the first in-depth study of the Scheme since its inception in the year 2000, as part of the Writers-in-Schools Scheme. The aim of the research is to try to identify the perceptions of learning of the various stakeholders (pupils/students, teachers, writers and Poetry Ireland Education staff) that takes place during a residency.

In this context I am interested in finding out the background and genesis to the Writers-in-Schools Scheme. I am particularly interested in the arts and education climates out of which the Scheme emerged and the initial rationale behind the Scheme itself. I am also interested in current perceptions of the Scheme by other stakeholders such as the Arts Council. The study affords the opportunity to contribute to making the Writers-in-Residence Scheme more responsive to the needs of the pupils/students, teachers and writers by helping to contribute to the design of the Scheme into the future and by contributing to the development of an assessment framework for arts-in-education more generally.

Your involvement in the study will mean participating in one (or possibly two) semi-structured interviews lasting approximately one-hour. Interviews will be conducted at a location and at a time that is convenient for you and I would like to be able to return to you for possible clarifications, or with questions that may arise as a result of the study. With your permission, the interviews will be video or tape-recorded so as to ensure an accurate record of what you say.

We intend to take all reasonable steps to protect the anonymity and the confidentiality of everyone involved to the fullest possible extent, within the limits of the law. Your name and contact details will be kept in a separate, password-protected computer file from any data that you supply. This will only be able to be linked to your responses by the researchers, for example, in order to know where to send your interview transcript for checking. In the final report, you will be referred to by a pseudonym. We will remove any references to personal

information that might allow someone to guess your identity. However, it may not always be possible to protect interviewees' anonymity.

All data will be stored on memory sticks which will kept in a safe or locked filing cabinet and confidentiality will be maintained, subject to legal limitations and unless there is a danger of self-harm or harm to another person.

Data collected for this project will be retained by Poetry Ireland and the researcher, and may contribute to further research unrelated to this dissertation, to be undertaken either by the researcher or by Poetry Ireland. Findings may also be published and presented at academic conferences.

Involvement in this research study is voluntary. Participants may withdraw from the study at any point. There will be no penalty for withdrawing before all stages of the study are completed.

This plain language statement is for you to keep.

Consent Form

If you would like to participate, please indicate that you have read and understood this information by signing the accompanying consent form and returning it in the envelope provided to:

If you have any concerns about this study and wish to contact an independent person, please contact: The Administrator, Office of the Dean of Research and Humanities, Room C214, St Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Dublin 9. Tel +353-(0)1-884 2149

Yours sincerely

Jane O'Hanlon

Informed Consent Form

I. Research Study Title: Perceptions of learning within The Writers-in-Residence Scheme: Exploring perceptions of learning within a national English language arts-in-education programme as one element of a framework for assessment for learning within schools for arts-in-education programmes.

II. Purpose of the Research: The focus of the study is the conduct of research on the Writers-in-Residence Scheme, the first in-depth study of the Scheme since its inception in the year 2000. The aim of the research is to try to identify the perceptions of learning that takes place during a residency by the various stakeholders including, pupils/students, teachers, writers and Poetry Ireland Education staff.

III. Requirements of Participation in Research Study My involvement will include participation in one (or possibly two) semi-structured interviews lasting approximately one-hour

IV. Confirmation that involvement in the Research Study is voluntary: I am aware that if I agree to take part in this study, I can withdraw from participation at any stage. There will be no penalty for withdrawing before all stages of the Research Study have been completed.

V. I am aware that it is intended to take all reasonable steps to protect the anonymity and the confidentiality of everyone involved to the fullest possible extent, within the limits of the law. Names and contact details will be kept in a separate, password-protected computer file from any data that is supplied. This will only be able to be linked to responses by the researcher, for example, in order to know where to send an interview transcript for checking. In the final report, people will be referred to by a pseudonym. Any references to personal information that might allow someone to guess at identity will be removed. Data collected will not be used for any purpose other than that flagged at the outset of the project without the permission of the participants. All purposes for which the data is intended have been clearly set out and details given of how confidentiality will be protected.

VI. Participant – Please complete the following:

(Circle Yes or No for each question).

| | |
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| Have you read or had read to you the Plain Language Statement? | Yes/No |
| Do you understand the information provided? | Yes/No |
| Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study? | Yes/No |
| Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions? | Yes/No |

VII. I have read and understood the information in this form. The researchers have answered my questions and concerns, and I have a copy of this consent form. Therefore, I consent to take part in this research project.

Participant's Signature:

Name in Block Capitals:

Witness:

Date:

PLS & ICF Principal

SPD & PI Logos

Exploring perceptions of learning within The Writers-in-Residence Scheme

A request for the participation in the above research project, which is being conducted by Jane O'Hanlon (EdD student) with the Education Department at St Patrick's College, Drumcondra. This project will form part the researcher's EdD thesis, and has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee and the Department of Education, St Patrick's College, Drumcondra.

Date

Dear Principal

I am writing to you to invite your school to participate in the above research project, which is being conducted by me on the Poetry Ireland Writers-in-Residence Scheme. This will be the first in-depth study of the Writers-in-Residence Scheme since it became part of the Writers-in-Schools Scheme over twelve years ago. I am currently a student on the EdD Programme with the Education Department, St Patrick's College, Drumcondra. This research project is under the supervision of Dr Michael O'Leary, EdD Course Director with the Education Department, St Patrick's College, Drumcondra and Dr Mary Shine Thompson, former Dean of Research and Humanities, St Patrick's College, Drumcondra. Your school has been selected for the study as one of the schools that applied for a Writer-in-Residence Programme for Spring 2013.

The aim of the study is to identify what takes place for the pupils/students and the teacher through their interaction with a writer over the course of an eight-week Writer-in-Residence Programme.

The schools' involvement will require your consent for (i) video-recording during the Residency (ii) the class teacher's participation in three semi-structured one-hour tape-recorded interviews, at the beginning, middle and end of the project, at a convenient time and place. The teacher will be asked to keep a journal, to record thoughts, ideas, experience, questions and suggestions etc., which will be collected by me at the end of the project. I would also like to collect samples of work produced by the pupils/students as part of the residency (with their permission) and to conduct two one-hour focus groups with them at the beginning and end of the residency, in the school at a time that is convenient.

Involvement of the pupils/students entail their being filmed over the course of the project and participating in two focus groups, at the beginning and end of the residency. Pupils/students will be asked to keep a diary of their thoughts, ideas, experiences, questions and suggestions etc., about the residency, which I will collect at the end of the project and this diary or journal can be anonymous if preferred. I would also like to be able to collect samples of pupils/students work with the writer for inclusion in my study.

Apart from this direct involvement, there is no intention to change the residency in any way.

All data will be stored on memory sticks which will kept in a safe or locked filing cabinet and confidentiality will be maintained subject to legal limitations. Once the thesis has been

completed, a brief summary of the findings will be made available. It is also possible that the results will be presented at academic conferences.

We intend to take all reasonable steps to protect the anonymity and the confidentiality of everyone involved to the fullest possible extent, within the limits of the law. Names and contact details will be kept in a separate, password-protected computer file from any data that is supplied. This will only be able to be linked to responses by the researcher, for example, in order to know where to send an interview transcript for checking. In the final report, people will be referred to by a pseudonym. We will remove any references to personal information that might allow someone to guess at identity. However, it may not always be possible to protect interviewees' anonymity.

