

The Twists Of The Tunnels



By: Holy Trinity
INVERELL



Write a Book in a Day



**THE KIDS'
CANCER
PROJECT**

Science. Solutions. Survival.

PARAMETERS FORM

TEAM DETAILS

STATE: NSW
DIVISION: Middle School
SCHOOL/GROUP: Holy Trinity School Inverell
TEAM NAME: Holy Trinity INVERELL
TEAM ID: 1385

PARAMETERS AND RANDOM WORDS

Parameters

Primary character 1 Tour guide
Primary character 2 Guitarist
Non-human character Dragon
Setting Tunnel
Issue Unexpected visitor

Random words

..... Tiptoe
..... Fresh
..... Community
..... Delight
..... Bruised

INSTRUCTIONS

- Start at 8am
- Write an original story:
 - based on all **five parameters** (above)
 - including all **five random words** (above), and in bold type
 - with some identifiable **Australian content** (in theme or setting or characters, etc)
 - keeping within the allowed word count (remember every word on every page counts)!
 - include this parameters form in your book **immediately after the front cover**
- Remember: **Every** word on **every page** counts. This includes your front cover, back cover, blurb, acknowledgements and copyright form.
- **Be sure to give yourself enough time to submit your book and complete the following checklist before 9pm.**

Log on to the Team Coordinator Portal to:

- ☐ Check the spelling of your team name and team members' names (how these are spelt on submission will be how they are displayed on certificates)
- ☐ Complete the Declaration
- ☐ Submit your finished book in **both** PDF and plain text format by 9pm

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Prologue

Eli

“Eli? We have something to tell you, your dad; he's gone!” The detectives told me, after inviting me and my mother into the police station. He has been missing for about 4 weeks now so it's not exactly a surprise. But it still hurts “What do you mean he's gone? He can't be! How? When?” I say, battling a waterfall of tears rushing into my eyes, failing miserably. I end up sobbing on my mother's shoulder. “His stupid obsession with the labyrinth got him killed, didn't it?!” I exclaim, “He knew what he was doing was dangerous and he didn't stop, he loved that ancient mystery more than he loved me; and now he is gone.”

In the distance I see one of my dad's old mates. An aggressive Australian man that seems to have been all around the world, fiddling with his cheap Hawaaiian binoculars in the rain. For the life of me, I can't remember his name, but something about him just makes me feel safe.

I'll find you one day, dad.

Chapter One

Flamin' Galahs

Eli

The bright rays of sun, puncture my eyesight and cause my head to pound. The blue sky is clear of any blemishes or clouds, the colour is identical to my muse's eyes. The green foliage that punctures the arid land, adds a vast contrast to the bright and dry biome of the Australian outback. Feeling my mouth go dry, due to the aridity of the atmosphere, I begin to question my decision. Is this dry and arid place really the right place for my music video? Will the landscape add to its authenticity or degrade it? But then I realise the real reason this was my chosen destination: my connectivity to the Lightning Ridge underground tunnels, my father's passion/obsession with its significance and mystery.

Turning around to familiarise my eyes with my surroundings, my eyes blur due to the change of scenery. The quiet serenity of the outback is broken momentarily by our guide's raspy voice, "Come on, you flaming galahs!" Shocked due to his unprofessional manner and state of mind, I lumber over to the group, regaining my composure. We begin to move forward as a body of people, towards the entrance finally beginning our tour. To others, the group would seem eccentric, worrying and perhaps even futuristically insane.

A guitarist, drummer and singer; walking around the Australian outback in leather jackets and ankle boots. Accompanied by a middle aged traditional Aussie, decked out in full khaki clothes and a cork hat. Trailing behind us are three fully suited and armed bodyguards, each with tough weathered faces and battle scars.

We are certainly out of our environment in the outback. An 'emo' guitarist, a beautiful singer and a rough looking drummer who looks like a bouncer. We are an indifferent group, with unique interests and distinctive appearances, however we all are connected and feel a sense of familiarity in the outback. In some way shape or form we are all connected to this landscape through heritage or emotional connection.

Walking down the long, dusty, worn track; we lumber over to the tunnels ducking under the decaying entrance. Entering the tunnels is like entering a whole new realm for me. Even now ten years later, the stories my dad used as bedtime tales; resonate in my brain and are a central part of my consciousness. Continuing down the sloping path, my eyes slowly adjust to the change of lighting and the eerie atmosphere.

