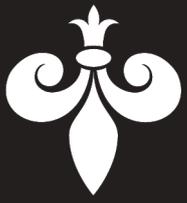
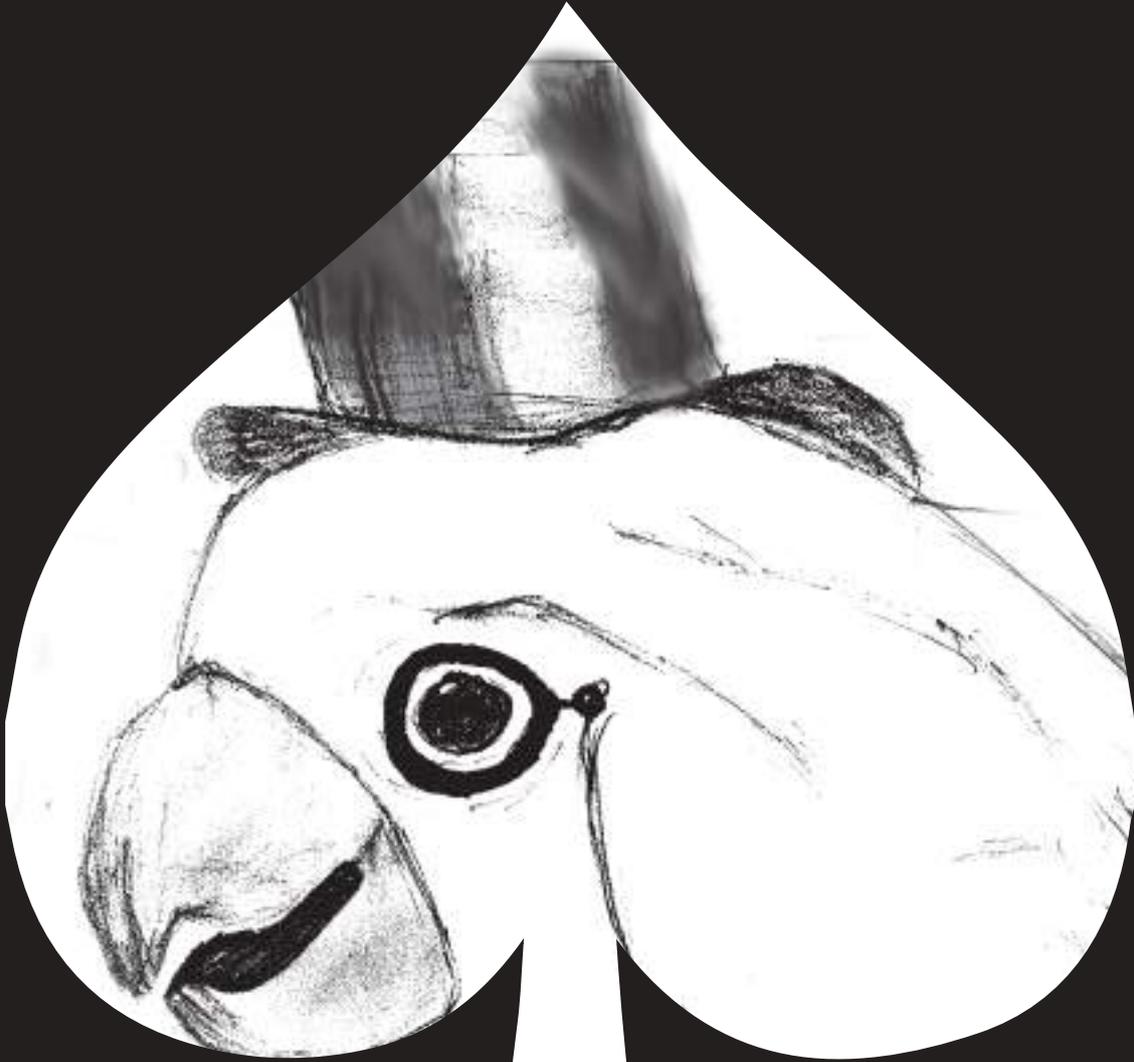
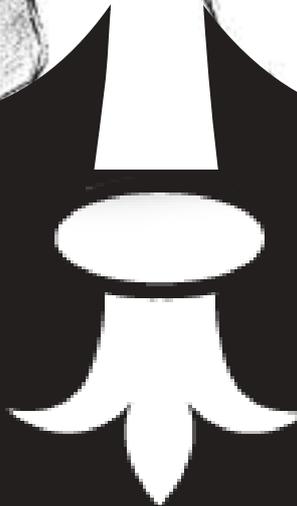


A


HIT OR STAY



YR12 SJC




V



Write a Book in a Day 2016

Book Summary



The Team Supervisor must confirm the details on this page. When the book is complete, please mark the checklist items and sign where indicated. Please add this page as the first page in the final book.