Data collected for this project will be retained by Poetry Ireland and the researcher, and may contribute to further research unrelated to this dissertation, to be undertaken either by the researcher or by Poetry Ireland. Findings may also be published and presented at academic conferences.

There are direct and indirect benefits to participants in the Research Study. They include the opportunity to contribute to making the Writers-in-Residence Scheme more responsive to the needs of the pupils/students, teachers and schools, by helping to determine the future direction of the Scheme and also by contributing to the development of the arts-in-education in general, through the possible development of an assessment framework for the Writers-in-Residence Scheme.

Your involvement in this research study is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any point. There will be no penalty for withdrawing before all stages of the study are completed.

This plain language statement is for you to keep.

Consent Form

If you would like to participate, please indicate that you have read and understood this information by signing the accompanying consent form and returning it in the envelope provided to:

In the event that you have concerns about this study that either myself or my supervisors cannot answer, and wish to contact an independent person, please contact: The Administrator, Office of the Dean of Research and Humanities, Room C214, St Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Dublin 9. Tel +353-(0)1-884 2149

Yours sincerely

Jane O'Hanlon

Informed Consent Form

I. Research Study Title: Perceptions of Learning within The Writers-in-Residence Scheme: Exploring perceptions of learning within a national arts-in-education programme.

II. Purpose of the Research: The focus of the study is the conduct of research on the Writers-in-Residence Scheme, the first in-depth study of the Scheme since its inception in the year 2000. The aim of the research is to try to identify the perceptions of learning that takes place during a residency by the various stakeholders including, students, teachers, writers and Poetry Ireland Education staff.

III. Requirements of Participation in the Research Study

The school's involvement will require your consent for:

- filming of the writer sessions with the group during the Residency
- the class teacher's participation in two semi-structured interviews, at the mid-point and end of the residency, to take place at an agreed time and place
- the teacher being asked to keep a journal, to record thoughts, ideas, experience, questions and suggestions etc., regarding the residency which will be collected by me at the end of the project
- to gather portfolios of work produced by the students as part of the residency (with their permission)
- to conduct a filmed focus group (class discussion) with them at the end of the residency. This would take place in the school at a time that is convenient.
- students will also be asked to keep a diary/journal of their thoughts, ideas, experiences, questions and suggestions etc., about the residency, which I will collect at the end of the project. These can be anonymous if preferred, and will be rendered anonymous by me in the final research
- to gather copies of student portfolios of their work with the writer for inclusion in the final study

IV. Confirmation that involvement in the Research Study is voluntary: I am aware that if I agree to take part in this study, the school can withdraw from participation at any stage. There will be no penalty for withdrawing before all stages of the Research Study have been completed.

V. I am aware that it is intended to take all reasonable steps to protect the anonymity and the confidentiality of everyone involved to the fullest possible extent, within the limits of the law. Names and contact details will be kept in a separate, password-protected computer file from any data that is supplied. This will only be able to be linked to responses by the researcher, for example, in order to know where to send an interview transcript for checking. In the final report, people will be referred to by a pseudonym. Any references to personal information that might allow someone to guess at identity will be removed. Data collected will not be used for any purpose other than that flagged at the outset of the project without the permission of the participants. All purposes for which the data is intended have been clearly set out and details given of how confidentiality will be protected.

VI. Please complete the following:

(Circle Yes or No for each question).

| | |
|--|--------|
| Have you read or had read to you the Plain Language Statement? | Yes/No |
| Do you understand the information provided? | Yes/No |
| Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study? | Yes/No |
| Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions? | Yes/No |

VII. I have read and understood the information in this form. The researcher has answered my questions and concerns, and I have a copy of this consent form. Therefore, I consent to take part in this research project

Participant's Signature:

Name in Block Capitals:

Witness:

Date:

Plain Language Statement

Exploring perceptions of learning within The Writers-in-Residence Scheme

This is a request asking for permission for the participation of your child in a research project on The Writers-in-Residence Scheme, which is being carried out by Jane O'Hanlon (EdD student) with the Education Department at St Patrick's College, Drumcondra. This project will form part of my final thesis, and it has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee and the Department of Education, St Patrick's College, Drumcondra.

Overview of the project from Jane O'Hanlon

Dear Parent/Guardian,

My name is Jane O'Hanlon and I am currently a student on the Doctorate in Education Programme in St Patrick's College, Drumcondra. I am also the education officer with the Writers-in-Schools Scheme which has been running in schools all over the country for the past thirty years (see www.poetryireland.ie/education). I have received permission from the school principal to write to you to explain the research that I am doing and to request permission from you for your child to participate in the project, which is being undertaken by me in your child's school. The project will be conducted under the supervision of Dr Michael O'Leary, EdD Course Director with the Education Department, St Patrick's College, Drumcondra and Dr Mary Shine Thompson, former Dean of Research and Humanities in St Patrick's College, Drumcondra.

The study will follow the pupils/students in the class as they work with a writer who will be in the school through the Writers-in-Schools Scheme. I want to try to find out what it is like for pupils/students when a writer comes in to work with them over the course of a Writers-in-Residence Programme, which usually takes place over eight weeks. I want the pupils/students to help me to understand what happens during this time and what they feel they learn. I will also be speaking to the teacher and the writer to see what they think about the programme.

This is a study of the Writers-in-Residence programme and not a study of the pupils/students who take part in it. They will be helping me to understand the programme from their point of view to try and improve it. If you agree to the involvement of your child in the study, it will involve him/her being filmed over the eight weeks when the writer is working with them. I would also like him/her to participate in two group interviews of about one hour each, which will be conducted by me in the school and will take place at the beginning and the end of the project and which I would also like permission to film. I would also like pupils/students to keep a diary in which they can write or draw about what they liked or didn't like and record any questions or ideas they may have about the project. This diary will be completely confidential and can be anonymous if they wish. I would also like to be able to collect samples of the work that pupils/students may create during the course of the residency, for inclusion in the study.

The participation of your child in the study will help us to make improvements to the Writers-in-Residence Scheme not only for your child and his/her school but also for others.

The consent form you've received with this plain language statement is to ask for your permission to film your child as he/she works with the writer during the residency, to conduct two filmed group interviews and to collect their diaries at the end of the project and also to include their work as part of my thesis in order to demonstrate the work that takes place during a residency.

All the information that is collected will be treated as confidential and will be stored on memory sticks and will be kept securely. Once the thesis has been completed, a short summary will be sent to you. It is also possible that the results will be presented at academic conferences, or published in academic journals/books and reported in the press.

Your child's involvement in this study is voluntary and he/she may withdraw from the study at any point, with no penalty for withdrawing.

This plain language statement is for you to keep.

Consent Form

If you would like your child to participate, please indicate that you have read and understood this information by signing the consent form on the next page and returning it to your child's teacher.

If you would like any further information, or have any concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher; Jane O'Hanlon (01-6789001) Course Director Dr Michael O'Leary (01 8842000) or if you wish to contact an independent person, please contact: The Administrator, Office of the Dean of Research and Humanities, Room C214, St Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Dublin 9. Tel +353-(0)1-884 2149

Yours sincerely

Jane O'Hanlon

Informed Consent Form

I. Research Study Title: A Study of The Writers-in-Residence Scheme.

II. Purpose of the Research: This is a study of the Writers-in-Residence Scheme and it will follow the writer as he works with the class, to try to find out what takes place for students when a writer comes in to work with them over the course of a Writer-in-Residence Programme. The study will try to find out what happens during that time and what students feel they learn from this experience. The researcher will be asking the teacher, the writer and the students these questions.