The path continues to slope as the guide begins to describe the purpose and history of the tunnels in his heavy Australian accent, "This maze of tunnels was built in the 18th century as a defence mechanism against the invading Europeans... The ancestral owners of this land evacuated the labyrinth-like maze a few decades ago when they deemed it too dangerous to inhabit. Since then, construction has been done to stabilise the infrastructure, however the true integrity and authenticity of the structure has remained integral."

As he drones on I begin to notice the many side tunnels that lead off away from the main path, and wonder where they might lead to. Pushing those thoughts from my mind, I focus my attention back to the boring lecture that we are receiving in Aussie slur.

"As you can see, this is where they mined opals," Stewie informs, seeming melancholic with his own lecture.

Instinctively, glancing at the walls, I become enthralled with the rich tapestry and intricate illustrations that cover the tunnel walls. The images add to the eerie atmosphere of the maze, casting shadows across the floor, reflecting centuries of culture. Feeling more connected to my absent father than I ever had before, I feel whole and complete.



Chapter Two

Crikey

Stewie

“Alright! Everyone pay attention. We're not waiting for the grass to grow here. Let's get a move on because I am only gonna say this once. Stick with the group at all times. Because if ya leave, its most likely ya ain't gonna return.” I warn them but I know there is going to be at least one cocky bugger that thinks they can outlive the tunnels.

“DO NOT go down any passageway without ME. No one fully knows what is down there. Horrifying creatures could be down there just waiting for their prey. And that'll be you!”

I start my tour of these treacherous tunnels by guiding the hopeless tour group down the dusty eroding pathways, making sure to point out all of the fascinating sculptures. Praying that they don't go off and die. After all, it'll be a hell lot of paperwork. Once again, I feel the need to warn them about staying safe as I know some of 'em are itching to explore (these days people have very little self control). “Once again you do not want abandon the group, because the speech that I'll say at your funeral won't be very nice”

I release a sigh, knowing that none of them are listening, and warning them is a pointless waste of breath.

Chapter Three

Six Stringed Weapon

Alaric

I watch Eli **tiptoe** slowly away from the group, his eyes glowing, admiring everything, with every step, a newfound experience. Clearly Stewie hadn't seen him step away. Eli has a way of turning away from a learning experience and facing danger, that is why I am following him, that is also why I am supposed to be his bodyguard. I can't let him see me, otherwise my cover will be blown, he would ask me to leave and I can't let him do that. Angela and Acksel (other bodyguards) were paired with Bliss and Jax and I was designated to Eli.

Eli never really talks about his family because his father left on a business trip 10 years ago when he was 12 and never returned, since then the underground tunnels in Lightning Ridge are of significance to Eli as that is where his dad supposedly 'died'. His mother was a quiet woman, she owns a small Mexican restaurant in Brisbane. Sofia doesn't like to get herself involved in popularity or fame but she is very proud of her son.

The dusty orange dirt is chipping away from the walls as I wander, Eli is carrying his guitar in his hand, almost like a weapon, protecting him. The old dirt tunnels go on for miles and that's what I am mostly worried about, Eli would wander for miles until he finds something interesting. Eli loves his music but sometimes it gets out of hand, like his last music video, he wanted to swim with sharks. Clearly that didn't end well.

There is a **fresh** smell in the air, it's almost like fresh water and of course, as I walk around the corner, Eli is sipping away at the unknown water

source, dripping from the roof of the dirt tunnel. I rapidly dart back around the corner before Eli sees me.

We keep walking through the dusty tunnels, the damp floor is crumbling with every step, I'm filled with worry for every metre I walk. The brown dust surrounds me and the floor moves beneath my feet. *Keep walking, Alaric.* The humid temperature is also not helping, my forehead is dripping in sweat and every stride I take, it hurts more and I want to stop, but I can't, I must protect Eli, no matter what. Then Eli was out of sight.



