

# Whitsunday Voices Short Story Competition

## Grades 11-12

### Winner

Kodi Sawtell for

INK

*Ink.*

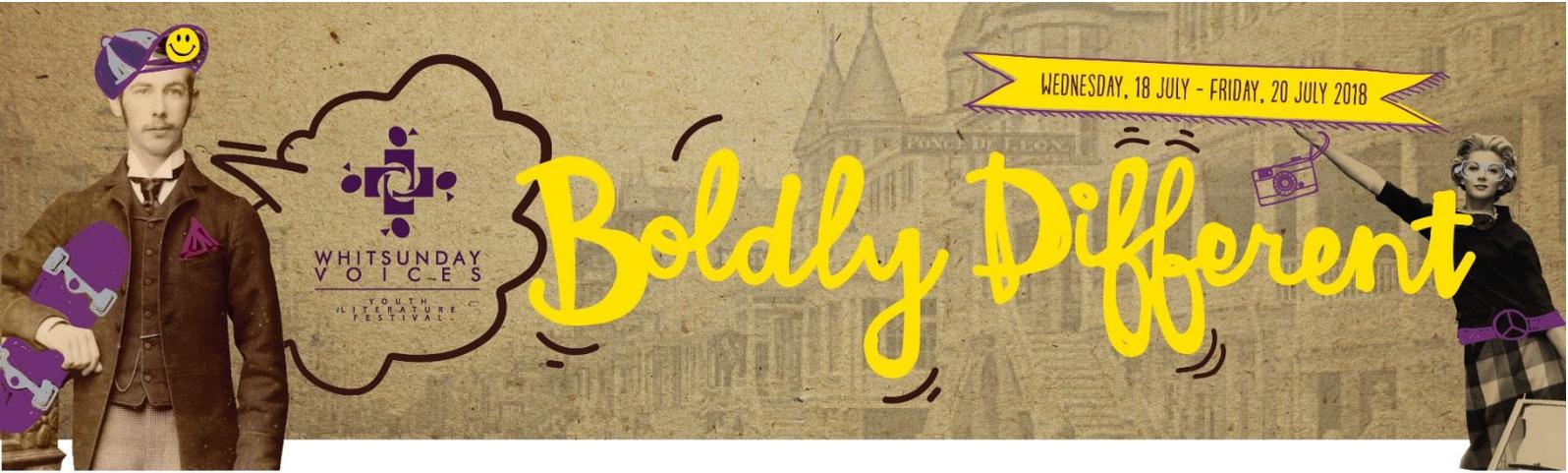
The gate slammed shut, clipping me on my derriere before clapping on its frame with a shaky bang.

“Son of a-“ I growled rubbing my sore ass and walking away.

No one wanted me, I couldn't even say 'Hi my name is-' before my potential future employers shut me out. In this case push me out the front gate and slam it on my *assets*.

Three stinking hours I had been trudging along, my thin booklet of a resume clasped in my sweaty hands. My feet burning in my cardboard filled rubber soles and my legs struggling to continue supporting my weight.

I couldn't take it anymore. Moving to a low-lying brick wall, I sat and brought my knees up to my chest. The sun was hanging low over the horizon of squat buildings reminding me of dirt mounds in a field.



The heat was still lingering in the last fading moments of sunlight, hitting my face at an angle to make my tattoos shine.

I absently stroked the intricate cravings in green ink that wrapped my cheek in a veil of vines down the left side of my face, having curled up from the depths of my shirt and finishing at my eyes. The best decision of my life or my worst? They define who I am. Yet even as I pass by people in the street, they avert their eyes, and keep their heads downcast.

I didn't give a stuff about people's opinion, however when it came to the next stage up, employment, it's blasphemy.