III. Requirements of Participation in Research Study: My child's involvement in this research will include him/her being filmed over the course of the writer's visits to the school. He/she will also be take part in a filmed group discussion (focus group), at the end of the project. My child will be asked to keep a diary in which they can write or draw about what they like or don't like about the project and where they can write down any questions or ideas they may have about the project. This diary can be anonymous if the student wishes and it will be collected by the researcher at the end of the project and it will be included as part of the research material. A portfolio or collection of the work that the student creates during the course of the residency will also be collected by the researcher and will be included in the final study.

IV. Confirmation that involvement in the Research Study is voluntary: I am aware that if I agree to my child's participation in this study, that he/she can withdraw from participation at any stage and there will be no penalty for withdrawing.

V. I am aware that it is intended to take all reasonable steps to protect the anonymity and the confidentiality of everyone involved to the fullest possible extent, within the limits of the law.

VI. Please complete the following:

(Circle Yes or No for each question).

| | |
|--|--------|
| Have you read or had read to you the Research Statement? | Yes/No |
| Do you understand the information provided? | Yes/No |
| Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study? | Yes/No |
| Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions? | Yes/No |

VII. I have read and understood the information in this form. The researcher has answered my questions and concerns, and I have a copy of this consent form. Therefore, I give my consent for my child to take part in this research project

Participant's Signature:

Name in Block Capitals:

Witness:

Date:

PLS & ICF Student

SPD & PI Logos

Date

Dear Student

My name is Jane O'Hanlon and I am currently a student on the Doctorate in Education Programme in St Patrick's College, Drumcondra. I am also the education officer with the Writers-in-Schools Scheme which has been running in schools all over the country for the past thirty years (see www.poetryireland.ie/education). I have received permission from your school principal and your teacher to write to you to explain the research that I am doing and to invite you to participate in the project, which is being conducted by me in your school.

The study will follow the writer as he/she works with your class, to try to find out what takes place for students when a writer comes in to work with you over the course of a Writer-in-Residence Programme. This usually happens over eight weeks and I want to try to find out what takes place during the residency and what you feel you learn from the experience. I will also be asking to the teacher and the writer how they understand what happens during the residency.

This is a study of the Writers-in-Residence Scheme itself. It is not a study of the students who take part in it and you will not be marked on it.

If you agree to be involved in the study it will involve being filmed over the course of the project and taking part in two focus groups (a discussion with the class group and myself) lasting approximately one hour each, at the beginning and end of the residency. These focus groups will also (with your permission) be filmed. It will involve keeping a diary of your thoughts, ideas, experiences, questions and suggestions etc., about the residency, which I will collect from you at the end of the project and this diary or journal can be anonymous if you would prefer. I would also like to be able to collect samples of the work that you do with the writer and these may be included in my study.

All the information collected by me will be put on to memory sticks which will kept in a safe or locked filing cabinet. I would also like to be able to use this information for further research, conference presentations and for publication.

I would be very grateful for your help with the study, as it will help us to improve the Writers-in-Residence Scheme not only for your school but also for others.

It is important that you know that your involvement in this research study is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any point. There will be no penalty for withdrawing.

This plain language statement is for you to keep.

Consent Form: Please indicate that you have read and understood this information by signing the consent form on the next page and returning it to your teacher. If you have concerns about this study that I or your teacher cannot answer please contact: The Administrator, *Office of the Dean of Research and Humanities, Room C214, St Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Dublin 9. Tel +353-(0)1-884 2149*

Yours sincerely
Jane O'Hanlon

Informed Consent Form

I. Research Study Title: A Study of the Writers-in-Residence Scheme.

II. Purpose of the Research: This is a study of the Writers-in-Residence Scheme. The researcher will follow the writer as she works with the class, to try to find out what takes place for students when a writer comes in to work with us during a Writer-in-Residence Project. The research is to try to find out what takes place during the residency, what I think about it and what I feel I learn from the experience. These questions will also be asked of the teacher and the writer.

III. Requirements of Participation in Research Study: Being involved in the study means I will be part of a group that is being filmed when the writer visits the class. I will be taking part in a class discussion, or focus group, at end of the project, which will also be filmed. I will keep a journal/diary of thoughts, ideas, experiences, questions and suggestions etc., about the project, which will be collected at the end of the project and will become part of the research on the project. This diary or journal can be anonymous. I will also keep a portfolio of all the work that I do during the residency and this work will also become part of the final study.

IV. Confirmation that involvement in the Research Study is voluntary: I am aware that if I agree to take part in this study, I can withdraw from participation at any stage.

V. The information that is collected will only be used for the uses stated in the letter that was given to me and to my parents/guardians.

VI. Please complete the following

(Circle Yes or No for each question).

Have you read or had read to you the Research Statement? Yes/No

Do you understand the information provided? Yes/No

Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study? Yes/No

Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions? Yes/No

I have read and understood the information in this form. The researcher has answered my questions and concerns, and I have a copy of this consent form. Therefore, I consent to take part in this research project

Participant's Signature:

Name in Block Capitals:

Witness:

Date:

Exploring perceptions of learning within The Writers-in-Residence Scheme

A request for the participation in the above research project, which is being conducted by Jane O'Hanlon (EdD student) with the Education Department at St Patrick's College, Drumcondra. This project will form part the researcher's EdD thesis, and has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee and the Department of Education, St Patrick's College, Drumcondra.

Date

Dear Teacher

I am currently a student on the EdD Programme with the Education Department, St Patrick's College, Drumcondra. I am writing to you to invite you to participate in the above research project, which is being conducted by me on the Writers-in-Residence Scheme, under the supervision of Dr Michael O'Leary, EdD course director with the Education Department, St Patrick's College, Drumcondra and Dr Mary Shine Thompson, former Dean of Research and Humanities at St Patrick's College, Drumcondra. This will be the first in-depth study of the Writers-in-Residence Scheme itself, since it was added to the Writers-in-Schools Scheme, over twelve years ago.

The aim is to identify what takes place for the pupils/students and the teacher through their interaction with a writer over the course of an eight-week Writer-in-Residence Programme. I am particularly interested in finding out what you as a teacher think takes place (or does not take place) when the pupils/students work with a writer; in any learning you can identify or that you think takes place and how you might characterise that learning.

You have been selected for the study as one of the schools have applied for a Writer-in-Residence Programme for Spring 2013. Your involvement will require your consent to being filmed over the eight-week residency and your participation in three semi-structured, interviews each lasting one hour, to be conducted by me. The interviews will take place at the beginning, middle and end of the project (at a time and place convenient for you) and with your permission, the interviews will be video or tape-recorded so that we can ensure that we make an accurate record of what you say. You will also be asked to keep a journal throughout the project, to record your thoughts, ideas, experience, questions and suggestions etc., which will be collected by me at the end of the project. This journal will be seen only by myself and my supervisors, but I would like to retain it as part of a Poetry Ireland data set that may be used for other research in the future. I would also like to collect samples of work produced by the pupils/students as part of the residency (with their permission) and to conduct two one hour focus filmed groups with them at the beginning and end of the residency, in the school and at a time that is convenient for everyone. Equally I would be happy to collect samples of any work (creative or pedagogical) that you might produce as a result of the residency

Apart from this direct involvement, there is no intention to change the residency in any way.

