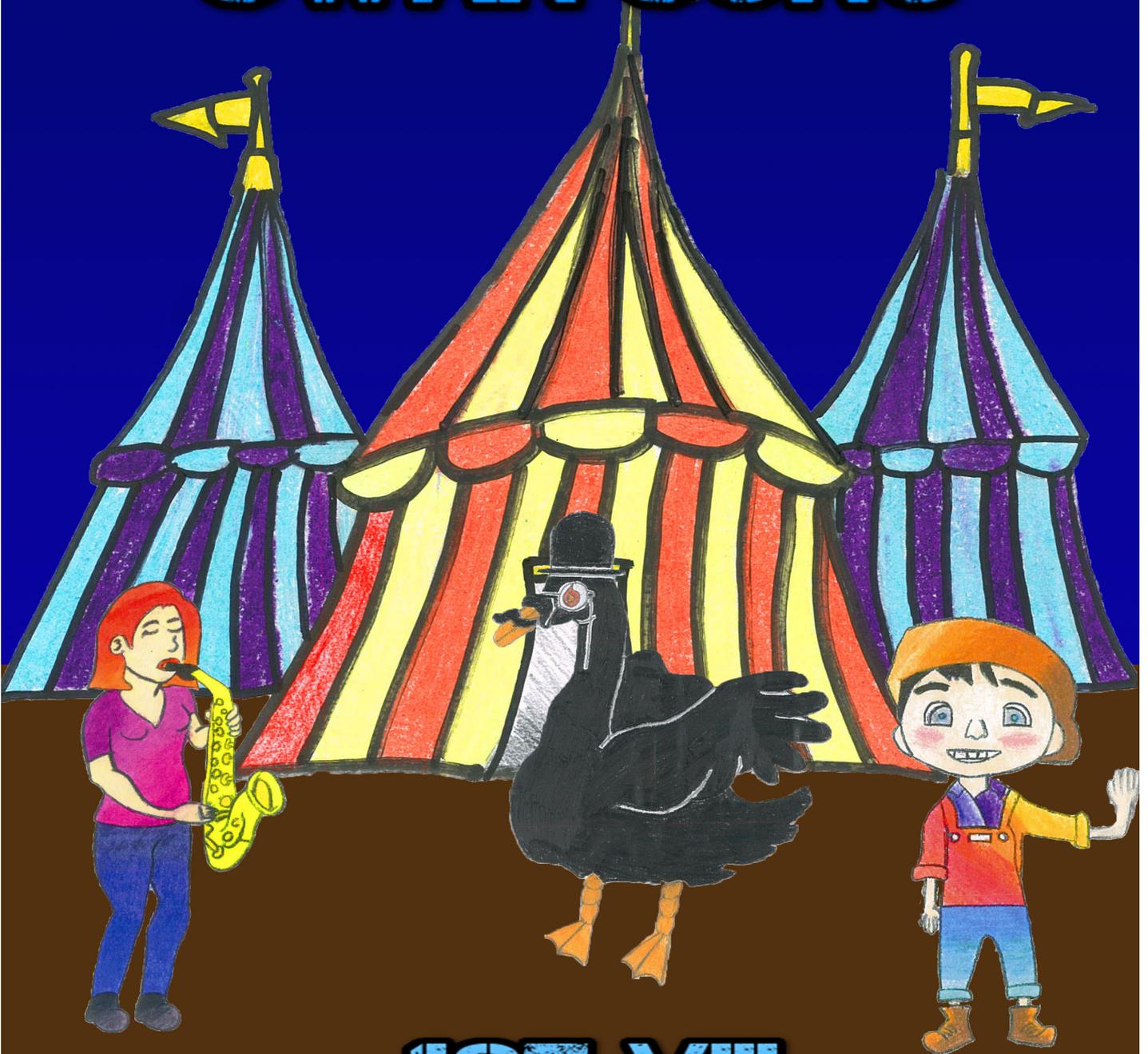
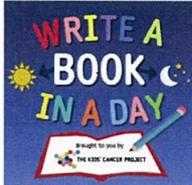