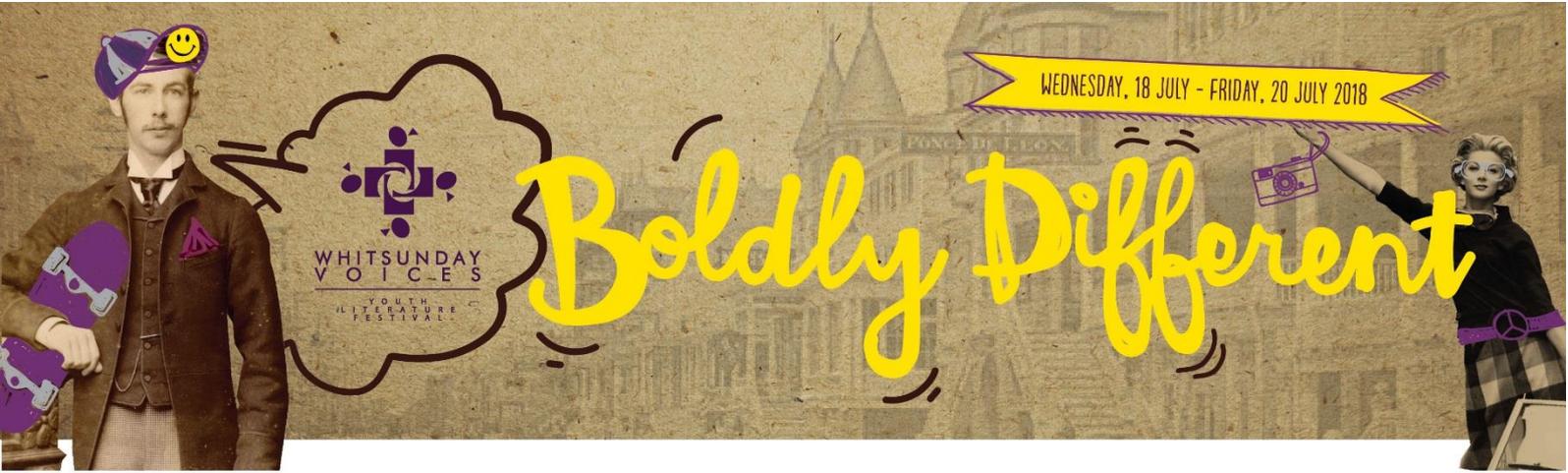
My chest tightened with rejection, the pressure piercing at my heart. The tears were a scourge as I savagely wiped them away, my eyes burning with a mixture of salt and hurt.

I wrapped the edge of my shirtsleeve around my hand and rubbed harshly under my red rims. The tears were streaking down my tattoo making me despise everyone more.

I rose off the wall and clumped down the street towards the last place of potential employment on my list. The one I wanted least.

As my feet slapped the pavement I stared down at the name and hated myself for even writing down the words.

Boutique Boots.



A fancy store that sold high priced boots and shoes for anyone abnormal enough to cough up for something more expensive than the price of a month's rent. I rolled my eyes at myself. Positive thoughts, come on think positive thoughts.

The store would be closing within the hour, and I was still walking at a leisurely pace.

*Stop stalling!*

I grumbled at myself under my breath and made my aching feet shuffle along the path quicker.

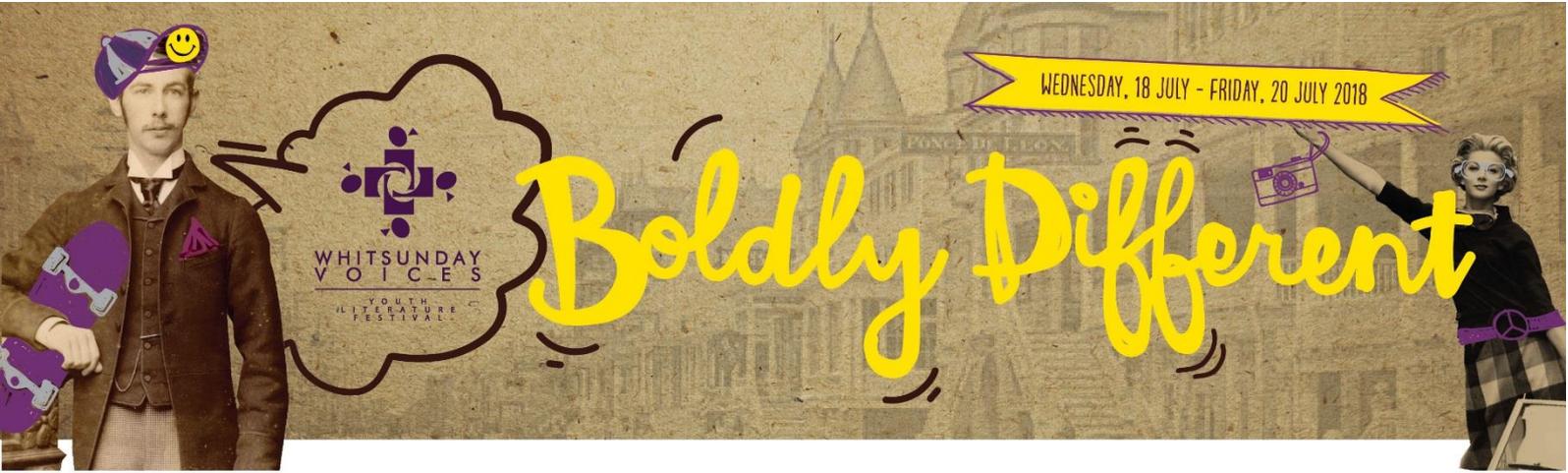
People were always too quick to judge someone. Nobody knew or even cared that I was top of my class in high school, nobody cared if I was really friendly or good with customers, because no one could get past the thing that gave me my identity.