All data will be stored on memory sticks which will kept in a safe or locked filing cabinet and confidentiality will be maintained subject to legal limitations. Once the thesis has been completed, a brief summary of the findings will be made available to you. It is also possible that the results will be presented at academic conferences, or published in academic journals/books and reported in the press.

We intend to take all reasonable steps to protect the anonymity and the confidentiality of everyone involved to the fullest possible extent, within the limits of the law. Your name and contact details will be kept in a separate, password-protected computer file from any data that you supply. This will only be able to be linked to your responses by the researchers, for example, in order to know where to send your interview transcript for checking. In the final report, you will be referred to by a pseudonym. We will remove any references to personal information that might allow someone to guess your identity. However, it may not always be possible to protect interviewees' anonymity.

There are direct and indirect benefits to participants from involvement in the Research Study, including the opportunity to contribute to making the Writers-in-Residence Scheme more responsive to the needs of the pupils/students, teachers and schools, by helping to determine the future direction and focus of the Scheme and also by contributing to the development of art-in-education in general through the possible development of an assessment framework for the Writers-in-Residence Scheme.

Your involvement in this research study is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any point. There will be no penalty for withdrawing before all stages of the study are completed.

This plain language statement is for you to keep.

Consent Form

If you would like to participate, please indicate that you have read and understood this information by signing the accompanying consent form and returning it in the envelope provided to:

In the event that you have concerns about this study that either myself or my supervisors cannot answer, and wish to contact an independent person, please contact: The Administrator, Office of the Dean of Research and Humanities, Room C214, St Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Dublin 9. Tel +353-(0)1-884 2149

Yours sincerely

Jane O'Hanlon

Informed Consent Form

I. Research Study Title: Perceptions of Learning within The Writers-in-Residence Scheme: Exploring perceptions of learning within a national arts-in-education programme.

IX. Purpose of the Research: The aim is to identify what takes place for the pupils/students, teacher and writer through their interaction over the course of a Writer-in-Residence Project. The research is particularly interested in finding out what I as a teacher think takes place (or does not take place) when the students work with a writer; in any learning that I can identify or that I feel takes place and how I might characterize that learning. This will be the first in-depth study of the Writers-in-Residence Scheme itself, since it was added to the Writers-in-Schools Scheme, over twelve years ago.

II. Requirements of Participation in Research Study:

My involvement will require my consent to being filmed over the 6-week residency and participation in two semi-structured interviews. These interviews will take place in the school at the mid-point and end of the project. With my permission, the interviews will be voice recorded to ensure an accurate record of what is said.

I will also be asked to keep a journal throughout the project, to record thoughts, ideas, experience, questions and suggestions etc., which will be collected by the researcher at the end of the project as part of the project documentation.

The researcher will also conduct a filmed focus group (class discussion) with the students (with the consent of parents/guardians and their own consent and at a time convenient to everyone) at the end of the residency. Finally, the researcher wants to gather portfolios of work produced by the students as part of the residency (also with their permission) for the purposes of inclusion as part of the final submission.

III. Confirmation that involvement in the Research Study is voluntary

I am aware that if I agree to take part in this study, I can withdraw from participation at any stage. There will be no penalty for withdrawing before all stages of the Research Study have been completed.

IV. I am aware that it is intended to take all reasonable steps to protect the anonymity and the confidentiality of everyone involved to the fullest possible extent, within the limits of the law. Names and contact details will be kept in a separate, password-protected computer file and separate from any data that is supplied. This will only be able to be linked to responses by the researcher, for example, in order to know where to send an interview query for checking. In the final report, people will be referred to by a pseudonym. Any references to personal information that might allow someone to guess at identity will be removed. Data collected will not be used for any purpose other than that flagged at the outset of the project without the permission of the participants. All purposes for which the data is intended have been clearly set out and details given of how confidentiality will be protected.

V. Please complete the following:

(Circle Yes or No for each question).

| | |
|--|--------|
| Have you read or had read to you the Research Statement? | Yes/No |
| Do you understand the information provided? | Yes/No |
| Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study? | Yes/No |
| Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions? | Yes/No |

VI. I have read and understood the information in this form. The researcher has answered my questions and concerns, and I have a copy of this consent form. Therefore, I consent to take part in this research project

Participant's Signature:

Name in Block Capitals:

Witness:

Date:

PLS & ICF Artist-writer

SPD & PI Logos

Exploring perceptions of learning within the Writers-in-Residence Scheme.

This is to request your participation in the above research project, which is being conducted by Jane O'Hanlon (EdD student) with the Education Department at St Patrick's College, Drumcondra. This project will form part my EdD thesis, and has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee and the Department of Education, St Patrick's College, Drumcondra. The project will be conducted under the supervision of Dr Michael O'Leary, EdD Course Director with the Education Department, St Patrick's College, Drumcondra and Dr Mary Shine Thompson, former Dean of Research and Humanities in St Patrick's College, Drumcondra.

Date:

Dear Artist-writer

I am currently a third-year student on the Doctorate in Education Programme (EdD) in St Patrick's College, Drumcondra. Part of the requirement for this course involves the carrying out of an in-depth a research project and it is my intention to take this opportunity to research the Writers-in-Residence Scheme, which has now been in existence for more than twelve years without having had any serious study done on it to date.

The focus of the study is the Writers-in-Residence Scheme and the aim of the research is to try to identify what takes place for the students, teacher and writer when they work together over the course of a residency. I am interested in understanding the school culture and the nature of the relationship between the teacher and the writer. I want to get your views/perceptions and experience of what takes place (or does not take place) when the students work with you as a writer in residence. I am particularly interested in the learning you think takes place and how you would describe the nature or content of that learning.

The project has been chosen from those which applied for a Writer-in-Residence for 2013. Your involvement will require your agreement to being filmed over the course of the eight weeks of the residency. I would also like to conduct two semi-structured interviews with you, at the mid-point and end of the project. With your permission, the interviews will be video or tape recorded so that we can ensure that we make an accurate record of what is said. You will also be asked to keep a journal throughout the project in which I would like you to record your thoughts, ideas, experience, questions and suggestions etc. about the project and which will be collected from you at the end of the project. This journal will be seen only by myself and my supervisors, but I would like to retain it as part of a Poetry Ireland data set for research in the future. I would also like to gather portfolios of all the work produced by

the students as part of the residency (with their permission) for inclusion in the final study. I would like these portfolios to include everything, even what they consider to be failed pieces, rather than a selection of the best work, in order to be able to trace any changes, developments etc. during the course of the work. Equally, if you yourself produce any work during the residency, which you consider arises directly as a result of your involvement in Bridgetown, I would be interested in including it in the final submission.

Data collected for this project will be retained by Poetry Ireland and the researcher, and may contribute to further research unrelated to this dissertation, to be undertaken either by the researcher or by Poetry Ireland. Findings may also be published and presented at academic conferences.

This study affords us the opportunity to contribute to making the Writers-in-Residence Scheme more responsive to the needs of the pupils/students, teachers, writers and schools, by helping to design the Scheme for the future and to contribute to the development of arts-in-education policy in general. It will also hopefully contribute to the possible development of a framework for evaluation for the Writers-in-Residence Scheme and it is hoped that all of this will have direct benefits for the WIR Scheme and for those working as part of it.