Chapter Four

A Touch Of Rock

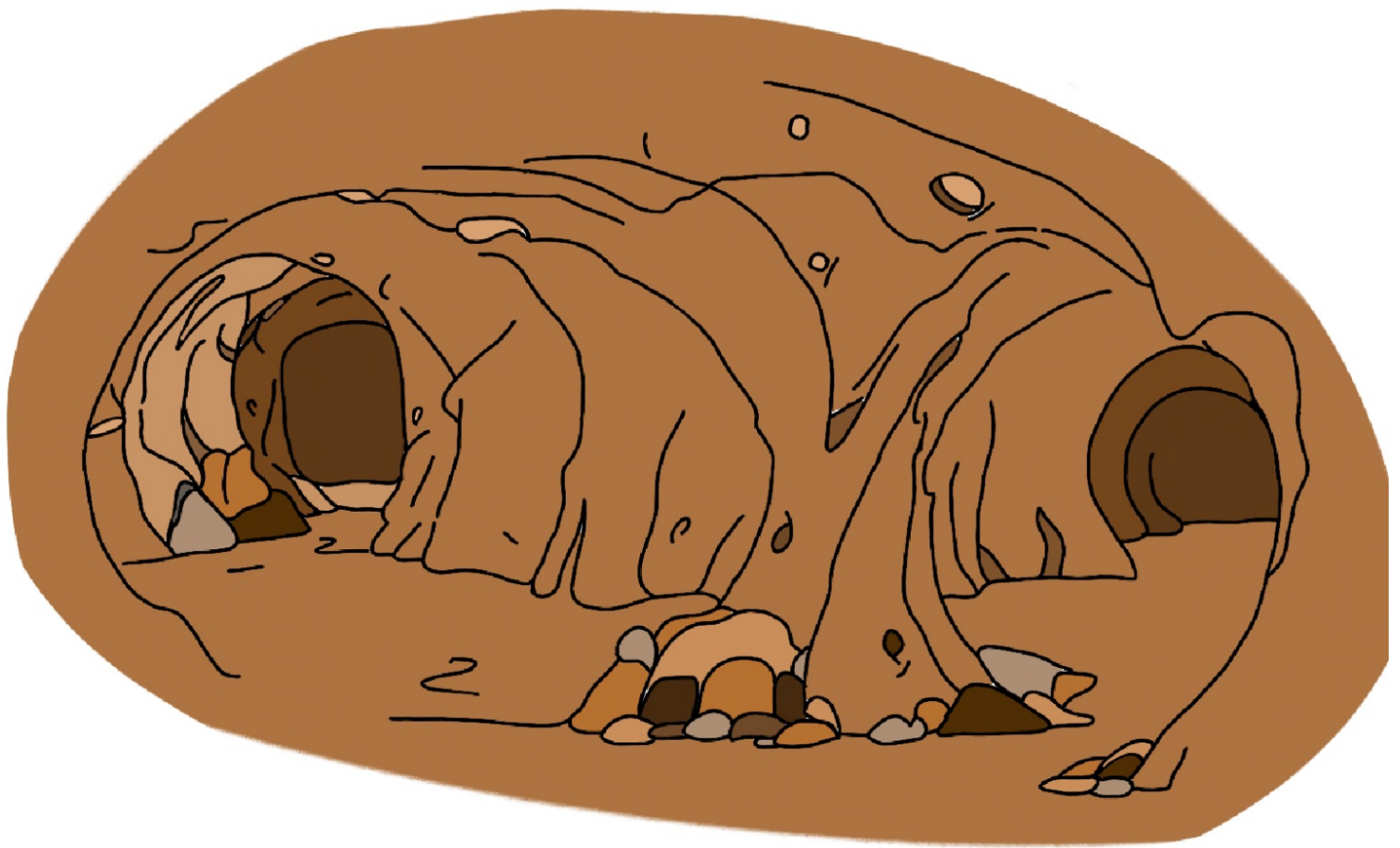
Eli

My hand runs along the walls, I can feel the history of the simple rock and the deep connection it has to its ancestors. Inspiration hits all around me. My father would want me to wander these paths, but I can only wish that he was here. But after his disappearance, my life would vary differently with me deciding to go down the path of creating music! My brain begins to leap at the craving of creativity all around me. The carvings make indents in my mind and as I continue to stroll down this path, words just start to flow. The more and more I continue to follow these tunnels the more they curve inwards outwards each little turn telling a different tale. I begin to wonder if there will be light at the end of the tunnel, and what dark abyss may be waiting for me at the end of the tunnel.

Legend states that wandering through these tunnels curses the soul with a life filled with lunacy. But if anything, my mind does not feel itself collapsing, instead I feel my mind becoming wider with knowledge and inspiration. As I continue to walk down the tunnel, I feel as if I'm being tested for drunk driving. I'm trying to walk in a straight line, yet the curves are trying to deny me. Uncertainty catches me at last and it washes over me, *What if these tunnels are not stable?* But my mind ignores the concept and continues to admire the true beauty of the path. I can feel the crunch of the rock under my feet and my hands are being drawn towards touching the sides and feeling the story.