DORIAN'S SWAN SONG



1ST VIII



Write a Book in a Day 2016 Book Summary



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

TEAM DETAILS

Writing Division: Middle School (NSW)

Writing Date: 03-08-2016

Group or School: The King's School

Team Name: 1st VIII

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PARAMETERS

Primary Character 1: Musician

Primary Character 2: Only child

Non-Human Character: Swan

Setting: Circus

Issue: Insect plague

RANDOM WORDS

Delicious

Nonsense

Hums

Cracked

Danger

AFFIDAVIT

I, Linda Gibson-Langford (Team Supervisor), certify that the above team:

- completed all work on their book in accordance with the competition rules
- completed all work between 8:00am and 8:00pm on the day of writing
- included all five random words
- Word Count: 4127 words

Date: 3 August 2016 Signed: [Signature]

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The King's School 1st VIII hope that we would bring the reader joy. We hope this book cheers you up and that you get better soon.

We would also like to thank our sponsors for their generous donations to this very worthwhile cause.

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Dorian

“Make sure you clean your room,” Dorian’s mother, Scarlett, reminds him. Arrghhh.. that painful trumpet he hears every morning; the battle cry summoning him forward towards his future. He trudges down the stairs. He sniffs. His beloved vegemite toast beckons him. It’s Friday and by now Dorian is fed up. His mother’s constant nagging and the sheer thought of another six hours of nothing - learning nothing, doing nothing, being nothing. He felt sad. Life was a brown canvas. Even a small sunbeam pushing through the clouds wasn’t enough to bring a smile to his face. He was constantly alone, at school and at home. His mother, a musician, worked full time and his father was... well his father wasn’t... wasn’t anything.

School was a drag, period after period of blank. Nothing going in and nothing going out. Finally, school’s out.

Dorian begins his walk home; his head filled with white noise. Thoughts of nothing; thoughts of everything flooded through his mind. He is usually excited for Friday afternoon but today he is down. He can’t even get excited about the T20 big bash game tonight, which is usually one of his favourite things on a Friday night. Pushing through the door, he kicks down the umbrella stand. Oh, that felt good. As soon as his foot hits the tiled floor of the lounge room, the home phone rings - a bad omen, no doubt. He feels tempted not to answer it but the constant ringing taunts his brain. He feels forced to pick up the receiver. It’s his mother. Oddly, her voice radiates as if she is dancing in the sunlight. It is upbeat, excited; a tone he rarely ever hears from his mother. “Get excited Dorian, we’re off to the circus tonight!”

Dorian feigns an enthusiastic response but his true emotions seep through into his reply, “Sure mum, sounds sooo exciting (not).”

Scarlett just wants to make her son happy. She didn’t even want to go, but she bought the tickets for Dorian, to make him feel better. She knows it is difficult for him with no influential male figures in his life. And while she was working, he was isolated. She was pursuing her dream. She felt like nothing could stop her while playing the saxophone. Despite that, she knows it had come at a cost. Her relationship with her son was less than great and was affecting both of them in a negative way. It was an issue she desperately wanted to resolve: for their future as a family, and for Dorian’s future.

Dorian has his cricket game the next day. Another thing he was usually happy about. So why not today? Dr. Kostakis, his teacher, has given him the irritating task of weekend spelling. He has no desire to do his homework and didn’t plan to finish anything. The threat of a detention didn’t affect him in the slightest. He doesn’t care about his homework, or anything really.

His train of thought, or lack of, is interrupted as he hears a noise coming from outside. Dorian watches as his mother’s old, battered Holden ute pulls into the driveway. His mother jumps out, enthusiasm plastered onto her face. Seeing his mother so happy lifts his spirits a little. Only a little, but his face is still impartial.