TEAM DETAILS

Writing Division: Uppat School (NSW)

Writing Date: 31-08-2016

Group or School: St. Joseph's College

Team Name: Year 12

Team Members: Joshua Agostino Tim O'Farrell
Duncan Butler Jacob Steinman
Tarren Gurbel Max Tassell
Henry Murphy Tim Wang
Pat O'Farrell

PARAMETERS

Primary Character 1: Miner

Primary Character 2: Jockey

Non-Human Character: Cuckoo

Setting: Hidden garden

Issue: Guess who is coming to dinner

RANDOM WORDS

Delicious

Nonsense

Hums

Cracked

Danger

AFFIDAVIT

I, Angie Gillespie (Team Supervisor), certify that the above team:

- completed all work on their book in accordance with the competition rules
- completed all work between 8:00am and 6:00pm on the day of writing
- included all five random words
- Word Count: 6050 words

Date: 31/8/16 Signed: [Signature]

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“ Luck is not chance —
It's Toil —
Fortune's expensive
smile
Is earned —
The Father of the Mine
Is that old-fashioned
Coin
We spurned — ”

Emily Dickinson, 1350

PROLOGUE

The sky turned. The dewy night took its stand atop the town centre of Eucalyptus Grove, and the stars rushed in from the ocean. The setting sun scorched a fatigue onto arms and legs, flippers of the weary workers. They were sent fast to sleep. The citizens, both man and animal, rested, scattered far and wide, unaware of the audacity of slipping trick.

Though across the plains, a little west of Town Hall on the day the humans called the Queen's Birthday, all manner of animals unmoved by the persuasion of the silver moon guarded the Golden Waratah. The hedges of the garden city, hidden to humans, feathered the stars and enveloped the shimmering flower beneath its leaves. It was said that the one who holds its roots is the luckiest among man and beast. It was because of this that it was agreed that no creature on two legs or four would wield it. Its power seeped from its roots and blessed the soil beneath it. The harbinger of harvest, the pinnacle of prosperity. It remained concealed within the hidden garden... until this particular night.

The gates were bolted, the sentries aloft in the heavens, the safeguards in place. No human was allowed past the threshold at any time. To the animals the garden was home; to the humans, a hidden wonderland. Though on that night the borders were blurred, and the sanctions shattered. A crime this foul leapt long past the laws, and slipped unnoticed by even the keenest eye of the owls.

It was on this particular night that the *Case of the Golden Waratah* was opened. It remains unsolved to this day, as cold as the night from which it was taken.

ONE YEAR LATER

Today was going to be Kurt's big day. Mr. and Mrs. Flaps had flown from the northern wall of the garden just for the occasion. To understand just how important this day was going to be, one must first realise what a momentous year Kurt had enjoyed. Starting off as just another Cockatoo police officer, Kurt had consistently impressed the higher-ups, putting criminals away every other day. He'd even cracked the case of the *Great August Gumtree Heist* (It was, as he'd expected, a gang of koalas). Since then he'd moved into a new manor in the garden, made a number of new friends, and just last week, he received the promotion of his dreams. Ladies and Gentlemen, Cubs and Calves, Eucalyptus Grove's new Head Detective... Kurt Flaps!

Since the promotion, Detective Flaps had been planning this announcement, the case that would really put him on the map. Resting on his curled black beak was an ornate monocle that magnified his beady eye and helped him spot wrongdoers from a mile away. Kurt had carefully gelled back his bright yellow crest and slipped on his top hat, a black piece almost as tall as he was.

"Your attention please!" he squawked from his branch to the gathering of animal citizens below.

