

THE



HEATWAVE



THE KIDS' CANCER PROJECT

WRITE A BOOK IN A DAY

Parameters Form

Team Details

STATE: VIC
DIVISION: Middle School
SCHOOL/GROUP: Box Hill High School (BOX HILL)
TEAM NAME: MENTOS
TEAM ID: 916

Parameters and random words

Parameters

Primary character 1: House painter
Primary character 2: Rock star
Non-human character: Koala
Setting: Classroom
Issue: Climate change

Random words

ruby
melts
shiver
tasty
sponge

Instructions

- Start no earlier than **8am**
- Write an original story:
 - based on all **five parameters** (above)
 - including all **five random words** (above) as written, 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

Prologue

50 years in the future, the world started to slowly die. A blue sky became an opportunity to celebrate, and winter's temperatures reached record highs for summers. Climate change was in full swing. Streets were deserted between the hours where the sun was at its peak. Being in a direct line from the sun could cause severe sunburns in minutes. The population of the world near the equator had decimated completely. Humanity still survived, thrived even, but the rising temperatures caused issues with most of the fresh produce which had a chain reaction to everything behind it. Heatwaves and lockdowns became a regular occurrence. Through the chaos, some tried to ignore it, working normal jobs with a similar lifestyle to that of half a century ago. Others tried to prevent it, and ended up failing in the modern society which won't lift a finger even if it costs everyone the planet.

CHAPTER 1

Mateo

Paint fumes filled the air as my car bumped along the old track. Despair and failure made the air so thick you could cut it with rusty nail scissors. My thin, white shirt pressed against my body, sodden with paint beneath my dark blue overalls. Humidity poisoned the air outside and seeped into my car, making me cough as red dirt kicked up around me, clouding my windscreen. I absent-mindedly pressed my foot down harder on the accelerator, speeding up the car until I hit a large rock and was jolted back to reality. My heart sank to my stomach and dread set in as I thought about returning home. *What if I didn't go home?* I thought to myself, but the idea was debunked before it ever got off the ground. I gulped, fighting back tears, but a small one slipped out anyway. My car's tyres slid along the red dirt path as I pulled up to my driveway. *My driveway.* I couldn't even say that. It was my parent's house, and they had made it blatantly obvious that they didn't want me there. But my career was nowhere near sustainable for me to afford my own apartment. I sighed, bracing myself mentally for the rollercoaster that was to come.

'Ah, Mateo!' A gruff voice yelled from the couch. 'Painter boy. How embarrassing.' He muttered under his breath, and I pretended not to notice.

'I uh, I got your money.' I said quietly, trying to make myself small. Holding out a stack of bills to my father, I moved quietly over to the corner, waiting. My heart jumped as time stood still. After what seemed like an eternity, he turned to me.

'What is this?!' He spat in my face. I instinctively recoiled, as if I was trying to hide from his wrath.

'It's what I earned. It's rent for this month.' My words came out as a husky whisper.

'I asked for two thousand, not two hundred!' He screamed at me. I perked up a little.

'It's more than two hundred, actually it's—' I started, but he cut me off.

'I KNOW THAT!' His voice was so sharp that I almost expected the windows to shatter. 'How do you expect to make it anywhere in life if you can't even pay me what little I charge of you!' I winced as he allowed silence to settle into the air.

'Where did we go wrong with you?' He grumbled and switched his attention back to the T.V.

'It wasn't my fault.' I muttered under my breath. It wasn't my fault I got underpaid. I did exactly what the client asked for; it wasn't my fault the paint was 'too salmon', and they didn't like it.

But somehow it was, according to my parents. I stumbled down to the hatch that led to the basement, paint fumes making me dizzy. I pulled the hatch open and had a welcome relief of cold air as soon as I stepped down the mossy wooden ladder. My hands slid down and I winced as a shard of wood stabbed into my hand. *Damn it!* I screamed on the inside, but no emotion crossed my face. I staggered over to the corner of the room and collapsed on the thin, dirty rug that made up my bed, ignoring all of the paint smudging onto it. The moment passed and I was left on the floor of the basement, feeling like a failure.

