

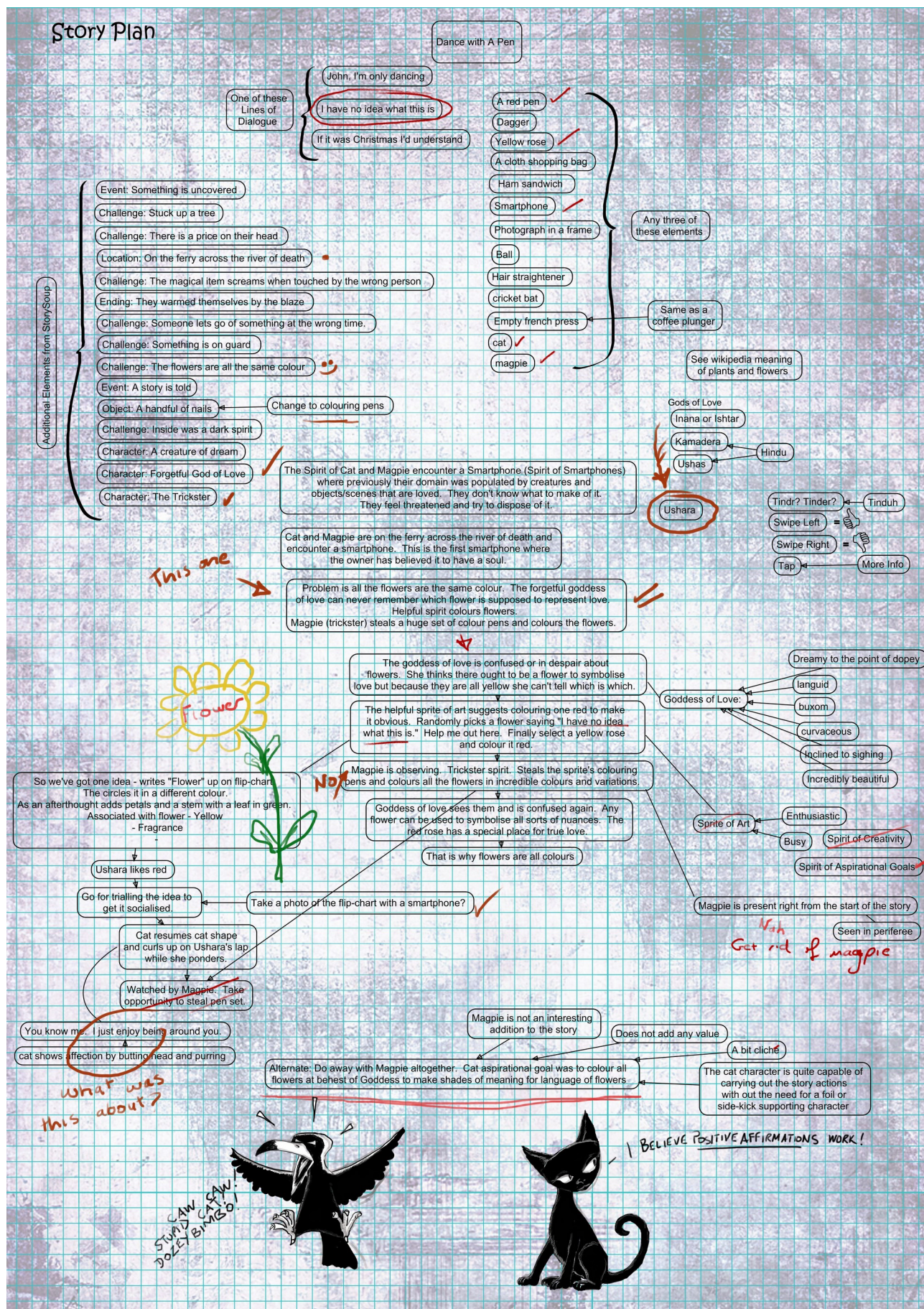
## The Magpie's Compliant – Writing Challenge Sept 2019

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Back in February 2019 I joined the Writers Plot Readers Read writing group which was hosted by the **Writers Plot Bookshop** in Upper Hutt New Zealand. The first writing challenge I encountered, lead to the short story "[\*The Language of Flowers\*](#)". Later in the year we were issued with a new challenge. This was to write a story from the point of view of another character from one of our previous stories. By this time I had several stories under my belt but didn't think that re-writing them from a different character's perspective would do the stories any favours. The quandary was; what to write? Then it struck me. How would a character in a story feel if they were written out? During my initial planning and first drafts of "The Language of Flowers" I had a Magpie character. As the story evolved I couldn't get this character to work and so left them out of the story. I was sure the magpie would be pretty pissed off by this and so I annotated the original story plan, added sketches, then had the magpie write a complaint letter.



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The Magpie

C/o The Silver Birch on the North Side of the Field

5th October 2019

To the Author

### **RE: Dropping me from “The Language of Flowers” story**

I want to express my outrage at being dropped from the February Writing challenge story, “The Language of Flowers.” I was quite happy being involved in the story up until the third version when you suddenly decided to throw me out in favour of keeping the cat and letting that ditsy bimbo, Ushira have all the glory for changing the colours of all the flowers in the world. That was going to be my role!!!

In your planning sheet, you had the nerve to write all sorts of disparaging comments about me. And then draw a stupid picture of me as a noisy, obnoxious, over-opinionated character squawking insults at everybody. I notice you go pretty easy on the Cat. You say I don't add any value to the story. In the initial versions I had a pivotal role. If anyone fails to pull their weight, it's that cat. He spends most of his time asleep, and when he is awake he's just making pleasing noises with no substance to them. Just like a cat. A shape changing cat? I think you just invented this aspect so you could score some cheap points by using the cat in the story while not actually having any real role for him to play. If you hadn't been suckered in by the usual cat attraction that seems to muzzy the brains of you humans, I would have had the lead role and could have done it without needing to change shape.

In your notes you portray me as the “Trickster.” I'm fine with that and this is consistent with the common character stereotype given to magpies. There is nothing wrong with using clichés as a form of storytelling short-hand. But then you went and gave the cat the title “the Spirit of Aspirational Goals.” What? Who has ever heard of a cat being associated with having aspirations? They don't have any. They just lie around all day, do nothing useful, and spend their awake time sponging off anyone around. Evidently you haven't a clue about how to work with common cultural stereotypes. This looks like a desperate “shoe-horn” job to me.

At the bottom of your notes you had some comments that rather stung. In particular you suggested I was a side-kick supporting character? Side-kick for the Cat? You have got to be joking. It would be me doing all the running around doing stuff while that smarmy little good-for nothing would just sit around “conceptualising” and gain all the credit.

As you can tell I'm pretty angry about your treatment of me in the creation of your story. I would appreciate it if you showed a bit more respect for your characters when you write your next story.

Thank you.

The Magpie (The Trickster)



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