



Can't go solo

WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY
5 SHADES OF AMAZING

PARAMETERS FORM

in a Day | Science, Solutions, Survival

TEAM DETAILS

STATE: VIC
DIVISION: Middle School
SCHOOL/GROUP: Box Hill High School (BOX HILL)
TEAM NAME: 5 SHADES OF AMAZING
TEAM ID: 202

PARAMETERS AND RANDOM WORDS

Parameters

Primary character 1: TV star
Primary character 2: Sheep shearer
Non-human character: Goldfish
Setting: Service station
Issue: Treasure hunt

Random words

Whistle
Light
Gold
Hungry
Buttily

Copyright

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Chapter 1

Selena

The world had stopped around me. My heart shattered into a million pieces as I stared down at those 10 words. Every muscle in my body tensed up. I tried – but failed – to hold in the tears as I read the words repeatedly. "We regret to inform you that you have been rejected."



This was the one chance I had to go from an unnoticed TV star to a coveted celebrity, and I had blown it! I slammed my hand on the letterbox and watched as a blue-black bruise began taking form on my olive skin.

With dejection coursing through my veins, I flitted through the remaining posters, weeding out the useless one that I could throw away. I was about to throw them into the bin when a leaflet caught my eye. My stars must have aligned today because this was the best news I had in a while. Just like that, my sorrow evaporated and transformed into unfathomable happiness. It was a treasure hunt, which would be a great way to get my mind off the rejection. The cherry on the cake was the fact that the winner would get to star in a movie with Azriel Vanserra, the most famous movie star to come out of Australia!

I headed towards my car, confidence pumping through me, and typed the address into the GPS system. I was about to drive off when I caught a glance of myself in the mirror. I looked terrible, probably because I had just had a mini break-down. There were long black streaks of mascara trailing down my face; my lipstick had smudged, making my small

pouty lips look uneven, and my hazel eyes were rimmed with red. My wavy chestnut-coloured hair that was sticking up in some places along with my pyjamas made me look even more dishevelled. I pushed my round-framed glasses up my button nose and headed back into the house.

I took a quick shower and threw on a black square neck shirt, blue denim overalls and pulled on a pair of hiker boots. I shoved the leaflet into the pocket of my overalls and headed off. When I got back into my car, I turned on my GPS and began to drive, listening to the directions it gave me. A few minutes into the drive, I decided to start up the radio to drown out the silence in the car. As the cool EDM beats began to fill up the tiny space, I began to sing along at the top of my lungs.

Finally, after an hour's drive, I reached a crowded service station. I had driven to a wrong address. Or the whole thing was a fraud? Oh well, I was desperately in need of coffee, and there seemed to be a coffee machine in the service station.

I got out of my car and started walking towards the service station. "Did you get a leaflet for a treasure hunt too? If you are here for the competition, you can just take the stairs to the second floor of the servo mate!" I turned around to see who had said that but saw no one behind me. Was I going out of my mind?

Nevertheless, I decided to heed the advice I had just heard. After a few minutes of wandering around, I found a rickety wooden staircase that led up to the second floor. I gingerly climbed up the stairs to see a room full of people. At the very back of the room, a talking possum was screaming at people to queue up to register.

I was getting increasingly astounded with every second that passed. As I looked around, I realized that people were being paired up randomly with a stranger. They were also being assigned talking goldfishes. My heart was beating as loud as a war-drum at this point. I really did not want to pair up with a stranger. For all I knew, they could be annoying and ruin my chances at winning. I realized that most of the queue had cleared and there was only a lanky boy with honey-coloured skin and curly red locks left. His grey eyes were swimming with emotions that I could not place. He was wearing a plain white t-shirt, an oversized navy hoodie, cargo pants and combat boots. Maybe he wouldn't be too bad?

I sauntered up to him and smirked. "Looks like we're partners

Ginger. My name's Selena." The boy looked down at me and muttered "Rowan" under his breath. "My name's Rowan, and I would appreciate if you called me that," he said again, louder this time. I harrumphed, appalled at the fact that he would talk back to me. Giving him the evil eye, I strutted towards the registration table to collect our goldfish.

chapter²

Rowan

As I drove home from my usual shift at the Woolly Beings Sheep Club. I was in my typical outfit of cargo pants, loose jacket, and cargo train boots.