I continue on my little wander and in the distance, my eyes are drawn to torches that look substantially different to the torches before, they illuminate a blue flame. The only place I have ever seen an illuminated blue flame is

on a gas cooker. But this blue flame is haunting. Its small, delicate touch on the torches feels as if it is a warning to what may come ahead... This may have not been a good idea, yet I once again neglect the aspect and continue wandering through the caves, with an appealing array of rock attracting my every emotion. I became inspired with a motivation to strum my guitar with an extremity of tunes, with the design of the tunnel engraving lyrics into my very mind.



Chapter Five

Blue Tongued Lizard with a Collar

Eli

The tunnels just continue pouring lyrics into my very mind, everywhere I look, inspiration flows; the intricate paintings on the eroded walls appear very delicate. The contrast from the brittle and fragile yet sturdy texture of the rock compared to the clay texture, from the soft mud used to paint on the walls feel connected to me for some reason. Like I've been chosen to be here. The feeling has me baffled as I go to lean on the powdery rock, dust falling merely blurring the artworks on the wall which made me more cautious of my surroundings; I have to protect the art here. Ancient, I feel these have been done centuries ago. Now I understand why dad loved exploring these caves, the rich culture highlighted by the people who lived here. If dad was here he would have loved this.

The lyrics are overpowering my mind, the lack of space to keep the lyrics in but the more I venture into the labyrinth, the more imaginative my mind gets. The feelings of **delight** I feel are more than I can describe. I started putting guitar tunes on this. "Mystery all around me, I feel connected but how can I be?" In the middle of spewing lyrics from my mind to relieve it from holding it all in. Suddenly, I hear a huff! Not a human, for it was far beyond the human capacity to breathe that loud. Smoke fills the room as I hear *it* exhale. "It's ok Eli, just keep walking," are the words I mutter to my perturbed body. I perceive sharp brown scales in my peripherals. "There are no such things as dragons right?" I said questioning reality at this point. Stewie was right. I should have stayed with the group. Whilst snoring, *its* spiky tail was hitting one of the major rocks. It came crashing down and caving me and the monster in.

Silently, I **tiptoe**, retracing my steps with the hope of escaping. In an effort to escape, I accidentally trip on a rock. Consequently, the beast wakes up. A flash of *its* collar reads Talos on his skin gripping claws. Two thoughts

rush through my mind; confusion and fear. Confusion because why would a wild, untamable beast have a collar like a pet does, and fear because of the obvious dragon chasing me out for **fresh** blood. Talos' spiked covered tail whipped me and threw me on my bottom. **Bruised** I was, as I laid there waiting to be eaten, before I found myself in a dusty, cold tunnel.



Chapter Six

Boofhead

Stewie

Goddamnit that silly guitarist Eli, as soon as I said those warnings I knew he would disappear; I guess it was only a matter of time though, I just didn't think he would wander off this soon. How foolish of him to play his guitar in these tunnels, especially when he strayed from the group. If that boy is not careful, he is going to get himself killed, and then who is going to have to pick up the pieces of his carcass? Me! Well that depends if there is anything left of him by the end of today. Although I do admit I have got a bit of a soft spot for him, his dad was my old mate. He was so with these tunnels that it became his toxic trait and eventually downfall. Poor little bugger, he's been through enough. Where could he have. Unless... nah he wouldn't be *that* moronic, would he? Crikey, what am I thinking? Of course that boofhead would run straight into the cave! I know there's an entity here, its subtle scratching and roaring making it more conspicuous. I just don't know what the creature is, and I fear that it may be what killed Eli's father. I know this place, after conducting so many tours here. I'm determined to find the kid. I just can't afford to lose him too, not after I lost his father.

Running through these endless tunnels is giving me a migraine, every turn I take there are just carvings and meticulous patterns that would take years to understand. Patterns only Eli's father would ever understand. My eyebrows furrow with concentration as I continue searching for that punk rock infatuated kid; I don't think I'm ever going to get out of these taunting tunnels, these things can go on for thousands of kilometres and who knows how far Eli is at this point. I am getting rather worried for the guy because I'd hate to see him go out the way his father did; he is so young and has his whole life in front of him, but the imbecile is so determined to be a rockstar.

