

Diary for Independent Project – A.P

- Today I began to plan for my short story. I've decided to write a science-fiction/dystopian short story in the epistolary form.
- I had my first meeting with Matthew and discussed the ideas that I had for my story. He suggested that I investigate the history behind the short story and suggested some works, such as I, Robot, that I may be interested in.
- I completed a rough plan for the first draft of my story, including rising action, climax, falling action and ending.
- Researching different codes and cyphers. I decided to include a hidden message within the text of the letter from the protagonist to her daughter. I'm keeping it quite simple. Something like: **Take Astin. Hide. They're coming.**
- Did some research on endangered species and where they were found so that I could more accurately portray my protagonist's work. I also researched various scientific organisations that worked with endangered animals.
- I read some short stories and articles in preparation for my short story. I wanted insight into how published authors managed the short story form in the genre of science fiction, as well as how the epistolary form was handled.

Some of the works I read included *I, Robot*¹, *Dracula*², and *The Best of British Fantasy 2019*³.

-
- From my research I learned that the short story doesn't have to have as prolonged an ending as a novel does. I shall be keeping this in mind when writing my story. I may even leave it open ended. I also learned that the epistolary form is a good way to show an individual character's unique voice, which I want to incorporate into the text.
- Did some character work for my protagonist. I wanted her to be upper middle class, striving to be upper class. She is cold to her daughter and thinks herself more clever and worldly than she is. Her message to her daughter is her way of apologising for the way she treated her over the years.
- My plans are for this to be 'soft' sci-fi, set in the near future. There is a technology in which a creature's essence can be harnessed and used to replicate the blueprint of life. In the past, my protagonist has used this in a scientific manner to help the breeding programmes of endangered species. Within the text, she is propositioned to help with a job that she is sure will elevate her career status, as well as pay good money. It is not until she is escorted to the premises to complete the job that she realises she is being asked to extract human essences to create a new source of energy. This is highly illegal. Upon being forced to complete the job, the protagonist has the technology turned on her. She pretends that the job has gone wrong and manages to escape. Through agent case notes, it is later shown to the reader

¹ Isaac Asimov, *I, Robot: The Definitive Science Fiction Collection Featuring the Three Laws of Robotics* (London: HarperVoyager, 2013)

² Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (Stansted: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 2022)

³ Jared Shurin, *The Best of British Fantasy 2019* (England; NewCon Press, 2020)

that, upon escape and reporting to the authorities, she wasn't believed and committed to a mental health facility. These notes then confirm that the protagonist went missing from the facility and later turned up dead. It is implied that this was a hit carried out by the unnamed antagonist clearing up any loose ends.

- Epistolary form is broken up by case notes of the agent working the protagonist's missing person case. They are in a different font to differentiate from the main text. The letter itself is seen to be evidence in this case.
- I included a few challenges for myself throughout this piece, including writing in the epistolary form from the point of view of a woman who is arrogant and cold. I also intersected this with the different voice of the agent, who is much more formal. This was a challenge to balance and still tell the story through both what the protagonist said, and what it was implied by the agent's statements.
- I decided to finish the story with an open ending. Though it is heavily implied that my protagonist's story has ended, the reader is unaware if the body discovered is hers, if the daughter received the letter and managed to escape, what has happened to the perpetrator and what role the agent has left to play. I wanted the reader to feel uneasy, as though they were investigating the case themselves and have stumbled upon a plot bigger than what they first thought.
- I ensured that a lot of character names and place names were [REDACTED] to fit in with the idea of the piece being a sensitive case file. It was tricky trying to ensure that characters had their own personalities even when their names were redacted, but I think I managed it.

References

Asimov, I, *I, Robot: The Definitive Science Fiction Collection Featuring the Three Laws of Robotics* (London: HarperVoyager, 2013)

Shurin Jared, *The Best of British Fantasy 2019* (England; NewCon Press, 2020)

Stoker Bram, *Dracula* (Stansted: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 2022)