"I'm pleased to announce that after a long year of bad luck in this garden, I'm reopening the case of the *Golden Waratah Theft*."

This was greeted by a joyous cacophony of barks, purrs, hums and nonsense squeals.

"I'm sure you'll also appreciate that while I've narrowed the pool of suspects to just four humans, I still can't quite be sure of the culprit. For this reason, I will be inviting the remaining accused to my home here within the garden for an interrogation." He interrupted the outburst of worried chatter with some reassuring promises. "Please take comfort in the fact that although humans' presence within the garden is certainly... unconventional... By the time this night is through the thief will be behind bars, and the Waratah will be returned so it may once again bless our garden with its luck and prosperity."

With that, Detective Flaps flew home and started making preparations. He called Shelly, his housekeeper, a slow snail with a quick wit, and asked that she begin preparing a meal to match the matter at hand.

"Guess who's coming for dinner Shelly." She hadn't been at his big announcement, as leaving the house was quite an ordeal for a woman of her speed. "I don't have the slightest idea Mr Flaps."

"The Golden Waratah thief, Shelly. The greatest criminal in Eucalyptus Grove's history."

The horses fidgeted behind the starting gates. They whinnied and snorted, sensing the race's nearing start. The verdant green of the track was bordered by a sea of colours as spectators watched from the grandstand. Robyn sat upon her horse, waiting patiently for her first Melbourne Cup to begin.

Soon enough the gates parted and the race was underway. Hooves thundered and jockeys on either side jostled Robyn. She positioned herself towards the middle of the pack for the early stages of the race. As the horses continued to thunder around the course there was a commotion. Several great beasts stumbled and fell. Large tufts of green were launched in all directions and brown bodies tumbled. However, one horse emerged, it was a miracle but Robyn continued the race, the only jockey remaining. As she approached the line she raised her arms above her head, her face alive with excitement.

ooo

Robyn returned to her room and considered her recent suite of wins, it had all started with her victory at Flemington. She had a race the next day and was certain that she would win. As she unlocked the door Robyn noticed an envelope resting on her bed. She opened it and read,

*Dear Robyn,
I would like to invite you to the hidden garden of Eucalyptus Grove for an exquisite dinner.
It will be a night of festivities and entertainment.
Your transport has been organised
Regards,
Head Detective Kurt Flaps*

Although she questioned the authenticity of this strange letter, Robyn buried herself beneath the sheets, excited for her coming race.

The next morning, she awoke in the lush grass of the hidden garden.

ooo

His clothes, his fingers, his face. For twenty years black dust had cloaked Larry. It was to be expected; he was a coal miner, following in the footsteps of his father and uncles. Each day he descended into the darkness of the caves, the only source of light; the torch he wore upon his forehead. Then, one day, the torch struck a glittering, glimmering stone. As he cleared away the coal dust further he received a sparkling smile. It was an opal resting peacefully in the coal seam. Joy rippled on Larry's face. He was filled with hope and proceeded to attack the rocks with his tools.

Over the course of many weeks, which gradually turned into months, opals streamed from the mine like water from a river. Larry was filled with gratitude that he had been blessed with such a find. The town declared him a hero for his incredible discovery. Coming from a family that had toiled in these mines without any success, Larry saw this as a change in his fate.

ooo

Larry had returned home after a long day in the mines. Of course he was overjoyed but sweat dripped from his brow and his muscles ached from the effort of using his tools throughout the day. As he opened the front door, Larry found an envelope that the mailman had delivered.

Dear Larry

He was excited by the invitation. Perhaps the animals had heard of his talents in the mine and wanted him to assist. When he awoke the next morning, the man lay beneath a tree in the hidden garden.

“Just this morning, I was walking down High road, and there the ticket was.” Scratch, a thirty-year-old, thin, mousy man, was lotto’s newest multimillionaire. He recounted to the news reporter with flustered enthusiasm.

“The lotto ticket?” the reporter questioned. She radiated an obvious excitement for Scratch, as he had just won the “unbelievable” eighteen-million-dollar jackpot.

“Yep.”

“Just lying on the footpath?”

“Yeah. It was crumpled and stuff, but it was golden and shiny, so it happened to catch my eye.” Scratch’s eyes darted from the reporter to the live film camera.

The reporter exclaimed genuinely. “That’s crazy. What luck!”