He reminds me of those flamin' gallahs. I am never going to find him at this rate. I mean why couldn't he, just for once in his life follow the rules; but no, of course he can't. He had to just disappear and look for an adventure just so he can feel '*inspired*'. Kids are hard to work with these days, I tell ya. I proceed running, my only determination to find him safe. I can not let him die in the tunnels like how his dad did. I know his dad disappeared here, I was there with him, but I just don't know how.



Chapter Seven

Unexpected Visitor

Eli

The suffocating stench of the ashy, congregated area fills the eerie atmosphere. My stomach aches to an excruciating extent, and my **bruised** bottom does not make matters any better. I gradually open my eyelids, mustering all courage to regain my composure. I whip my filthy, brushed-down hair out of my face, and once I am fully conscious, I scan the tunnel. The maze consists of immeasurable tunnels, who knows which one I am in? Before I can entirely acknowledge my surroundings, I notice a familiar face peering at me and exchanging a warm, crooked smile. The same almond-brown eyes glistened towards me, and the familiar tattered clothes. Not much has changed, except the adaptation of such skinny posture from famine, the severe burns engraved on his untucked shirt, and the countless amount of eyebags from many sleepless nights. However, he is still the same charismatic man I knew many years ago. It was bewildering. My eyebrow furrows in disbelief and I realise my mouth was agape. This man is my father - Darryl. The very father that disappeared all those years ago. The very father who is the reason I came to this tunnel in the beginning. The man who has saved me.

"Welcome back, son," my father says, emotion clear in his words.

He gives a light chuckle and wraps his arms around me in a sentimental embrace.

"I thought you died," I reply croakily, fighting back the streaming tears.

"I suppose I didn't," My father says, grinning haughtily.

I am rather taken aback when I abruptly notice the chaos in the tunnel. A **community** of diverse people, all excessively lean from days of famine, crowd around me, eyes wide and trembling. Are they... scared?

My father appears to have acknowledged my overwhelm due to the crowd, and he roars a raucous, "LET HIM BE," to the crowd. My dad's unexpected

exclamation was rather baffling. He was always an adventurous type of person, yet he always spoke softly. This is very out of character for him. "Y-yes, sir," the **community** replies. I can't help but notice the terror in their eyes as they retreat away from me.

"We have to escape, dad," I claim, panting and clutching my chest. I am still exhausted from the strenuous events, not to mention, quite puzzled by my recent discoveries. In response however, my father glares at me like I am stupid, which, though I admit, seems irrelevant to the statement.

Darryl rolls his eyes and gives an arrogant smirk. "Leave? Why would we leave this labyrinth? Do you not understand the significance of this room? The very tunnels under such a site like Lightning Ridge? I have been waiting all my life, hoping that you may join me one day in this paradise. "AND YOU WANT TO LEAVE?" He clenches his fist and eyes me with such unfamiliar infuriation.

"Are you mad? WE ARE TRAPPED HERE, DAD. YOU WERE TRAPPED HERE FOR A DECADE, AND YOU DON'T WANT TO LEAVE BECAUSE OF YOUR OBSESSION WITH LIGHTNING RIDGE AND ITS 'LABYRINTH'? OH, AND YOU PLAN TO TRAP ME TOO?" I can hear the exasperation in my raspy voice.

I am apprehensive, I admit. But what had happened to the Darryl I knew? Honestly, how bizarre is this place? First, I discover a brown, flesh-eating dragon, now I determine my father is the very one controlling it, keeping it like his pet? Then, it hit me, the legend is true. That room I had approached earlier never affected me, for I was not inside it for long enough, yet it haS affected my father. Inevitably, he is now a lunatic.

"I have been waiting so long, researching for so long, ensuring the dragon, Talos, follows my every order and captures everyone he encounters, in hopes that we will build a civilisation here, and perhaps that he will imprison *you* so that you may join me as well. Besides, I need company." His voice is now placid, but his eyes aren't. His eye twitches psychotically as he gives a maniacal chuckle.

“You’re trapped here forever, boy, and there’s nothing you can do about it,” he continues, and then I notice Talos’ fangs beaming at me, eager to devour me.