This feeling wasn't anything new to me. I often got paid under the 'minimum wage' for painters because I was the lowest rated one in the area. I got stiffed for cash then rated lower on my website, like a vicious cycle. I couldn't even remember the last time I felt inspired, or like everything would be okay again. I cast my mind back a few years, when everything was fine and I was an aspiring

zookeeper, my dream profession. That seemed so long ago today. I was a different person back then. Everything was different.



CHAPTER 2

Melissa

I turned the familiar corner and examined the rusty house that stood before me. The windows had become so fragile and brittle, months of rust and dirt crawling its way up. The thicket of dandelions sprouting through the crevices of cracked concrete. Crabgrass was dotted across the driveway and hideous overgrown grass brushing lightly against my knee. I ambled my way to the scabby 'Welcome' mat which did not look welcoming whatsoever and tapped my fist against the door. The door was so delicate that if I had even knocked with the tiniest bit of force, it looked like it would shatter into a million pieces. The face of my manager looked at me discontentedly and instantly made me break out into panic.

'What's wrong?' I asked hurriedly, the simple words fighting their way out my mouth.

'Ah. Melissa.'

'What happened now?'

'N-Nothing yet. The business hasn't been going too well. I think we're going to have one more gig before...'

'ONE MORE?' I screamed, a little louder than intended.

'Yes. Melissa dear. One more chance.'

One more chance to make my dreams alive. One more chance for my future. One more chance to prove my parents wrong. One more.



'Climate change won't wait, it's now we fight, for a world that's sustainable in the light...'

My voice faltered and my guitar string hit the wrong note making the stage erupt with a cacophonous sound. The lights dimmed and my silhouette etched onto the swaying velvet curtains as the deafening silence rung in my ears. Two pairs of bored eyes stared up at me, one on their phone. Three people. I shuffled my feet awkwardly, my eyes darting around. *What was I meant to do now?* I thought to myself. I did the quick maths- fifteen times three. Forty five dollars. Not even enough for a days' rent. My thoughts took an awry turn, the skyscraper of overdue bills and rent adding up, my own parents scowls of disappointment as they looked down at me as I spit out the words I'd been dreading to say again for the fourth month in a row. That was my last chance. I'd messed up.

'I... I don't have the money...'

I squeezed my eyes shut, blinking back tears that I didn't even realise were there and left.

The stage flowed shut for the last time and engulfed me into my own world of blackness.



Back outside, the breeze was comforting, it put a tranquil cast over my thoughts. *So much for becoming famous*, I grumbled to myself. So stupid. Did I really think I could make it to the big stage

with millions of people? Was I really that deluded into my dreams? I was just a hopeless dreamer. A failed hopeless dreamer that was now turning the same corner to her doom. The rusty house now stared back at me all the hope sucked through. I knew what was going to happen now. It was inevitable. The final downfall of Melissa Rundle.

I tapped on the door lightly for what was probably the last time. The answer was abrupt.

'Melissa. You've arrived.'

'And so I have.'

'Please, won't you come in? I have some news for you.'

My heart fell; I knew what the news would be already. He opened a bag of crinkled crackers, put some slices of **tasty** cheese and ham on a plate and handed it to me.

'Thanks. So, you had to tell me something?' I asked, shoving a cracker in my mouth.

'I don't know how to tell you this.'

'Just spill'

'I don't think I have any other choice. I have to fire you. Don't take it personally, but rock just isn't hitting the charts as high as pop you know? It's not permanent, but I'm not really sure at the moment.'

I breathed a sigh and shut my eyes closed. I wanted to run out of my life and live as someone else. I wanted to believe this was all a dream. I knew it was going to happen eventually, but hearing it confirmed was like bricks being thrown at me. I staggered against the weight of my own disappointment and muttered my final words.