We intend to take all reasonable steps to protect the anonymity and the confidentiality of everyone involved to the fullest possible extent, within the limits of the law. Your name and contact details will be kept in a separate, password-protected computer file and separate from any data that you supply. This will only be able to be linked to your responses by the researcher, for example, in order to know where to send an interview query for checking. In the final report, you will be referred to by a pseudonym. We will remove any references to personal information that might allow someone to guess your identity. However, it may not always be possible to protect interviewees' anonymity.

All data collected by me will be stored on memory sticks which will kept in a safe or locked filing cabinet and confidentiality will be maintained, subject to legal limitations. Once the thesis has been completed, a brief summary of the findings will be made available to you. It is also possible that the results will be presented at academic conferences.

Data collected for this project will be retained by Poetry Ireland and the researcher, and may contribute to further research unrelated to this dissertation, to be undertaken either by the researcher or by Poetry Ireland. Findings may also be published and presented at academic conferences.

Your involvement in this research study is completely voluntary. Participants may withdraw from the study at any point and there will be no penalty for withdrawing before all stages of the study are completed.

This research statement is for you to keep.

Consent Form

Please indicate your willingness to participate in the study by signing the accompanying consent form.

If you have any concerns about this study and wish to contact an independent person, please contact: The Administrator, Office of the Dean of Research and Humanities, Room C214, St Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Dublin 9. Tel +353-(0)1-884 2149

Yours sincerely

Jane O'Hanlon

Informed Consent Form

I. Research Study Title: Perceptions of learning within The Writers-in-Residence Scheme: Exploring perceptions of learning within a national arts-in-education programme.

II. Purpose of the Research: The focus of the study is the conduct of research on the Writers-in-Residence Scheme, the first in-depth study of the Scheme since its inception in the year 2000. The aim of the research is to try to identify what takes place for the students, teacher and the writer when they work together over the course of a residency. The researcher is specifically interested in my views/perceptions and experiences of what takes place (or does not take place) when the students work with me as a writer in residence. The researcher is interested in the understanding the learning that I think takes place and how I would describe the nature or content of that learning.

III. Requirements of Participation in Research Study: My involvement will require my agreement to being filmed over the eight weeks of the residency. I also agree to take part in two semi-structured interviews, at the mid-point and end of the project. With my permission, the interviews will be recorded so as to ensure an accurate record. I will also be asked to keep a journal throughout the project in which to record thoughts, ideas, experience, questions and suggestions etc. about the project and which will be collected at the end of the project as part of the project documentation. Portfolios of work produced by the pupils/students as part of the residency will also be collected as part of the project documentation (with permission), as well as any specific work I may produce during the residency (with my permission) for inclusion in the final study.

IV. Confirmation that involvement in the Research Study is voluntary

I am aware that if I agree to take part in this study, I can withdraw from participation at any stage. There will be no penalty for withdrawing before all stages of the Research Study have been completed.

V. I am aware that it is intended to take all reasonable steps to protect the anonymity and the confidentiality of everyone involved to the fullest possible extent, within the limits of the law. Names and contact details will be kept in a separate, password-protected computer file from any data that is supplied. This will only be able to be linked to responses by the researcher, for example, in order to know where to send an interview query for checking. In the final report, people will be referred to by a pseudonym. Any references to personal information that might allow someone to guess at identity will be removed. Data collected will not be used for any purpose other than that flagged at the outset of the project without the permission of the participants. All purposes for which the data is intended have been clearly set out and details given of how confidentiality will be protected.

VI. Please complete the following (or an appropriately phrased variation)

(Circle Yes or No for each question).

Have you read or had read to you the Research Statement? Yes/No

Do you understand the information provided? Yes/No

Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study? Yes/No

Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions? Yes/No

VII. I have read and understood the information in this form. The researcher has answered my questions and concerns, and I have a copy of this consent form. Therefore, I consent to take part in this research project

Participant's Signature:

Name in Block Capitals:

Witness:

Date:

PLS & ICF Poetry Ireland Staff

SPD & PI Logos

Exploring perceptions of learning within The Writers-in-Residence Scheme

A request for your participation in the above research project, which is being conducted by Jane O'Hanlon (EdD student) with the Education Department at St Patrick's College, Drumcondra. This project will form part the researcher's EdD thesis, and has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee and the Department of Education, St Patrick's College, Drumcondra.

Date

Dear Colleagues

As you know I am currently a student on the EdD Programme in St Patrick's College, Drumcondra, part of which involves undertaking an in-depth research project. It is my intention to take the Writers-in-Residence Scheme as the focus of this research. This will be the first in-depth study of the Scheme since its inception in the year 2000, when it became part of the Writers-in-Schools Scheme.

The overall aim of the research is to try to identify the perceptions of learning that takes place during a residency by the various stakeholders including, pupils/students, teachers, writers and Poetry Ireland Education staff. The research will be conducted under the supervision of Dr Michael O'Leary, EdD Course Director with the Education Department, St Patrick's College, Drumcondra and Dr Mary Shine Thompson, former Dean of Research and Humanities in St Patrick's College, Drumcondra.

The aim of these interviews will be to try to identify the perceptions of learning taking place from the point of view of the Poetry Ireland staff who administer the Scheme. I am particularly interested in the operational details of the Scheme i.e. how it works on a day to day basis; the main difficulties encountered; what improvements could be made to the Scheme etc.

Your involvement will include participation in one (or possibly two) semi-structured interviews lasting approximately one-hour.

It is hoped that this study will result in helping to ensure that the Writers-in-Residence Scheme is as responsive as possible to the needs of the pupils/students, teachers and writers by helping to design the Scheme for the future and to contribute to the development of art-in-education schemes in general, by contributing to the development of an assessment framework for the Writers-in-Residence Scheme.

We intend to take all reasonable steps to protect the anonymity and the confidentiality of everyone involved to the fullest possible extent, within the limits of the law. Your name and contact details will be kept in a separate, password-protected computer file from any data that you supply. This will only be able to be linked to your responses by the researchers, for example, in order to know where to send your interview transcript for checking. In the final report, you will be referred to by a pseudonym. We will remove any references to personal

information that might allow someone to guess your identity. However, it may not always be possible to protect interviewees' anonymity.

All data will be stored on memory sticks which will kept in a safe or locked filing cabinet and confidentiality will be maintained, subject to legal limitations.

Data collected for this project will be retained by Poetry Ireland and the researcher, and may contribute to further research unrelated to this dissertation, to be undertaken either by the researcher or by Poetry Ireland. Findings may also be published and presented at academic conferences.

Involvement in this research study is voluntary. Participants may withdraw from the study at any point. There will be no penalty for withdrawing before all stages of the study are completed.

Consent form

If you would like to participate, please indicate that you have read and understood this information by signing the accompanying consent form and returning it in the envelope provided to

If you have any concerns about this study and wish to contact an independent person, please contact: The Administrator, Office of the Dean of Research and Humanities, Room C214, St Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Dublin 9. Tel +353-(0)1-884 2149

Yours sincerely

Jane O'Hanlon

Informed Consent Form

I. Research Study Title: Perceptions of learning within The Writers-in-Residence Scheme: Exploring perceptions of learning within a national English language arts-in-education programme as one element of a framework for assessment for learning within schools for arts-in-education programmes.