I was wondering if things would ever change for me. I worked as a sheep shearer which obviously meant that I was not earning much. Why did the world have to fall apart like this? If I were able to get the answers, I would. I pulled up to my driveway and saw my warmly lit house. As I opened the door, my muscles relaxed to the warm scent of freshly baked cakes and bread wrap around me. My parents were sitting on the dining table playing a game of scrabble, they looked up as I collapsed onto the couch, exhausted after the days' work. My parents shared a knowing glance at each other. I got up to get my hot chocolate and sat down next to them, and I had only one thing to say. They looked me in my wistful and clear grey eyes, and I told the two words I had meant to say. "I quit." And that was the end of it. I stormed into my room and slammed the door behind me, causing them to jump.

I threw myself onto my rickety old bed and lay there motionless, sobbing into my pillow. I heard my door open and was suddenly aware of my mother's gaze. She walked towards me and set something on my bedside table. After she left my room, I lifted my head. There, on my table, was a leaflet. The leaflet was a minimal brown type of colour. At least reading might help get my mind distracted from my sorrows.

The leaflet was promoting a treasure hunt with a grand prize. There were so many things going through my head that night. Was there only one winner? Was I sure I wanted to take part? That night, for the first time in months, I slept soundlessly lost in my ongoing happy and excited thoughts.

I woke up at the crack of dawn the next day, pumped to think what might happen. I kept on reading the leaflet repeatedly. It was not just the fact that there is a grand prize, it is the fact that I might meet someone

who might become my friend or even best friend. Yes, to enter the competition, you had to find a partner to compete with. I quickly got dressed in a plain white t-shirt, an oversized navy hoodie, my usual cargo pants, and combat boots.

I hopped into my car and begin the 4 hours' drive to the given address. I felt my hands getting sweaty as they gripped the steering wheel even tighter. I did not know why I was so nervous. It was not like I was going to the moon or anything. After ages of driving, I finally pulled up to ... a service station? The station is packed with people bustling about. I hear people yelling to go to the second floor of the station, so I head there myself. I quickly realize that I need a partner for this challenge. After a while of looking around, I spot a pretty girl, around my age. She was a short girl with wavy hair and olive skin. I would have asked to pair up with her, but she would turn me down. I started looking around for others, but none of them stood out to me. I felt a tap on my shoulder, and I turn around. Standing there is the girl from before.

"Looks like we're partners Ginger," she smirked.

"Rowan," I muttered, slightly annoyed. "My name's Rowan, and I would appreciate if you called me that."

CHAPTER 3

Selena

The possum at the registration table pointed at the last remaining goldfish. As soon as I picked it up, it started blabbing. "G' day mates! My name's Derp the goldfish, and I am going to be your host. A **whistle** should have appeared around both your neck. It's going to let you talk to animals like me!"

I stared at 'Derp' for a while, wondering whether this was all just a dream. I blinked twice slowly, trying to process everything that the goldfish was saying. I turned to face Rowan and saw that he had a befuddled expression on his face too. I pinched my arm hard, and when I did not wake up to a different reality, I realized that this was really happening. I let out a long sigh and braced myself for a long, long day.

"So ... Derp, what do we do now?" I asked. With a massive smile on his face, Derp began to explain that he would give us a riddle and we would have to solve it. Once we solved it, we would have to take a magical portal to the location and snap a selfie of us with it in the background.

Rowan, with a determined look on his face, asked what the riddle was. Derp, thankfully, did not say anything unnecessary and got straight to the point. "Near water, I stand, but sail I cannot for all my sails are made of rock." Hearing this had me perplexed. There were hundreds of things near water!

Rowan piped up from behind me, "Sails? That means this place ought to have a ship. But what kind of a ship has sails made of rock?" That is when it struck me. The riddle was talking about the Opera House! It was near a water body and was shaped like a collection of sails. I related my answer to Rowan, and he agreed that my guess was the most probable. When Derp informed us that our solution was correct, my confidence levels rose.