“I guess, yeah.”

“And what do you plan to spend it on?” The reporter asked.

She brought the microphone up to Scratch’s quivering lips.

“Um, I’ll use it to pay off my rent for the coming years and I’ll probably save or invest the rest. I’m looking to keep this money around for a while.” Scratch brushed back his thinning hair out of his flickering eyelids.

“Well congratulations Scratch, I hope some of your luck rubs off on me.” The reporter chuckled as Scratch grinned reluctantly.

Scratch would return straight home after the interview that was outside the newsagency. His house was only a few minutes away, and when he arrived he checked his mailbox and found a letter.

ooo

“Mr. Ian!”

“Mr. Paul Ian!”

Journalists, eager for their scoop, called out to the newly elected mayor.

“Mr. Ian, how do you explain your unprecedented rise to popularity within the town of Eucalyptus Grove?”

“I think I appeal to the average Australian; I am nothing special. But, I know what this town wants.” Paul Ian spoke with a convincing confidence that reassured the loud crowd that had gathered at his electoral rally. “Next question,” Ian proclaimed as his pointing sausage finger scanned the crowd.

“You went from being an unknown entity to a household name within a few months. Can this be solely attributed to your political stances or has there been some luck at play?” The journalist chuckled slightly at his own question but looked to Ian for an answer.

Ian cleared his throat as he prepared to respond. “We have run an aggressive campaign that seeks to address the needs of the people. In particular, we have strong growth in the mining sector that has supported many regional jobs. Luck might have played a part, but we have arrived here because of the work of many good people.” Ian nodded slowly, impressed with his own political wit. “Any more questions?”

There was no reply from the audience, so Ian broke the silence with a, “Thank you.” He left the rally hall and returned to his office just before he would go home. Upon his desk sat a letter



Detective Flaps sat at his desk, adjusted his top hat, and prepared to address the ordeal before him. Moving a jar on his desk, he grabbed the file underneath. On it read the words: *The Case of the Golden Waratah*.

Opening the file, he began for one final time to read over the notes he had created surrounding the four main suspects of the case. Four individuals blessed with extraordinary luck, in a timeline all too similar to that of the stolen Waratah. The first and least likely culprit was Scratch, the lottery winner. Getting any information out of him would be difficult, as no real evidence existed linking him to the scene of the crime. However his astounding lottery win last year could not be ignored. Detective Flaps knew it was a long shot, but he thought he could get lucky with Scratch.

Next up was Paul Ian, a mayor whose political career arrived from nowhere. Making it in the political arena, and in such a short timeframe, was lucky enough on its own. But something else connected Paul Ian to the scene of the crime. Near the previous location of the Waratah, investigators had found a pin promoting the political campaign of one Paul Ian. While this name wasn't well known at the time, it soon rose to prominence in the political sphere. Possibly due to the influence of the Waratah?

However, the next two were the most likely candidates for the crime, first of which was a miner by the name of Larry. His recent luck in the mining industry was hard to ignore, but more important was the evidence that had been found near the scene of the crime. Coal filings, in a garden far away from any exposed coalmines. That coal should be found in this garden mere months before a local miner hits opals could not be a coincidence. Opals in a coal mine?

Last but not least was Robyn, the jockey whose career had quite literally sprung out of nowhere. After she had run that miracle Melbourne Cup race, she had done quite well for herself. Furthermore, hoof prints had been found around the site of the stolen Golden Waratah, suggesting that the thief had possibly escaped on horseback. This, combined with Robyn's extraordinary luck, painted her as perhaps the clearest suspect in Detective Flap's experienced, monocle-clad eye.

The invitations were sent and everything was in order. By the time dinner was over Kurt was determined to have found someone to be held to account for the *Case of the Golden Waratah*, and bring closure to the animals of the Hidden Garden.

There were four knocks on the door. Kurt snapped the case files closed, grinned, and walked to answer it. They had all shown up: Larry, Robyn, Scratch and Paul Ian. The dining room he led them to was a grand space, to say the least. A mahogany table took up most of the room, with a golden table runner down the center with a packet of playing cards on top. Blackjack chips were arranged at each chair.

“What exactly have you brought us here for Detective Flaps?” asked Paul. “I have a family to get home to.”