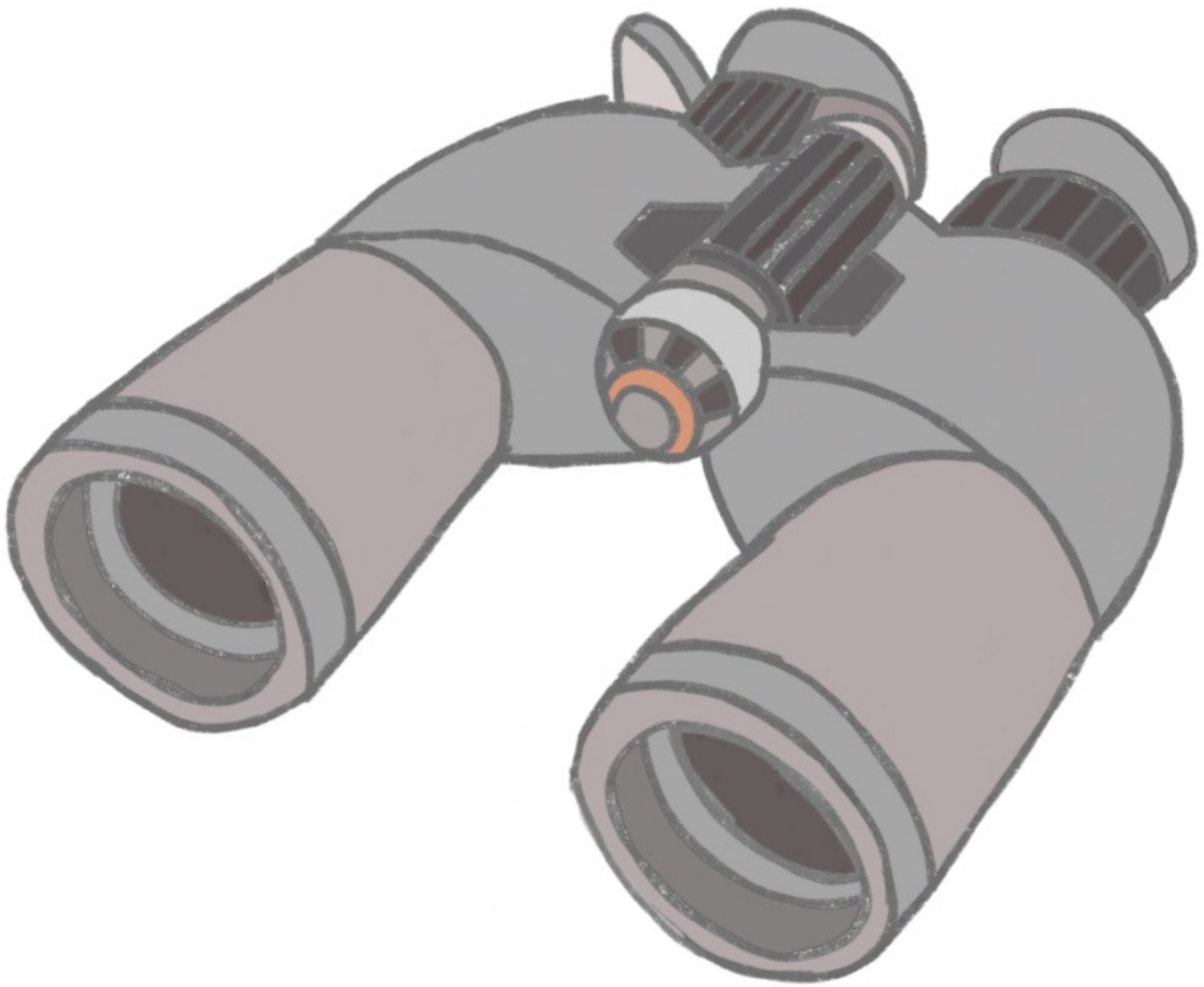
Chapter Eight

Cheap Hawaiian Binoculars

Stewie

I've never run through those tunnels at such a high speed before. The binoculars I got at that dollar store in Hawaii were bouncing against my stomach, almost making me throw up. Thanks to the Aussie bush turkey I had my mullet, I think it made me more aerodynamic. The point is that I'm here now. Stewie's here. The only thing separating me from the dragon that lies ahead is a couple of flamin' rocks. Finally, the gym work I did in Italy will actually be useful.