As I rounded the last corner to the store I froze, my chafed feet anchored to the pavement. Boutique Boots was lit up like a Christmas tree with sleek glamorous people laughing and chatting, in and out of the store.

This was the store for stuck up customers and nosy rich people. I didn't belong here.

I almost turned around and headed back to my drab shrimp sized apartment. Maybe I could entice some cats out of the back alley to keep me company. At least they didn't judge what someone looked like.

Shakily, I picked up one foot and placed it in front of the other and so forth, so as not to stumble and embarrass myself. I slowly made my way to the store.



Placing my hands on the delicate glass doors, I pushed them open.

The first thing that hit me was the smell. The aroma of gorgeous leather and crisp air fell like a drape over me. I looked around, fugitively but no one seemed to pay me any attention as they all dug through the conglomeration of shoes.

The only staff member I could see was behind the counter a few steps away from the door busily writing something down in a ledger.

I took an uneven breath and held my head high as I walked towards the man. He looked up as I approached and did the last thing that I was expecting.

He smiled.

“Hi, welcome to the Bou’s Boots. How can I help?” He said, his eyes didn’t even seem to register the ink decorating my face.

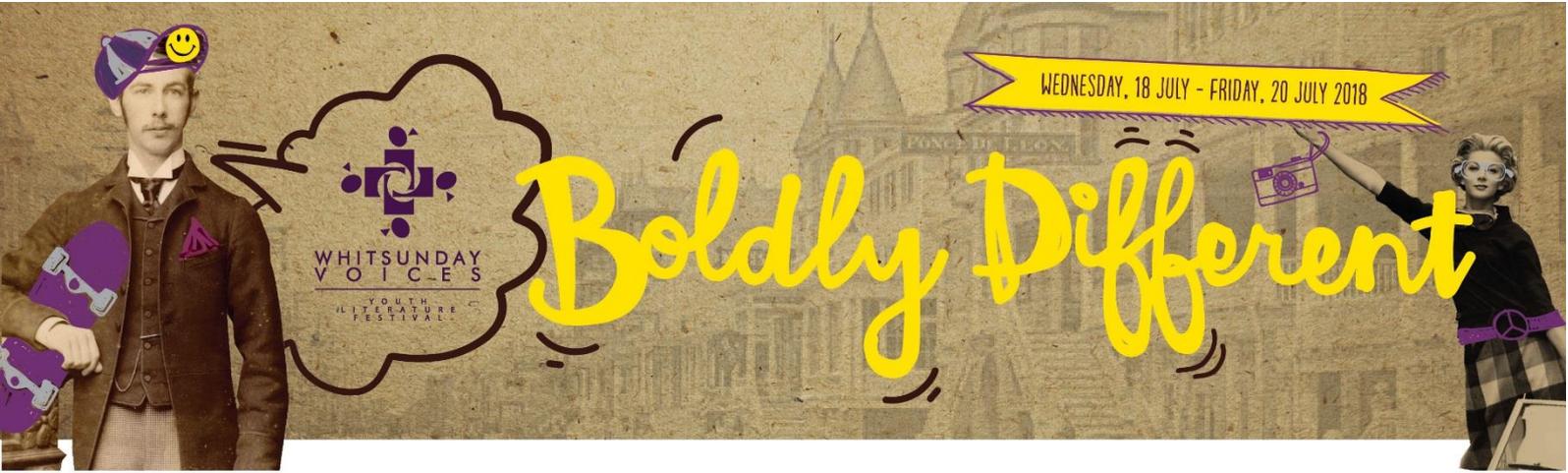
It took me a moment to get my thoughts together. “Hi. I was just wondering if I could give in my resume?”

He grinned wider and gestured to a door across the room with *Staff* written boldly on it. “Don is just through there, he’s the boss.”

“Uh, thanks.” I turned away and let my polite smile fall into a frown. He didn’t say anything about my tattoos, or even sneer at them. No one even looked at me funny as I crossed the room either.

*What is wrong with this place?*

As I reached the door, I hesitantly knocked.



A grumble came from behind the door and it took all my false bravo to push them open widely.

A big man stood before me, with wide eyes and a head of thick bronze hair, but it wasn't his hair that I was staring at. It was the facial tattoos.

A dragon appeared to be eating his mouth, curling down from behind his ear, its wings up over his cheek. It was spectacular.

I grinned.

Don looked from the resume clasped in my hands to my tattoo, to my eyes.

And grinned back.