Scarlett tries to make pleasant conversation on the way to the circus. But her attempts are shut down by one word answers, revealing Dorian's lack of focus and enthusiasm. These answers chip away at her morale. These answers dig at the mask of happiness she has put on. After a miserable ten minutes in the car, she can't take Dorian's attitude any more.

"What is wrong with you?" she asks, "I've made such an effort to bring you here and you're being so ungrateful."

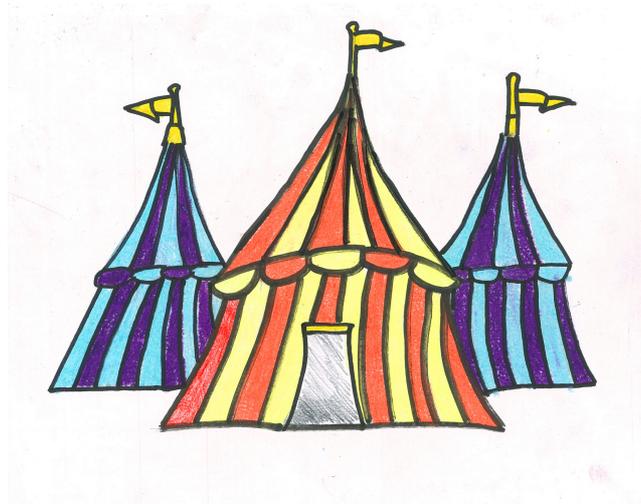
"I'm only here because of you. I didn't want to come. I'm only coming because I thought you were excited about it."

"I'm doing this for you, Dorian. Just be thankful," said Scarlett.

This relationship was already cracked and now seemed to be at breaking point. The rest of the car journey is silent; they both know that they only have each other but they know that isn't enough. Even though they are together, they are lonelier than ever; even though they are close to each other, they have drifted further than ever to a point of almost no return. They are only bonded by blood, something that seems thinner than water; thinner than a piece of paper, something that means nothing. They both don't want to be there but decide a mediocre circus troupe might cheer them up.

They pull into the campground. They are surprised at the fact that it's filled to the brim. There wouldn't be a single chair unfilled. A site that looked abandoned before the circus moved in now bursts with life. A scene of colour and laughter still does not bring a smile to Dorian's face. The clowns and animals are wandering around with no care in the world. Scarlett and Dorian have been transferred into a parallel universe. Something they both need, but both are unable to release their deep-seated emotions.

They file into the tent and wait for the show to begin. Maybe it wouldn't be so mediocre after all.



Bruce

The first act is about to start. The lights for the crowd turn off and the stage is flooded with light. The enthusiastic announcer's voice booms throughout the circus tent, creating a myriad of echoes. Looking around at the crowd again, Dorian is surprised to see not a single empty seat. Unlike Dorian, everyone seems to be quite excited for the circus. "Is this how people spend their Friday nights, watching this joke? I thought this was just for little kids," Dorian thinks to himself, still a little annoyed at his mother for bringing him here.

"Hot-dogs, hot-dogs, get 'em quick, get 'em hot!" The smell of hot-dogs overwhelms Dorian as the bald hot-dog seller walks by. He immediately craves one. He didn't want to eat when he got home after his already boring, insignificant day which was now ten times worse because he is at this circus. However, the smell of a cigarette, coming from the bald hot-dog man whose beer gut can now be seen even more as he walks past Dorian, ruins Dorian's appetite.

Dorian lowers his back in the uncomfortable chair and tries to gain whatever comfort he can from the unstable seat. He pulls out his phone and continues to play his favourite game. However, like always, his mother is razor sharp and notices him playing on his phone.

"Dorian! What have I told you about playing those silly games on your phone. You're going to get square eyes if you keep looking at that tiny screen."

"I don't care, at least the game is better than this circus."