I looked down my nose at the lanky Ginger and cooed with a sickly sweetness, "Try to keep up Ginger. I'm not going to lose this competition because of your lack of intellect." Rowan raised his eyebrow and gave

me a look that clearly said, "Oh, really?" I stared at him impassively until he turned around and walked towards the magic portals. I trailed behind him and walked through the portal to see the Sydney Opera House in front of me in its ethereal glory.

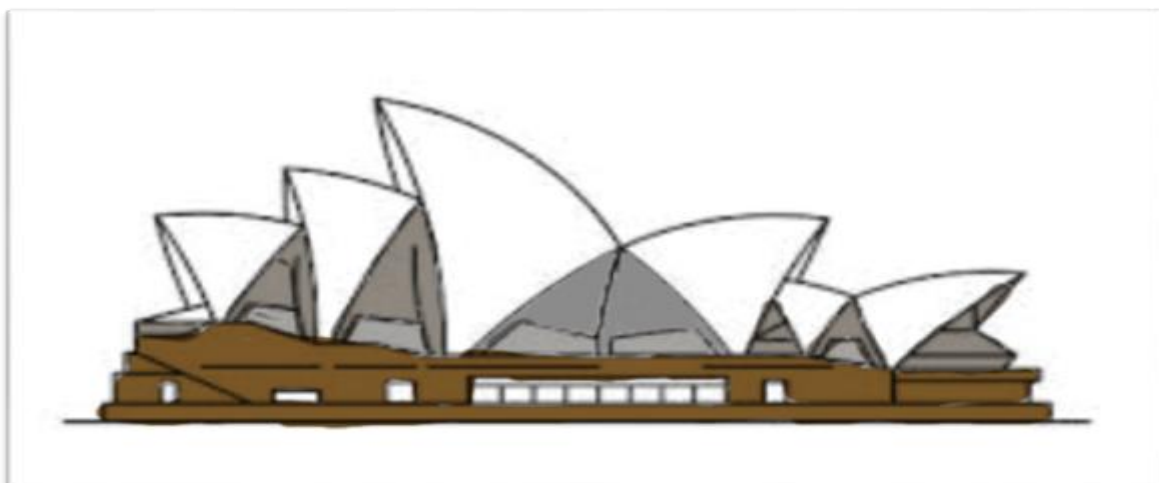
I pulled out my phone and asked Rowan to stand behind me so that we could take the picture and get back as soon as possible. Rowan grumbled something that I could not hear and came to stand beside me. He bent down slightly so that we could both be in the picture, put his arms around my shoulder and smiled into my phone's camera. I took a few quick photos and put my phone back into my pocket. Rowan's arm slipped out from around my shoulder, and I could not help but miss the warmth that was surrounding me a second ago.

"The sails are whiter than the wools of the sheep I shear – or used to anyway. I quit my job yesterday," Rowan randomly blurted out.

"What am I supposed to do about that? It's not my problem that you couldn't handle a simple job," I snarled at him.

Rowan looked wounded at those words. He clenched his jaw and stalked to her, "Must you be so rude? I have seen you on TV before you know, and I cannot believe I was foolish enough to think that somehow the fame would not have gotten to your head. Oh! I completely forgot, you were fired for being incompetent, and no one has hired you since!" His words knocked the wind out of my lungs. I turned around and walked away from him. It was all I could do to stop myself from falling apart right there and then.

A lone tear slid down my cheeks as I jogged towards the portal. I wiped off the tear as I strode through it and finally got back to the service station.



Chapter 4

Rewan

As soon as the words came out of my mouth, I had regretted it. I was never the kind of person who would insult anyone, but Selena brought out the worst in me. When I saw the hurt and rage flash through her hazel eyes, I almost begged for her forgiveness, but she walked back through the portal before I could do anything. I chased after her, hoping that she would accept my apology. Even I would not forgive myself if I did that, then how could I expect her to.

When I finally got to the other side of the portal, I saw that she was showing Derp the photos that we had taken. It occurred to me then that I should not have to ask for her forgiveness, she had hurt me too. I had offered her something a small part of me, and she had judged and belittled me. She did not deserve my forgiveness, nor did she deserve an apology from me.