II. Purpose of the Research: The focus of the study is the conduct of research on the Writers-in-Residence Scheme, the first in-depth study of the Scheme since its inception in the year 2000. The aim of the research is to try to identify the perceptions of learning that takes place during a residency by the various stakeholders including, pupils/students, teachers, writers and Poetry Ireland Education staff.

III. Requirements of Participation in Research Study My involvement will include participation in one semi-structured interview lasting approximately one-hour.

IV. Confirmation that involvement in the Research Study is voluntary: I am aware that if I agree to take part in this study, I can withdraw from participation at any stage. There will be no penalty for withdrawing before all stages of the Research Study have been completed.

V. I am aware that it is intended to take all reasonable steps to protect the anonymity and the confidentiality of everyone involved to the fullest possible extent, within the limits of the law. Names and contact details will be kept in a separate, password-protected computer file from any data that is supplied. This will only be able to be linked to responses by the researcher, for example, in order to know where to send an interview transcript for checking. In the final report, people will be referred to by a pseudonym. Any references to personal information that might allow someone to guess at identity will be removed. Data collected will not be used for any purpose other than that flagged at the outset of the project without the permission of the participants. All purposes for which the data is intended have been clearly set out and details given of how confidentiality will be protected.

VI. Participant – Please complete the following:

(Circle Yes or No for each question).

| | |
|--|--------|
| Have you read or had read to you the Plain Language Statement? | Yes/No |
| Do you understand the information provided? | Yes/No |
| Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study? | Yes/No |
| Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions? | Yes/No |

VII. I have read and understood the information in this form. The researchers have answered my questions and concerns, and I have a copy of this consent form. Therefore, I consent to take part in this research project.

Participant's Signature:

Name in Block Capitals:

Witness:

Date:

Appendix 5 Interview Schedule

The following Table sets out the full schedule of interviews and focus groups for the study which was conducted between December 2012 and April 2016. The interviews are grouped under the following headings: (1) identified experts consulted for the study (2) pilot teacher, artist-writer interviews and pilot student focus group conducted in Bay School (3) phase two of the study which comprised the interviews and focus groups conducted between April and June 2013, in Bay, Hill, Park and Grove Schools, and which lie at the heart of the study (4) phase 3 of the study which comprised the follow-up student focus groups, (including one student interview) and an interview with a teacher exploring a whole school approach to arts-in-education practice and provision. While it was originally planned to have 4 teacher and 4 artist-writer interviews at the mid- and endpoints of the each of the creative writing programmes, as well as 4 student focus groups, this did not prove possible due to unavoidable circumstances. Therefore, there is only a midpoint interview with the artist-writer from Grove School and there is only an endpoint interview with the teacher in Hill School who was involved in the study. It was also not possible to conduct a focus group at the end of the creative writing programme in Hill School in May 2013, as the TY group involved had finished for the summer holidays and it similarly proved impossible to arrange a follow-up focus group with Grove School in the spring of 2015.

| | | | | | | |
|--|---|------|----|--|---|-------------------------|
| | | | | | | Audio/ Video |
| | December 2012 – April 2016 Interviews with identified individuals with specific expertise in arts in education conducted over the 3 phases and spanning the 4-year period of the Study | | | | | |
| C. Benson interview | 20.12.12 | 2012 | 1 | | Historical development of in arts in education theory, policy & practice in Ireland | A |
| ‘Caroline’ artist-writer interview | 05.1.13 | 2013 | 2 | | Storytelling theory, practice & performance, particularly as practiced through the WIS | A |
| WIS staff focus group | 04.6.13 | 2013 | 17 | | Responsible for WIS implementation (3) | V |
| M. Drury interview | 23.8.13. | 2013 | 22 | | Overview of current and past arts policy & practice in relation to the WIS | A |
| T. Dorgan interview | 05.2.14 | 2014 | 23 | | Poet & writer & former Director of Poetry Ireland including the WIS Scheme | A |
| D. Jordan interview | 27.2.14 | 2014 | 25 | | Arts theory, policy & practice & teacher education theory, policy & practice | V |
| ‘Jan’ artist-writer interview | 27.2.14 | 2014 | 24 | | Storytelling, classroom practice, teacher education, mentor on the WIS | V |
| ‘Olive’ teacher interview | 10.3.14 | 2014 | 26 | | School-based experience of arts education & arts-in-education practice particularly cross-curricular integrated arts-based practice | V |
| J. Coolahan interview | 28.4.16 | 2016 | 32 | | Current and historical curricular policy contexts and developments at second level | V |
| | February – March 2013 Pilot Interviews and Focus Groups conducted in Phase 1 of the Study | | | | | |
| ‘Ann’ pilot teacher interview, Bay School | 06.2.13 | 2013 | 3 | | Pilot interview to identify issues, questions and concerns of to teachers | V |
| ‘Ivan’ pilot artist-writer interview, Bay School | 20.2.13 | 2013 | 4 | | Pilot interview to identify issues, questions and concerns of relevance to artist-writers | V |
| Student focus group (pilot), Bay School | 20.3.13 | 2013 | 5 | | Pilot focus group with 4 students to identify issues, questions and concerns of relevance to students (they | V |

| | | | | | | |
|--|---|------|----|--|---|---|
| | | | | | were unsolicited volunteers from 2 classes (2 from each class) which had participated in a WIR programme in 2012 and who came forward) | |
| | April 2013 – June 2013 Interviews and Focus Groups conducted in Phase 2 of the Study | | | | | |
| ‘Ann’ teacher interview (2), Bay School | 24.4.13 | 2013 | 12 | | Conducted at the end of the WIR programme in Bay School | V |
| ‘Deirdre’ teacher interview (1), Park School | 12.4.13 | 2013 | 7 | | Conducted at the mid-point of the WIR programme in Park School | V |
| ‘Deirdre’ teacher interview (2), Park School | 26.6.13 | 2013 | 21 | | Conducted at the end of the WIR programme | V |
| ‘Ivan’ artist-writer interview (2), Bay School | 24.4.13 | 2013 | 11 | | Conducted at the end of the WIR programme in Bay School | V |
| ‘Joan’ artist-writer interview (1), Park School | 12.4.13 | 2013 | 8 | | Conducted at the midpoint of the WIR programme in Park School | V |
| ‘Joan’ artist-writer interview (2), Park School | 26.6.13 | 2013 | 20 | | Conducted at the end of the WIR programme in Park School | V |
| ‘Zoe’ artist-writer interview (1), Grove School | 23.4.13 | 2013 | 9 | | Conducted at the midpoint of the WIR programme in Grove School (due to unforeseen circumstances it was not possible to conduct a second interview with the artist-writer) | V |
| ‘Bernadette’ teacher interview (1), Grove School | 23.4.13 | 2013 | 10 | | Conducted at the midpoint of the WIR programme in Grove School | V |
| ‘Bernadette’ teacher interview (2), Grove School | 31.5.13 | 2013 | 16 | | Conducted at the end of the WIR programme in Grove School | V |
| ‘Will’ artist-writer interview (1), Hill School | 13.5.13 | 2013 | 13 | | Conducted at the midpoint of the WIR programme in Hill School | V |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---------|------|----|--|--|---|
| ‘Will’ artist-writer interview (2, Hill School | 06.6.13 | 2013 | 19 | | Conducted at the end of the WIR programme in Hill School | V |
| ‘Charlie’ teacher interview (1), Hill School | 06.6.13 | 2013 | 18 | | Conducted at the end of the WIR programme in Hill School (due to unforeseen circumstances it was not possible to conduct an interview with the teacher at the midpoint of the programme) | V |
| Student focus group (1), Bay School | 10.4.13 | 2013 | 6 | | Conducted at the end of the WIR programme with 19 students in Bay School | V |
| Student focus group (1), Grove School | 14.5.13 | 2013 | 14 | | Conducted at the end of the WIR programme with 8 students in Grove School | V |
| Student focus group (1), Park School | 17.5.13 | 2013 | 15 | | Conducted at the end of the WIR programme with 14 students in Park School | V |
| February 2015 – April 2015 Follow-up Interviews and Focus Groups conducted in Phase 3 of the Study | | | | | | |
| ‘Amanda’ student interview | 18.2.15 | 2015 | 27 | | With student from previous focus group who had gone on to third level | V |
| Student focus group (2), Hill School | 27.2.15 | 2015 | 29 | | With 2 members of previous focus group | V |
| Student focus group (2), Park School | 06.3.15 | 2015 | 28 | | With 6 members of previous focus group | V |
| Student focus group (2), Bay School | 23.3.15 | 2015 | 30 | | With 2 members of previous focus group | V |
| ‘Patricia’ teacher interview | 23.3.15 | 2015 | 31 | | Focusing on whole school approach to arts education & arts-in-education practice | V |
| Total: 32 (24 Interviews, 8 Focus Groups) | | | | | | |