'Thank you, then. I hope I'll see you again... maybe one day.'

'I am genuinely sorry. I hope you understand. All the best yeah?'

'Yeah, yeah thanks. Seeya.'

And I stormed out the room.



CHAPTER 3

Mateo

Her bright purple hair against her pale skin stood out against the mundane classmates surrounding her. A fragment of sunshine reflected off of the window and onto her face, illuminating her grey-blue eyes. I felt a smile inching onto my face as I crept up behind her. I slid my arms around her neck whispered 'hey' into her ear. I watched as her cheeks flushed a pale pink, and my heart exploded in my chest.

'Sit down!' She giggled, but I noted the tone of seriousness in her voice and pulled a chair up to her table.

'Your own table, please.' I jumped as a cold voice ordered me around. Glancing up to the front, I sheepishly noticed the 'I'm not in the mood for this today' look that the teacher was giving me.

'I'll be back for you,' I whispered to her before moving away to sit in the back. She placed a hand on my shoulder, and I felt a rush, a euphoric feeling which slipped away as soon as her hand returned to her side.

I spent the entire class gazing at her, wondering how I ever got a girl like her. Her sweet, kind nature contrasted her ambitious essence that radiated around her like an aurora, filling everyone who went near her with the same energy. The recess bell couldn't come fast enough, but a sick feeling settled in my stomach when I heard the words, 'Mateo, stay after class'.

Another girl had the misfortune of staying with me. Maddy, a classmate of mine and a bit of a nerd.

'Mateo, I want you to work with Maddy on the next project. Your marks on the last test proposed a risk of you failing this class.' She left a silence for the words to sink in. I glanced at Maddy and her freckled face held a shy smile.

'Yeah, no, that's okay.' I said, my voice monotone, as I tried to hold back the waver I could feel coming on.

'Okay, good. I will leave you two to discuss it then.' She left the room in an abyss of awkward silence as the two of us stood there.

'You, um, got any ideas?' I said, as she took a step towards me. Then I heard a gasp from the door. I looked over, horrified to see Melissa, mouth gaping wide open, accusing stare trained on me.

'How could you?!' She spluttered.

'What? No! It's not what it looks like!' I yelled back at her, pushing Maddy away from me. 'I would never do that!' Her face twisted, as if she was contemplating whether or not to believe me.

'That's that what they all say.' She said defiantly, before spinning on her heels and storming down the corridor.

CHAPTER 4

Melissa

His hazel bronze hair bounced against his forehead, his full lips and slender nose contrasting his face perfectly. Balanced, like all things should be. His sharp jaw matched his piercing voice that rang with melodious sincerity in every word he spoke. He shone like a diamond in the rubble of stone. I could hear the shuffling behind me, but I was determined to not turn. He slid his arm around my neck and whispered 'hey' in his seductive tone. His warmth spread throughout my body; I wish he could stay with me like this forever. 'Sit down,' I half-whispered half-giggled. The teacher shot us a dirty look. He pulled a chair without missing a beat and I was about to explode with ecstasy, until the teacher had stormed over.

'Your own table, please.' a cold voice appeared. I timidly turned back to reality, where the teacher was now eying Mateo with a disgruntled face. Trust the teacher to ruin the moment, huh.

'I'll be back for you,' he whispered to me before moving away. I placed a hand on his shoulder, wanting to prolong the moment, but with the vexatious glare the teacher was now shooting us, I knew that wouldn't be possible.

I spent the whole class sentimentalizing about every word he spoke- his perfect articulation, the way his heart lips spoke, every touch, every word lingered in my thoughts. Lovestruck, you could call it.

'Mateo, stay after class.' My heart skipped a beat as his name was called. I hoped he wasn't in trouble because of me. I walked out the class, my heartbeat still thumping erratically. I leaned against the wall, waiting to see his face again. One minute, five minutes, ten minutes and he still hadn't left? I peered inside and a gasp left my mouth before I could control myself. A **shiver** ran down my back as I scanned the room.