"Dorian, I've brought you here to enjoy yourself; in fact, to lighten up. I know you've had a hard week at school but just leave that behind and have some fun."

"Fine, whatever you say," Dorian says as he turns off his phone and puts it back in his pocket.

A wave of hush engulfs the crowd. Everyone begins to watch with anticipation as they wait for the first act to begin. Dorian looks back at his crumpled program. He looks for the first act and 'Bruce the Singing Swan' is up first. "What an absolute joke. That only happens in those children's cartoons. It's just utter nonsense."

Dorian thinks to himself. "I'd rather be at home watching the cricket than doing this, anyway I'm only here because mum forced me to come."

The thundering applause of the audience interrupts Dorian's thoughts. Dorian's heavy eyes follow the spotlight, drawing him to the centre stage. The clapping dies down, followed by the announcer's voice, "Ladies and gentleman, boys and girls, children of all ages, presenting, the Superficial Singing Swan, Bruce!"

A hush of anticipation falls over the crowd as the black swan walks out onto the stage. The graceful piano accompaniment begins to play. Dorian is anxious to see the 'superficial' talents of this black swan.

The swan begins to sing. Its song pierces through the anticipation of the crowd like a hot knife through butter. He is singing at such a high register that it has become almost uncomfortable. It sounds like a song from a Vienna Opera. The high-pitched voice of the swan works brilliantly against the score. Scarlett is amazed at the talent

of the swan and appreciates it. Even though she enjoys playing jazz music on her saxophone, she thinks to herself, "This stuff could break glass."

However, Dorian finds it weird to hear this kind of music coming from a black swan compared to a stereotypical fat eastern European woman. In fact, the singing is actually a lot better than Dorian and Scarlett thought it would be.

The swan continues for the next couple of minutes as more and more jaws drop. The swan then becomes silent and the familiar tune of Chanson Napolitaine from Swan Lake begins to ring through the circus. Bruce, the Superficial Singing Swan, begins to dance. He sways side to side with the beat of the song. As the music speeds up, Dorian and Scarlett do not take their eyes off the graceful swan. Bruce mesmerizes the entire audience. Finishing with a swift spin, he spreads his fat short legs and bows: the piano stops playing and a roar of applause follows from the astounded audience.

Scarlett looks over at Dorian. He is in complete shock. This warms her heart. It is good to see her son finally change his mood.

"Next up, ladies and gentlemen, I present to you, the Jiving Jitterbugs."

"If a swan can sing, then surely these insects must be able to dance," says Scarlett, turning to Dorian with a smile on her face.

"Yeah surely," quips Dorian, this time not faking an excited tone, but actually enthusiastic for what he is going to see.

The 'can-can' blasts over the loudspeaker as the insects scatter onto the stage. The insects line up in perfect form, like soldiers marching down Elizabeth Street on ANZAC Day. Dorian squints his eyes, trying to see what the insects are doing. Their tiny legs seemed to be moving in unison but Dorian can't tell as he is too far away to see. He turns to his mother and whispers to her, "Can you see what they're doing?"

"I can't Dorian, but it looks like something you see in those Disney movies," she says, remembering the days when she used to watch those animations.

"Yeah, at least it isn't as weird as that singing swan," Dorian says with a glint of happiness in his eyes. Scarlett thinks it is good to see Dorian finally enjoying himself. She sighs, "Ten minutes ago, he was so sad."

Once again, the crowd is left in pure amazement as they witness a spectacle fit for a fictional world on a silver screen - not for a stage circus. People are focusing intently on the insects. The *Jitterbugs* are moving in perfect unison, dancing to a most *contagious* song.

However, their act is cut short with a piercing screech. The lights on the stage turn off immediately and the tent plunges into darkness. The crowd is hysterical, confused, and a little bit worried. A light buzz can be heard, underneath the announcer's voice.

"Ladies and gentleman, do not panic. There has been a technical issue. Please stay in your seats and wait for the issues to resolve."