Appendix 6 Letters of Approval

Letter of approval from the Director of Poetry Ireland, Joseph Woods, to conduct the research through the Poetry Ireland Writers-in-Schools Scheme.

Letter to the Ethics Committee, St Patrick's College, regarding instrumentation.



POETRY IRELAND ÉIGSE ÉIREANN

POETRY IRELAND ÉIGSE ÉIREANN

17th October 2012

Re: Research approval from Poetry Ireland

To whom it may concern:

This letter is to certify that approval has been sought and obtained by Jane O'Hanlon, Education Officer with Poetry Ireland, for the conduct of research on the Poetry Ireland Writers in Schools Writers-in-Residence Scheme, as part of her studies towards the Ed D with St Patrick's College, Drumcondra 2010-2014.

Yours sincerely

Joseph Woods
Director



Poetry Ireland, 32 Kildare Street, Dublin 2, Ireland
T (00353) 1 6789815 E info@poetryireland.ie W www.poetryireland.ie
Education 01 4758605 Writers in Schools 01 4758601

Poetry Ireland is a company limited by guarantee. Company Secretary: Joe Woods. Registered office as above. Registered number: 170768. Poetry Ireland / Éigse Éireann is grant-aided by An Chomhairle Ealaíon / The Arts Council and The Arts Council of Northern Ireland.

Letter re: Research Instrumentation

The Research Ethics Committee
St Patrick's College
Drumcondra
Dublin 9

17th October 2012

Re: Research instrumentation (e.g. questionnaires, interview protocols)

To whom it may concern:

Research instrumentation (e.g. questionnaires, interview protocols); will have to be adapted after clearance has been received from the Research Committee and will be reviewed by the supervisors before being distributed, who will, in turn, inform the Research Ethics Committee of this. The supervisors will address any queries in relation to these late changes or amplifications, directly to the Secretary, Research Ethics Committee, Office of the Dean of Research, Room C214, St Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Dublin 9.



Signed :

Date: 17th October 2012

Appendix 7 Schedule of Questions for Interviews and Focus Groups

- I. Schedule of questions for pilot student focus group, Spring 2013
- II. Schedule of questions for student focus groups, Spring/ Summer 2013
- III. Schedule of questions for follow-up student focus groups, Spring 2015
- IV. Schedule of interview questions for teachers, Spring/ Summer 2013
- V. Schedule of interview questions for teachers' follow-up interviews, Spring 2015
- VI. Schedule of interview questions for the artist-writers, Spring/ Summer 2013

I. Interview schedule for pilot student focus group, Spring 2013

- Q1. Did some of you already do creative writing yourselves?
- Q2. What did you think about the idea of working with a writer in the classroom?
- Q3. Was there a difference between working with a writer and working in a regular class?
- Q4. There is a feeling coming across from you that you felt the permission to try things out and of not having to do things in a certain way? Can you tell me a little more about that?
- Q5. You say that you began to feel that 'yes, this is really useful'? I'm really interested in that. How did that switch happen?
- Q6. When did it happen?
- Q7. What sort of balance was in your group between boys and girls?
- Q8. You know the way you are asked to write and then you were asked to read out your work? I would be interested to hear how you felt when you were asked to do that?
- Q9. You said that you have had the same teacher all through your secondary school? How was that important?
- Q10. What was the best thing about the residency for each of you and what was the least good thing about it for each of you?
- Q11. You said the best thing was learning how to put the writing together for the exams. Out of all the things you learned, what was the best thing you learned through all of that?
- Q12. So it's the crafting and the grafting that you do with the writer that is really helpful?
- Q13. You made a reference to the 'art form' earlier. Do you think of writing as an art form?
- Q14. Would you take part in a creative writing workshop again?
- Q15. How would you design the workshop?
- Q16. Do you have any ideas about the kind of writer you would like to work with?
- Q17. What length of session would you like to have with the writer?
- Q18. What time of the school-year would you think is the best time to do this?

II. Interview schedule for student focus groups, Spring/ Summer 2013

- Q1. Had you ever taken part in a workshop with a writer before you did this?
- Q2. How were you selected to take part in this project?
- Q3. What was it like at the beginning?
- Q4. What did you think you would be doing in the class with the writer?
- Q5. Did you work alone or in groups?
- Q6. What is it like working together in groups?
- Q7. What did you do in the class with the writer?
- Q8. What is it like being asked to read out your work to the class? How you feel when you are asked to do that?
- Q9. Was the feedback from the writer different from what you would get in class?
- Q10. Did the project change the way you write or what you write about?
- Q11. There is a feeling coming across around having permission to try things and of not being tied to doing things in a particular way?
- Q12. So is it the crafting and the grafting that you do with the writer that is really helpful?
- Q13. Did fact that you were working together in groups change the experience?
- Q14. Would the group work have been a different way of working in class for you?
- Q15. What was it like working with a writer in the classroom?
- Q16. Tell me about the experience of working with the writer?
- Q17. Would you take part in a creative writing workshop again?
- Q18. How would you design it?
- Q19. What kind of writer would you like to work with?
- Q20. What length of session would you think is best?
- Q21. What time of year would you think is best?

III. Interview schedule for follow-up student focus groups, Spring 2015

- Q.1 Can you recall what your expectations were at the beginning of the residency.
- Q2 You said you didn't expect much. Were you aware of the expectations of other students with regard to the residency?
- Q3. What did it feel like to be working with a writer in the classroom?
- Q4. You said there was a sense that maybe 'something is happening'? When or how did that start?
- Q5. You were working in groups? Would you have worked in groups in class?
- Q6. What was it like to be working in a group?
- Q7. What would be the best way to form these kinds of groups in your opinion?
- Q8. You said it took about two weeks before you began to understand what was going on? What was it that began to change things for you?
- Q9. There is a feeling coming across around having permission to try things and of not being tied down to doing things in a particular way? Can you tell me more about that?
- Q10. Would any of you say you learned anything particular about your own writing from working with the writer? I don't mean that you necessarily got better but that you learned something about how you wrote or the way you approached writing or thinking about writing?
- Q10. Did you think that working with the writer improved your writing skills?
- Q11. Do you think it helped with your other school work over the next couple of years?
- Q12. What do you see as the most important things to be considered when bringing a writer in to a school?
- Q13. What makes for a good experience of working with a writer in the classroom?
- Q15. Do you think that your relationship with the teacher was important?
- Q16. Would you take part in a creative writing workshop again?
- Q17. How would you design it?
- Q18. What kind of writer would you suggest or like to work with?
- Q19. What length of session would you think is best?
- Q20. What time of year would you think is best?