“I just want,” he paused, stretching the rubber band of tension between them, “to talk.”

“I’m so glad you could all attend this evening. I’m sure you all remember the news last year that the garden’s prize possession, the Golden Waratah, was stolen in the night.”

“The Queen’s Birthday, if I recall,” added Larry the miner.

“Well,” continued Flaps, “I’m sure you’ll all be shocked to hear this, but you four are my prime suspects. You’re free to leave at any point, but you must understand that it would only make you appear guilty. So, join me for a meal and a friendly game of blackjack, and I might just get to the bottom of this.”

“Dinner might be some time,” announced Kurt to his company. “So... who plays Blackjack? I know Scratch does. Do you play, Larry?”

“Yes, but I’m not very good,” he replied. Paul cut in with his protestations that he would rather not play, but Kurt overruled him firmly.

“And you, Robyn? Do you play?”

“Oh, of course! I’m a beast at the game, I seem to always get lucky,” she boasted.

Head Detective Flaps glanced at her accusingly, wiping the smile off her face and ushering silence.

Larry, the miner, wasn’t as comfortable with the whole situation as the others. “Why exactly are we your suspects Mr. Flaps?”

“I’m glad one of you finally asked. Firstly there’s the matter of your astounding luck. Larry, you came across one of the greatest opal veins in Australian history. Robyn had a miraculous streak of racing wins. Paul, your election was nothing short of a miracle and Scratch, finding a winning lottery ticket on the side of the road is unbelievable luck! Then, there’s a slate of physical evidence. Hoof prints would point to Robyn being here. Filings of coal would point to you, Larry. And most damningly, I found this!” He produced from under his wing a pin marked, “PAUL IAN FOR MAYOR. So if that answers your questions, lets begin this game.”

Their ease was quickly replaced with sharp breathing and covering from the detective's feverish gaze. Kurt Flaps began hopping from the end of the table, waving his wings, indicating they should sit. The game was set, dinner was cooking, and the thief was among them. As they took their seats, the detective spoke slowly.

He began to deal them all a hand of cards; the game was on. A small shaded lamp at Kurt's elbow gave minimal light, only enough to reveal their expressions, horrified like escaped prisoners caught in the floodlights. A slightly stronger light-bulb hung over the table where the slap of cards continued.

Kurt adjusted his top hat and set his sights on Paul Ian: the miracle mayor.

"Hit me," responded Paul defiantly to Kurt's gaze.

"Such a travesty on the Queen's Birthday, don't you think?" Kurt's eyes darted to the Mayor, a glance halfway between inquisition and incrimination. The mayor's brow furrowed. His cards found themselves face up on the table, but the table was more intrigued by his hurried counting.

"12th... 13th... 14th" The Mayor paused. "THE 14TH! That's it, I was in Canberra giving a speech. It was televised, for god's sake! If I was out of town at the time, then how could I possibly have stolen your precious Waratah?"

"Oh, the speech was truly inspiring," Larry interjected cheerily, but quickly returned to his cards. The detective was growing impatient.

"Hit or stay?"



Paul waved his hand to stay, though Kurt was satisfied.

“No, you’re bust,” His wings scooped his mille-feuille of cards up and turned them over. A ten, a seven and an eight. “You can go.”

Before another card was dealt, Robyn realised something just wasn’t right.

“Hang on a second. If Paul is really innocent, then how did that pin end up in the garden? Surely the evidence means something.” The detective cockatoo was taken aback for a moment. He looked back and forth between his remaining guests, piecing together all he knew of their profiles. That’s when it came to him.

“If I recall, Mayor Ian’s policies were very favourable for the local mining industry. Larry, you even admitted to watching one of his speeches on telly. If anyone at this table was wearing a Paul Ian pin, it would’ve been you!”

Larry, visibly distressed, defended himself. “Half the town was wearing his merchandise, and that speech aired on every channel. That means nothing! Now let’s get on with the game.”

Kurt now turned to Scratch, who winced at his first question.

“So about that lottery ticket – it was just lying on the side of the road? That’s a bit far-fetched. How did you really come across it?”

“I swear, it was in on the footpath,” stammered Scratch shiftily.

Kurt nodded. “Hit or stay?”