"How could you?!" I demanded. My heart shredded into a million pieces and my eyes stung.

'What? No! It's not what it looks like!' he yelled back at me, pushing Maddy away from him. *'I would never do that!'* My face twisted, as I wondered if he was telling the truth or not.

'That's what they all say,' I grumbled, the tears starting to spill.

I stormed off, a mess in distress.



CHAPTER 5

Mateo

Beads of sweat glistened on my forehead as I revved the engine, driving away from my troubles. I couldn't let myself start to feel sorry for my life, otherwise I would start to spiral out of control into a never-ending whirlpool of misery. I glared at the red dirt track and swallowed myself in my thoughts. Suddenly the dust in the air cleared for a split second for me to see a koala, right in front of my car. Instincts took over and I slammed on the breaks, bracing for impact or the dreadful sound of bones snapping. I felt contact with the front of my car and squeezed my eyes shut, hoping for the best. I waited a few beats after my car had stopped before getting out.

'No, no, no,' I muttered to myself after seeing the koala, limp on the floor. 'What have I done?' I tried to pick her up, but the sharp claws and heavy bodyweight put me off. I wrapped her in a towel, inspecting her. No visible injuries, and a slow, staggering breath. I flipped her over to see her tail tagged, like the ones from the zoo.

'**Ruby**,' I read aloud. I felt my breath quickening as hers slowed. I wasn't near anything. I only had my paint supplies and not even ten dollars in my wallet. I frantically glanced around, until my eyes settled on an elegant looking building a few hundred metres down. Without giving it a second thought, I took off down the street towards the building. It came more into view as I got closer, and I saw the words *High School* printed across the front. *A high school nurse can help an injured koala, right?* I thought in a frantic attempt to console myself.

I reached the school's doors and bust them open without a second thought. The office I had burst into was completely empty, which further sent me into a frenzy. I sprinted across the campus, limp koala in my arms, trying to find a room with someone who could be of any assistance. Spying a classroom with people inside, I forced the door open still cradling the koala.

'Please help me.' I gasped.

I felt all eyes settle on me as I registered how crazy I looked. The teacher at the front of the room said something to his assistant, who quietly ushered me out of the room.

'I can take him to sick bay, if you want.' The sweet tone struck a chord in me. I waited a beat before replying.

'Her. She's a girl. And yes, that would be amazing.' I quietly followed the woman to the sick bay, wondering where I knew her from. Silence filled the air while we were walking.

'Melissa?' I blurted out. She turned to me, her grey-blue eyes analysing my face.

'Yes.' She said skeptically. 'I'm sorry, do I know you?' The words made my heart sink. I looked down at my feet, noting my paint-covered clothes into the reason she didn't recognise me.

'It's uh. Mateo.' I said sheepishly.

'Oh.' Silence filled the air, and I was suddenly regretful of how things ended between us. But we soon arrived at the med bay and all my worries focused on **Ruby**.

'She'll be just fine.' A reassuring voice told me. I breathed a sigh of relief and I collapsed into my chair outside the office. I let myself relax as I held my head in my hands. My eyes snapped open again when a siren blared from a speaker in the top corner of the room.

'What now?' I muttered.

'That's the lockdown alarm. A heatwave is coming.' Melissa grumbled, and I knew that this wasn't an uncommon situation. I noticed the aircon up near the speaker start working double.

'We should get back to the classroom, check on the students. We have procedures for this.' I absentmindedly nodded, following Melissa back the way we came towards her classroom. I opened the door for a shortcut across the oval, but Melissa quickly stopped me, and the wave of humidity that hit me right after inclined me to agree with her.

The students in the classroom were in havoc when we arrived back. Everyone was lying on the hard, tile floor, trying to absorb any cold that it had to offer. I felt my heart start beating faster and sweat drip down my face. The aircon was blasting but it didn't seem to be doing anything. Suddenly one boy stood up, looking drunk from the heat. He stumbled a few paces towards the front of the room before collapsing back onto the hard tiles.