**IV. Interview schedule for teachers mid- and endpoint interviews, Spring/
Summer 2013**

- Q1. How did you first hear about the writer-in-schools Scheme?
- Q3. What was in your mind when you brought the writer in to work with the group?
- Q3. Did you have any particular expectations about how it would work?
- Q4. Did your expectations change or were they met?
- Q4. You mentioned that you write yourself? Do you consider that to be important?
- Q5. What is the role of the teacher in the residency?
- Q6. Is the fact that you have taught/not taught a lot of the students significant in contributing to the kind of openness required for a creative writing workshop?
- Q7. How would you characterise the learning that takes place when students work with a writer?
- Q8. How did you see this working (or not) with the group?
- Q9. How would you describe or characterise the writer's role?
- Q10. Do you think there is a significance in terms of the mix of boys and girls in the group?
- Q11. How does that gender balance work? How would you describe the dynamic?
- Q12. Would you take part in a creative writing workshop again?
- Q13. What are the practical issues for the teacher and by the school?
- Q14. Did/is the residency create/ing extra work for you?
- Q15. How would you suggest the writer-in-residence programme be designed?
- Q16. What type/genre of writer would you like to bring in to work with students?
- Q17. What is the optimum length of a session in your experience?
- Q18. What is the optimum time of the school year for this in your experience?
- Q19. How important is it that writer has the experience of working with young people/ in an educational setting/school?
- Q20. How significant is it that the teacher and the writer know each other/ get to know each other? Is that important in the classroom dynamic?
- Q21. How is the writer perceived generally within the school?

V. Interview schedule for teacher expert interviews, Spring 2014 & Spring 2015

- Q1. How many students would you have in the class with the writer?
- Q2. What would be the best balance between boys and girls?
- Q3. Are the classes generally mixed ability groups?
- Q4. What are students' reading interests? What, or how, are they reading?
- Q5. As head of English here, what is your strategy in bringing a writer into the classroom?
- Q6. As somebody dedicated to making English 'happen' in the school, is the writer in residence fulfilling what you needed and hoped it would do?
- Q7. You as the teacher deal with the subject on a particular level, what do you think it is the writer brings...or does the writer bring something that you think is important that adds an extra dimension to the students' learning?
- Q8. How important is the relationship between you as the teacher and the writer?
- Q9. How do you go about establishing that relationship with the writer?
- Q10. When the writer is working in the classroom, do you /or how do you see the learning being scaffolded by both of you?
- Q11. How would you describe your respective roles? Are you both doing different things?
- Q12. Would you see different pedagogies at work, or what occurs to you when the writer is in the classroom?
- Q13. How significant is it that you are an established, experienced teacher who has been with the students for a number of years?
- Q14. What do you think students are learning? What is the major learning that is taking place for them?
- Q15. What do you think is the long-term learning, or is there long-term learning, for students?
- Q15. Is there a cumulative benefit for the school/ the students/ the teachers/ in having the writer in residence in the school?
- Q16. Would you be able to say if, and how, you as a teacher might approach teaching differently as a result of working with the writer?
- Q17. Would you take part in a creative writing workshop again?

- Q18. What are the practical issues to be considered? Does it create extra work?
- Q19. How would you suggest designing a programme like this?
- Q20. What type/genre of writer would you like to bring in to work with students?
- Q22. What is the optimum length of a session in your experience?
- Q23. What is the optimum time of the school year for this in your experience?
- Q24. How important is it that writer has the experience of working with young people/ in an educational / school setting?

VI. Interview schedule for artist-writers, Spring/ Summer 2013

- Q1. How did you get involved in working in schools?
- Q2. What is it that encourages/ drives you/ inspires you to do this work?
- Q3. Is there anything specific that stands out now for you from your experience of working in schools and /or from this experience in particular?
- Q4. You said that this residency experience was one of the best you've had. Can you say what made it so good on this occasion?
- Q5. You spoke about the editing process, can you explain how that works with students?
- Q6. How important is it that the writer has the capacity and experience to be able to adapt to the school/ class/ teacher' needs and expectations and to 'go with the flow'?
- Q7. Do you see a clash for something like the Writers-in-Schools Scheme, whereby the writer goes in and is attempting to get the students to engage with the writing process in a way that is free, and then also having to say to them 'this is a craft that you must learn' and do you experience that as being problematic?
- Q8. Are you conscious of how or what you do to create the environment within which students engage with the process of creative writing?
- Q9. When you go in to work with students, what are you thinking will happen?
- Q10. Are you conscious of the way you work with the students in the classroom?
- A11. Do you see yourself as being engaged in teaching when you work in the classroom?
- Q12. Is there a difference in learning in and learning through an art form, in your experience?
- Q13. If you could design the residency, how would you design it?
- Q14. How many participants would you have?
- Q15. What length of session would you suggest as the optimum?
- Q16. What would stand out for you as the characteristics of a successful creative writing residency in a secondary school? What are the challenges and/ or the opportunities?
- Q17. How important is the writer's relationship with the teacher?
- Q18. What's the best way of establishing the relationship with the teacher?

- Q19. How do think that the students experience what you, as a writer, ask of them?
- Q20. Which do you prefer working with single sex or a mixed group?
- Q21. How do you deal with a mixed ability group?
- Q22. In your experience, which student benefits most from working with a writer?
- Q22. In terms of the cultural shift, what are the differences in working with teenagers now as opposed to 10 or 15 years ago?

Appendix 8 Writer-in-Residence Application Form

Application form used by schools to apply to Poetry Ireland for a writer in residence through the WISS.



Writers in Residence in Schools Application Form

Send this form to: Jane O'Hanlon, Writers in Residence,
Poetry Ireland, 11 Parnell Square East, Dublin 1. Tel: **(01) 6789 815**
Email: education@poetryireland.ie (digital signatures accepted)
Or fax it to: (01) 6789782

School: **Roll no:**

Address: **Telephone:**

..... **Email:**

..... **Teacher:**

..... **Contact:**

Writer: **School Funding in place:** Yes No....

Groups: **P.I. Funding:** Yes.....No...

No. of Participants: **Other Funding:** Yes.No...

(please tick as appropriate)

No. of Sessions:

Start Date:

Finish Date:

Focus of Project:

.....
.....
.....
.....

Signature of Principal: **Signature of Contact:**

Date:

PLEASE ENSURE THAT ALL SECTIONS OF THE FORM ARE COMPLETED.
Poetry Ireland Writers in Schools would like to make it clear that should the School's teacher be absent from the classroom for any reason whatsoever during the writer's visit, responsibility for any incidents which may occur during his/her absence rests entirely with the School, and the School further agrees to indemnify the writer and/or Poetry Ireland Writers in Schools without limitation in respect of same.