“Is everything going to be alright, mum?” Dorian searches her face, with a hint of sadness in his tone.

“It should be fine, Dorian,” replies Scarlett, disappointment in her expression as she realises that her son is just beginning to relax.

Suddenly, a flood of insects sweep over the stage, one united cloud flying into the unsuspecting crowd.



The Jiving Jitterbugs

Like a whirlwind, the insects are causing havoc. Popcorn flies from the hands of the audience. Inside the tent, mayhem rules.

One hour before

Behind the curtain, the colossal black singing swan, Bruce, rallied all of the insects for a meeting... minutes before going on stage. The insects - a multicultural, multi-coloured mixture of bees, ladybugs, ants and crickets. They had lived in the circus for most of their lives, learning different tricks, and how to dance. They existed on bribes of sugar; never receiving big portions. This made them heavily addicted.

"Today is the day we get all the delicious sugary treats you could ever dream of," Bruce says enticingly.

"Bruce, you are being absurd. We only ever get sugar from our masters; the people who hold us here," says Barnaby the bee.

All the insects roared in agreement.

"Wrong," the swan rebuked, "we have a chance in a few minutes. When I squeal, break your dance formation, and steal the sugar from the humans. They always bring lollies to indulge on during performances."

The animals were unsure. Some agreed, but most disagreed.

"This plan will never work!" Leonard, the ladybug, argued.

"Think about the liquorice allsorts, the honey flavoured popcorn, the sweet, creamy chocolate and the toffee apples," Bruce continues.

Whilst saying this, all the insects started to drool, excited by their lust for the delicious treats. Just the thought of the treats alluded the insects to the thought of the danger they would have to endure.

"What must we do?" the insects cried in unison.

"Half way through your dancing act, go out towards the humans and steal all their lollies," the swan extols, continuing to persuade them all.

Still seduced by the thought of the delicious sweets, they agreed to everything that the swan asked for.

The swan was delighted. His plan for deceiving the insects had worked. He had convinced them, and now he could finally get revenge on the humans - for everything they had done to him. They would pay. They would all pay. Bruce had no muscles in his cheeks to smile, but if he had, he would have been grinning a very evil grin.

Meanwhile, Back at the Circus

Everywhere, people are screaming; it's dark, it's scary. They can see nothing but can hear everything. They throw away their sweets and popcorns which are swarming

with insects. A ladybug flies down into the eye of a huge man. The man helplessly flings his hand at the bug. He falls, tumbling forward, dropping the glazed donuts and the diet cola which were cradled in his hands. A little child in a white dress is licking a chocolate ice-cream. When she hears and feels a cricket near her ears, she drops the sweet onto her dress, a stain will be a memory. A tent flap opens; lights from the circus ground help to illuminate inside the tent. Dorian and Scarlett are lucky. They are able to sprint away, leaving the noise of the crickets and the buzzing of the ladybugs; so deafening that it was like a bell ringing in their ears.

The insects leave the tent craving more and more sugar; their sweet tooth taking over. It is an insect plague; one that engulfs the whole town, stripping it of all things sweet. The supermarkets are left with horrible *greens*, whilst all the sugary treats disappear into the bellies of this multicultural mayhem of insects. At home, kitchens are left deprived of all things containing sugar. No place is now safe. Over the wave of attacks, more insects join in - an onslaught. Civilians try insect repellent. There is nothing they can do to stop the sugar craving lunatics.

Scarlett

Everything is going crazy! Bugs are flying around in people's eyes, landing on abandoned candy and overall irritating everyone; their annoying symphony of high-pitched **hums** sounding in the streets. Any hole that they can get through, they get through, searching for the soft white sugar they that they crave. Scarlett runs into their house and shuts the door behind her, forgetting that Dorian is there.

"Mum, you've left me behind," Dorian cries.

"Oooh, Dorian, sorry."