'Oh my gosh,' I muttered to myself, and the teacher ran to tend to him.

'He's passed out from the heat. Everyone get on the ground; don't hit your head if you do too.' The teacher announced, and panic settled in among the students. Melissa grabbed a nearby phone and dialled a few numbers, and the alarm from the other end told me it was the boy's parents. I stood there, a feeling helpless and things descended into chaos around me. Just as it seemed everything couldn't get any worse, the lights in the room flicked off. The blinds had been put down to keep heat out, so the room was almost pitch black. Screams from the students echoed around the room. I felt my head start to throb. My face burned from the heat. I looked over through the shadows, noticing a pair of worried blue grey eyes, scanning the darkness.

CHAPTER 6

Melissa

I was in a frantic frenzy as the lights engulfed us into pitch blackness. I had already dialled a dozen parents whose children had fainted and I did not need to do more.

‘Mateo! Where are you?’ I whispered in a hushed tone. I didn’t need the children to start panicking—that would just make them even more unnecessarily hot.

‘I’m here! Melissa!’ He whispered back, matching my tone. I looked at me, desperation in his eyes.

‘Do we have towels? Let’s make some wet towels, it’ll cool them down a lot.’

His eyes flashed in relief and softly replied ‘Yes, of course. You’re a genius Melissa! Let’s get to work.’

We worked in the dark, wetting towels and putting them on children’s foreheads. His calm had made the kids less scared, and he worked so well with kids—significantly less calls were made. He joined me in the kitchen a few minutes later.

‘Hey Melissa, we’re out of towels here.’

I glanced to the side; the bucket of towels emptied.

‘There’s some up here in the cupboard. Here, I’ll get some for you and pass them down to you.’

‘Thanks.’ He replied.

I reached up grabbing a handful of towels and passing them to him. He set them aside as I pulled a chair to get the hidden ones at the back. I scooped a handful with my arm and started passing them to him again. As I reached again, my foot slipped on some water left from making the towels and made me go stumbling down. I braced myself for the pain that was surely on the way, my eyes squeezed shut, fingernails digging into my palms, but the pain never came. I blinked my eyes open and found Mateos arms supporting my weight. I relaxed into his grip like how chocolate **melts** in your mouth. As I met his gaze, still stunned, he set me back on my feet.

“I-I’m sorry I think I slipped or something...” I stammered.

“All good. You alright?”

“Yeah of course. Thanks, again”

“Anytime.” And with that, he flashed a grin and walked away.

I might have been floating.



CHAPTER 7

Mateo

I grabbed one of the wet towels, ignoring the previous moment and navigating my way over to a boy that had fainted. As I adjusted to the dark, my eyes settled on his face, flushed tomato red. I gently placed the towel on his forehead and spooned some water into his mouth before making my way to the next one. We quickly ran out of towels on the people who had fainted, again, so I grabbed a small **sponge**, soaked it, and used it as a makeshift one for people who were still conscious. I hazily stood up, proud of my work, before remembering the koala still in the sick bay. *Crap*, I thought to myself.

'I'm going to check on the koala.' I muttered to Melissa, not wanting to ensue more panic than there already was.

'What? Alright.' The disappointment in her voice would have made me blush if I wasn't already burning. I recalled the way through the maze of corridors in the dark, sweating profusely. Seeing a light in the distance, I pursued and stumbled haltingly into the med bay. The nurse was tending to someone passed out on the bed, looking worried.

'Why is there power here?' I blurted out, getting annoyed.

'We're connected to a different grid because this building is new.' She answered, back turned to me. Not caring enough to pay attention, I frantically glanced around the room, eventually spotting **Ruby** lying unconscious on the floor.

'You didn't take care of her?!' I yelled, but already knowing that people would be prioritised over her. I heard the click of heels behind me, and Melissa appeared beside me. I rushed to the koala's side, rolling her limp body over and wrapping her in the blanket.