I walked right past her and looked at Derp, "What's the next riddle?" I could see Selena's distraught face in my peripheral vision. There was a small wet line down her cheek. Oh no! If I had made her cry, I would never forgive myself. If Derp realized that there was some sort of tension between us, he never let on. Instead, he just spewed out the next riddle with a straight face. "Once upon a time, 9 stood proud, now there are 8 that still shout loud. They lay beside a winding path, the rocks themselves are taking a bath."

We stood in silence for a few minutes, wondering what it could be. 'Rocks taking a bath' meant they were some sort of rock formation in water. There were 9 of these formations before, but now there were 8. Did the rock just magically vanish or something? Hold on, the answer was the 12 Apostles! They were near Great Ocean Road, which was a winding road, and there were only 8 apostles left after one had collapsed in 2005.

I yelled out my answer, confident that I was correct. I was not even surprised when Derp nodded his head at me. I simply walked back towards the portal and crossed into the top of an Apostle. Selena walked

in behind me and nearly fell off when she missed her footing. Thanks to my quick reactions, I managed to grab her and pull her up before she fell off. She quickly shoved my arm off, and I could swear that hatred flashed through her eyes when she looked at me. "Let's just take the photo and get this over and done with," she snapped at me. I did not blame her for snapping at me after what I had said. It did not change the fact that she had started it or that she had hurt me too.

We smiled into the phone, putting our hatred aside. After Selena took the photo, I looked around and was shocked to see a throng of other competitors around us. We had to hurry up if we wanted to win this competition. I looked down to see Selena's face **light** up with the same realization that I had just had. My doubts were confirmed when she dragged me to a portal.



Chapter 5

Selena

I grabbed onto Rowan's arm and dragged him through the portal. We might not be talking to each other, but that was not going to stop me from winning. When we got back into the servo, I saw even more groups starting to return. I ran to Derp, pulling Rowan behind me the whole way.

Frustrated with the idea of losing, I screeched at Derp to tell us the next riddle. Derp seemed a little annoyed at my tone, but honestly, I couldn't care less. When Derp realized that, he let out a long exhale and said, "At the top of the unknown land; at the bottom of the sea; stretches of colour as long as can be."

If the other riddles were hard, this was impossible. How could we know about an unknown land? Urghh! I really did not want to lose. I could not believe I had gotten this far just to lose. I wracked my brain, trying to think what the answer could be. When I turned to look at Rowan, I saw his face scrunched up in concentration. I really regretted what I had said to him. He had been nothing but kind to me the whole time, and yet here I was being rude to him. Sure, he had said some hurtful things, but I had started it.

I was about to apologize to him when he announced, "The Great Barrier Reef." I looked at him in awe, wondering how he could have figured that out. He must have realized that I would ask the question, for he launched into an explanation. "Australia was once called '*Terra Australis*' which meant '*unknown land*.' The only colourful and long underwater thing at the top of Australia was the Great Barrier Reef." *Why hadn't I thought of that?*

We both sprinted toward the portal desperate to get there before the other groups did. When we finally got there, I pulled out my phone to take one last photo of the two of us before we went our separate ways and never saw each other again. A wave of sadness rushed through me as I realized that we would part with negative memories.

"Earth to Selena? Is anyone in there?" I realized I had blanked out for a while. When I looked up, I saw terror in Rowan's silvery grey eyes. Instantly I knew that something was wrong. When I questioned him about what had happened, he merely pointed at the portal. I was growing concerned. What could have happened to the portal? I decided to check it out for myself and stumbled towards it. I tried walking through but smashed into an invisible hard wall. Realization surged through me. The portal had locked us out, and now we were trapped!

I turned back to Rowan and trudged towards him. This was going to be awkward. I sighed through my nose and stared at Rowan, who was now sitting on the sandy beach. I plopped down next to him and curled into myself. Since we were stuck here, I might as well apologize to him.

"Rowan, I'm sorry about what I said earlier. I've just really wanted to win. I've realised that there are more important things than winning, things like friendship. You've been nothing but nice to me, but here I was being rude to you. I guess I was simply scared that you wouldn't like me. I'm so, so sorry. Please forgive me-" I was cut off by his arm circling around my waist and pulling me into his chest. He quietly whispered that he had forgiven me and that he was sorry for being rude too.

'GROOWL' my stomach rumbled. I froze, mortified at the loud noise that my belly had just made. Rowan clamped down on his lower lip to try to suppress his laughter. When I saw his expression, I burst out chuckling. Hearing my laugh caused him to laugh too, and soon, tears of merriment rolled down our cheeks.