She opens the door and Dorian runs in, falling over the couch.

"Well, I don't know what we're going to do," Scarlett exclaims in a hushed tone, comforting Dorian as she walks him into the lounge room.

"Mum, you know how some people can charm snakes with flutes?" Dorian asks.

"Ummm, yes," she replies.

"Well, what if you tried to charm the bugs. You know... a beautiful piece of music. Grab your saxophone."

She takes it into her hands and holds the mouthpiece to her mouth. A continuous sound plays from its end and fills the room and then the whole street. Amazingly, all of the bugs stop their rampage, their humming slowing to a calming buzz. Scarlett stops the onslaught of bugs. They are under her spell. A saxophone spell! Scarlett stops playing. Within a flash, the bugs are back to their feasting.

"Play again, Mum, play again!" Dorian screams.

Scarlett plays again, this time with a basic tune but nothing happens! She plays fifteen different notes in different melodic ways and still nothing happens. The bugs find their way into their house and the feasting continues. Out of desperation, Scarlett gives the saxophone to Dorian.

"Maybe you will be able to calm them down if you play!" she shouts over the humming noise of the bugs.

Dorian takes the saxophone, dripping with his mother's saliva, wipes it off and plays. Every single insect stops what they are doing and once again go back to their low buzzing noise. When the noises from the bugs change, some of the curious townspeople look out of their houses, staring in shock as they realise that the bugs have calmed down. They hear the saxophone playing; its syncopated notes floating through the street and realise what the saxophone is doing. The curiosity from a few townspeople makes the others feel safe. Every man, woman and child walks to the house where the saxophone is being played. They want to thank Scarlett but just before they can open the door, Dorian storms out and looks over the crowd with horror. So many people, he thinks. He is stuck on the spot and doesn't know what to say to them. They cheer him. They sing a swan song of happiness. Dorian feels changes within him. He gains confidence; feels in control. He could almost see it seeping into him.

“These bugs have taken to our streets and stolen our sweets, our sugar and are now taking our homes. No more will this happen. They will be returned from whence they came. Onward citizens. To the circus!” Dorian shouts.

The crowd cheers and begins to walk with Dorian, Scarlett controlling the bugs with her saxophone and ordering them to move with the crowd. They walk for many kilometres through the night, the light of the moon illuminating shadows. In the final leg of the journey, most of the crowd are panting and children are crying to go home, but Dorian pushes on and after what seems like forever, they arrive at their destination. Dorian moves into the tent, some of the townspeople trying to be brave and entering with him but he turns them back, telling his mother to come in with the long trail of bugs. As they enter, they hear it. The thing that stops them dead in their tracks. Emanating from the shadow of the circus tent. A very familiar voice, dark, and malicious. Bruce.

Swan Song

Dorian and Scarlett both hear him. They stand deadly still, not daring to take a single breath.

“Haha, foolish humans,” came the voice, “Let them suffer at the hands of this plague.”

Scarlett and Dorian stare into the blackness in front of them, which hid the dark voice’s owner.

“We know you are there,” yelled Scarlett into the empty space in front of her.

The voice ceases for a moment, then returns.

“Who are you?” came the voice.

“The ones who stopped your plague?” Scarlett replies.

Another moment passes, then, the mastermind, Bruce, emerges from the veil of black.

The tyrannical swan, Bruce, stands there. His shrill cackle echoes throughout the deserted circus tent, filling the void. His dark body casting a menacing shadow. The musician’s flaming hair hangs loosely at her shoulders, and by her side, a saxophone, and a child. Her child.

The swan steps forward out of the darkness, balls of fire burning in his eyes.

“So,” Scarlett says, obviously mortified at the revelation. “You are the one that started the plague?”

There is no response. The superficial, singing swan just stands there, his beady eyes boring into Dorian’s soul. After what seems like an eternity, a deep voice finally breaks the silence.