'She got hit by a car! Help her!' I yelled at the nurse. She looked frustrated but obeyed me, until Melissa stepped in.

'People are fainting! No one cares about some stupid koala.' She recoiled after seeing my shocked face but didn't back down.

'They will WAKE UP. **Ruby** might not.' I said aggressively. Melissa threw her arms up in the air in exasperation.

'Who cares about the dumb koala? It's going to die anyway.' I took a step back, shocked and unsure how to respond. Melissa seemed surprised by herself and maybe even regretful. But I felt my temper flare and was too mad to care.

'Your koala will be fine.' A calm voice from the corner said. I breathed a heavy sigh of relief, and just in that moment, everything seemed fine.

CHAPTER 8

Mateo

The walk back to the classroom was silent, but the tension in the air was gone. My head felt like it could implode at any minute, and my body felt like it was frying on a grill. Melissa's legs wavered, and then slowly gave way. She collapsed on the floor before I could do anything to stop it. Her breathing heavy, I reassured her that I would be back soon and dashed off to bring back some water.

My eyes pierced through the darkness as I scoured the room. I dashed to the sink and grabbed a roll of paper towels, ripping one off before soaking it in warm water from the faucet. I almost sprinted back, but I was too late. She had passed out on the floor, waiting for me to return.

Seconds turned into minutes, and then slowly, into hours. I felt myself cooling off as the heatwave passed. Power wasn't restored until after I left with Melissa in my arms. Most of the students' parents arrived but weren't allowed to enter the school because of the lockdown. Ambulances and paramedics arrived and took most of the students away, and veterinarians took the koala away. But I wanted to personally escort Melissa to the hospital. I watched her, so peacefully, resting while doctors hurried around her. I was made to leave and wait outside the room while they worked. Anxiety crept up on me the longer I was left waiting. But I had nothing to do but wait.

CHAPTER 9

Melissa

My eyes flickered open as I looked around, thoughts disorientated. Behind my eyelids, dim images flashed around. Heatwave. Mateo. Wet towels. Mateo. Children. Falling down. Blackout. None of this was making sense. I leaned over and found myself on a white gossamer bed. I hurried to my feet, almost falling twice before I grabbed onto the table and steadied myself. Where was Mateo? Was Ruby okay? Questions filled my head, so with that, I walked forwards. Glancing around, I found my phone. My fingers tripped over the keyboard in my hurry to text Mateo.

‘Hey Mateo, come in please.’

Mateo stumbled in and hurriedly rushed to my side. ‘Are you okay?’ He asked in trepidation.

‘Yes, I’m fine.’

‘Um... Melissa?’

‘Yeah?’

‘I never cheated on you. I just, I hope you know that.’ Mateo said, his voice timid. Awkward silence filled the air as I tried to remember what had happened.

‘WHAT. Then, what were you doing with that other girl?’ I questioned; my voice still skeptical.

‘Nothing! That’s just it— it was for a project that I was stuck with her.’

‘You sure?’

‘Promise.’

And this time I believed him.

EPILOGUE

A FEW YEARS LATER

I moved out of my parent's home a few months ago, and they could not be happier. I landed my dream job as a zookeeper after my ordeal with **Ruby**, I realized how much money actual jobs paid. And I could move out soon after.

I'd kept in contact with Melissa after she figured out what happened all those years ago. And we were closer than ever. She began an exceptionally successful YouTube channel, protesting climate change online with her lyrics. It might not save the world, but it was a start.

I still see **Ruby** most days. She lives at the zoo and I am her primary caretaker. Melissa often comes by, and I stop by her new place often; I found out she was being stiffed as an assistant at the school. Our lives changed for the better that day.

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50 years in the future,
climate change caused
the world to
drastically heat up
resulting in everyday
life to change acutely,
for the worst. There
were those who chose to
ignore it, and those
who chose to oppose it.
Heat waves destroyed
the natural life
outside of well-kept
enclosures. Through it
all, two unlikely
friends work together
to save their careers
and the world.