"Well good for you I'm hungry too," Rowan said, standing up and offering me his hand. We walked towards the nearby barbeque stall and ordered 2 meat pies with Pepsi. As the **bubbly** liquid slid down my throat, I felt a hundred times more rejuvenated.

Suddenly, the **whistle** around our necks burst out with **gold light**. Everything around us started to blur as I felt myself being sucked into an abyss. When everything was clear again, I looked around to see that I was in the servo.

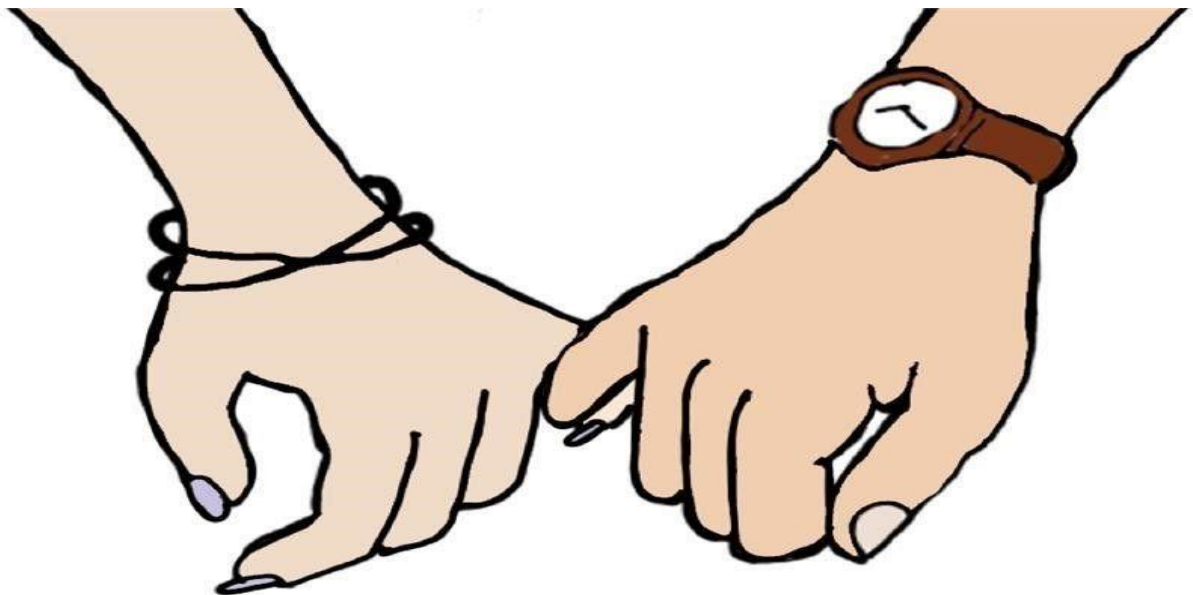
A kangaroo hopped out from behind me, took a good look at Rowan and me and monotonously announced, "You two have won the competition. The treasure was friendship, and you managed to find it." I

was ecstatic when I heard this. Immediately, I turned around to hug Rowan. He squeezed back tightly.

When I turned back to thank the Kangaroo, I saw that it wasn't there. Instead, there stood Azriel Vanserra – tall and handsome – staring at us with amusement in his eyes. I had nearly forgotten about the grand prize when Rowan brought it up.

Azriel stared at us and laughed. "This is the movie! You and the brunette finding friendship was the whole story. You're meeting me now, and this part's going to be included in the movie, so technically, you will be in a movie with me."

I should be annoyed that I let myself be cheated into the whole situation, but I couldn't bring myself to be upset. I had just found myself a good friend, and I had finally scored a role in a film. I was radiating happiness through every pore. When I said this to Rowan, he nearly cried. I just got myself a double grand prize. I guess you can't go solo in life .





Blurb:

When an unnoticed actress and a sheepshearer are paired up in a Treasure Hunt competition, they find it hard to get over their differences. As the competition progresses, things get worse. Can they overcome their differences to win? What will be the costs?

#Can't Go Solo

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5 SHADES OF AMAZING.