“Of course, the smartest creature in the circus.” Bruce’s voice sends goose bumps along Dorian’s arms and neck. It was quite a contrast to his pleasant singing voice.

“The plague of insects were the perfect way to get back at you humans for all you’ve done, and now you’ve ruined my hopes of escape.”

The swan scowls at the musician and her son, his glare like a knife, piercing their hearts.

“You’ve ruined everything!” the swan screams sending echoes through the large circus tent.

Scarlett drew her saxophone from her side and put the mouthpiece to her lips. She began to play, but the swan was not affected. She played louder and harder. Nothing. The swan begins to laugh maniacally. Scarlett is not quite as amused.

“You think you can stop me with that?” The swan says in between chortles, “No. I am not as weak as those bugs. I am much more than that.”

Scarlett's face has gone red. She drops her saxophone, in her eyes a mixture of confusion and terror. Dorian is standing by her side, wondering what to do. He picks up the fallen instrument. He had played it with his mother before, but it seems different now. He is on his own.

In the background, Dorian can hear a voice calling him.

"Dorian," says Scarlett quietly, "we have to go. Now."

But Dorian doesn't. He just stands there, with his mother's saxophone. His mother's voice vanishes. Dorian puts the mouthpiece to *his* lips. The swan laughs even harder at this, at the pathetic little boy who continues to try, even when there is no hope. But then, that little boy blows, and the swan goes silent.

Dorian plays with all his might, plays louder than he ever has before, and the swan does not move. His eyes wide with fear. Bruce's body convulses, and his wings start to flap uncontrollably. His black body throbs and he starts to scream.

"What is happening to me?!"

Dorian continues playing, with greater gusto still. The swan is panicking now. He starts frantically running around, flapping his wings and honking loudly. And then, all of a sudden, he freezes. He ceases to move and falls down. Then a white ink starts dripping down him. Except it's not ink, his feathers are turning pale. The colour flows down him, until he is as white as snow. A deafening silence settled over them. Dorian let go of the saxophone and placed it on the ground. Suddenly, the swan began sparking life. The musician and the child jumped back in shock, bracing themselves for more danger. The swan struggles to its feet. He turns to face Dorian and Scarlett. His whole body has changed colour.

"What have you done?" Bruce cries. The swan stares at the mother and her child with fear and hatred in his eyes.

"What have you done?!" he repeats

Scarlett turns to her son. *He* doesn't know what to do. He has no idea what he's done, or how. He just stands there, looking at the transformed swan, Bruce.

"I think I made you better," says Dorian.

The swan looks at himself. He has no cheek muscles, but Dorian knows that if he did, he would be smiling.

The swan looks at himself. He turns from his saviours, and gasps a sigh of relief.

Epilogue

That happened about a month ago. Bruce returned to the circus and is now entertaining people all around the country. More importantly, he now loves what he does. Scarlett has found a willing producer and has started making music for the public. Dorian has found a love for playing the saxophone, just like his mother. But above all, Dorian is very excited today, because today, they are going to see an old friend. A big smile spreads across Dorian's face, as he and his mother walked out the door together and set off for the circus...

**“EVERYTHING IS GOING CRAZY!
BUGS ARE FLYING AROUND IN
PEOPLE’S EYES, LANDING ON
ABANDONED CANDY AND
OVERALL, IRRITATING EVERYONE,
THEIR ANNOYING SYMPHONY
OF HIGH-PITCHED HUMS
SOUNDING IN THE STREETS.
ANY HOLE THAT THEY COULD
GET THROUGH IS FULL OF
THE THINGS, ALL SEARCHING
FOR THE SOFT WHITE
SUGAR THEY CRAVE...”**

**A CIRCUS, A SINGING SWAN,
A PLAGUE OF DANCING BUGS,
A SAXOPHONE PLAYER AND
HER SON. IT’S GOING TO BE
ONE HECK OF A NIGHT!**



Recommended for 10-16 year olds