Lifting the rocks wasn't exactly a challenge for me, not when you follow the ancient water techniques the monks taught me when I visited China. Using the balance between mind and body, I removed the boulders from my path with ease. That's when I saw him. "No, it can't be" I say, whispering and far gone. The sight before me is enough to send me into bloody shock. There, standing before me is that guitarist Eli, about to be eaten by a dragon controlled by none other than Darryl. My best mate disappeared in this maze long, long ago. What happened next is better left unsaid. But let's just say my farm wasn't very calm



Chapter Nine

Square In The Face

Talos

Food! Meat. Oh, the delicious blood that will pour out of this dish. Master Darryl has granted me the opportunity to eat, an opportunity that last occurred a Millenia ago. Back when I was under the command of William the Conqueror. Such a great role model, unlike the pile of rock obsessed flesh I serve now. But he who is chosen is he who commands. And that *he* is Darryl. And that *he* is so out of touch that he gave me a collar.

My scales come alive as I'm about to devour this meal in front of me. My distinct blue tongue tastes the air, the only part of my body that I'm actually proud of. The same rich blue colour that lights the hallways close to my resting place. My tongue was common among my native Australian dragon tribe before we were slaughtered by the great magpies. That was eons ago, before time had even begun. We allied with the Kangaroos, Platypus and Echidnas. But it was not enough. We all lost, but my tribe lost most of all. I was the only one left, the entire legacy of my tribe falls upon me. And here I am, in a stupid labyrinth that only a handful of people know about. About to eat some lame guitarist that will probably be irrelevant in a decade. I've done nothing to honour my people and I have brought shame and indignity to my tribe. I'm a failure. The last breath of an empire long gone.

It's as I realise this that I get punched square in the face by a weird aussie guy in khakis and cheap Hawaiian binoculars.



Epilogue

Darryl

It's been ten years. Ten years since I've smelt the familiar lingering aroma in the atmosphere. A decade since I have been given liberty, when my mind can think freely, not controlled with lunacy that ancient tunnel granted upon me. Escaping that labyrinth and the toxic chemicals brings me back to sanity. How different the world feels, how much more I have to learn. The nerves creep up my spine as I remember the hundred lives I tortured for so many years. What have I done? No extent of apologies can ever cure the hurt I've caused. But all I could do now was make amends. The community I had imprisoned had been ever so forgiving, they were so grateful to reunite with family and to experience freedom once more. For that, they cooperated in attending my son's concert in dedication to Lightning Ridge, the liberated community, and quite frankly, me. My awe of this site and its labyrinth and tunnels have inspired me to continue researching as a historian and understand this landmark. I know I must spend the rest of my years compensating these people and my family. But the first aspect I should ensure is that my son hosts the greatest concert of his lifetime.

It was an extremely crowded province, with outstanding numbers of audience, much larger than the civilisation in the labyrinth. Tens of thousands of Eli's fans have congregated to witness this special event. Stewie and I have reconciled, reunited, and recovered our memories of our eventful friendship, and we vow to always be in support of one another, despite all circumstances. The concert is a remarkable occasion performed in front of Lightning Ridge as a symbol of celebration. Celebration that we have freedom, celebration that we are all in the presence of such a grand landmark, celebration that we are reunited with music.

Without further adieu, Eli's band advances to the stage, handling guitars, drums, and a lengthy microphone. Covered with smeared face paint and similar jackets and jeans, the confidence of this band penetrates through

them all, and Eli is not making his elated nature inconspicuous. A wide smile plastered his ragged face as he noticed me standing in the crowd. His joy of witnessing my presence was contagious; it made me grin proudly back. I glance at Stewie as he pats my shoulder, ruffling my hair in approval. Eli's zealousness is further amplified when he views Prime Minister John Howard in the crowd. He gives the Prime Minister a 'peace' sign and Howard gives a respectful nod back. He even waved eagerly at Alaric, his frantic bodyguard who so desperately tried to find Eli when he strayed away from his tour group. Seeing my son happy again was all I wanted to see, and that's all that mattered. Even back in Mexico, I knew that Eli's grandparents and aunties and uncles would be watching over the broadcast, smiling from ear-to-ear, equally proud of him. Then, the band played their new song 'The Twist of the Tunnels,' and the crowd united in harmony.

Blurb

Years passed without him by my side and I've learnt to live without him. I've made a brand for myself. A music band with millions of fans at my feet. The location for my music video is dedicated to my dad. His weird obsession with Lightning Ridge made it the perfect spot. Venturing into the Ridge all by myself was the stupidest idea I ever made. And I may never be the same again...