Scratch lifted his cards, shaking in his hands, so close to his face they touched his glasses. A seven and a three. An average hand, he could have safely received another card though he choked under Kurt’s scorching gaze. Words were still circulating in his mind, not yet ready to flow outward into the world.

“Something to say?” Kurt pressed.

“Okay, I lied,” he sighed. “I did buy a ticket... fifty of them. I thought that maybe the people would be more interested if I lied. Besides, winning the lottery isn’t as lucky a thing as it’s made out to be. I’m almost bankrupt thanks to stupid games like this one.”

Kurt, lit by the flickering lamp, smiled. Gesturing to the door, he declared, “You can go.”

Scratch slapped his cards down, pushed back his chair, scraping noisily against the floor, and scampered out the house so quickly each action blurred into the other. Kurt was now alone with the Jockey and the Miner. The game was still afoot.

Kurt's beady eyes swept the table, darting from face to face with an inquisitive glare. The tension in the air was thick; now that Scratch and Paul were gone, the competition became much more serious, with each player suspect of the other. Kurt dealt confidently under Robyn's curious gaze, her eyebrow still raised in surprise at the accusations put against her. She had to get out of here before things got out of control, before she was taken in for a crime she didn't commit. The jockey, however, was not completely innocent.

"Hit, or stay?" Kurt asked coolly. Robyn checked her hand – a queen of clubs and a five of hearts. Enough to be tempting, enough to be too risky. She took the time to consider her position, and the potential danger she was in. *What am I really doing here?* She thought. *I know I didn't take that stupid plant. Maybe this is just a dream, and I just have to force myself to wake up.*

"...Hit."

Kurt deftly slid her another card. Robyn peeked at it – another queen. She threw her hands up in surrender, pushed out her chair and began searching for an exit.

"Now hold on a minute," Kurt squawked, "you can't just leave! You're still a prime suspect!"

"I didn't take your damn flower!" Robyn shouted back. "Yeah, I wanted to, but it was gone before I could get my hands on it!"

Kurt looked aghast as she continued.

"I knew I couldn't win the Cup. I had no chance, not against that kind of competition. They had more training, more money, more everything. I just wanted to win once, is that so bad? I snuck in because I knew the flower could give me what I want, but when I came here with my horse it was gone. So I gave some tranquilizer to the other horses. Search me! I just want to get out of here."

Kurt looked at her long and hard, considering how to deal with this, whether or not to trust her.

"Alright Robyn, I believe you. And I won't even report your conduct to the authorities. But don't *ever* let me catch you in here without permission again."

Robyn turned and stalked off with a huff, slamming the gate behind her with a sharp clang. Kurt turned back to Larry, the last remaining player.

"And then there were two." He said with a wink.

A cold shiver of sweat converged at the bridge of Larry's crooked nose, streaming across a face creased by years of hard toil in the mines.

At lightning speed, the cards flew like knives towards Larry, forcedly stopping just shy of his fingers. Placing his hands on the two cards, his heart began to viciously palpitate, like a runaway train, intensifying each second. But Larry just couldn't help but notice the ominous smile from the detective.

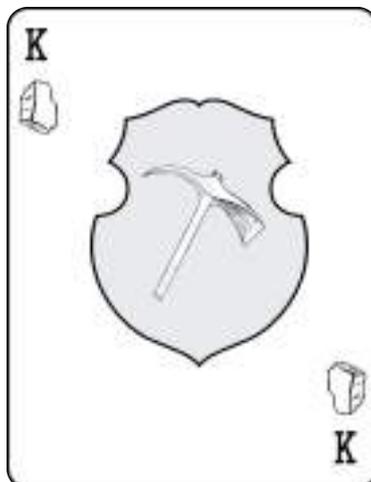
"Correct me if I'm wrong Larry, but even in a town like this one, the discovery of opals in a coal mine is considered a miracle. Men who've spent a lifetime in those mines have never gotten close to making a find like that one. You can see why I'd be a little curious about that sudden luck. That combined with the coal we found here makes it seem awfully likely that you're responsible for all this, and since all my other suspects managed to prove their innocence, I have no choice but to arrest you."

Larry looked up in terror, and as he did he noticed the card he'd been dealt. A nine, and with that he'd busted. Every single turn, Detective Flaps seemed to have drawn miracles, while one by one the suspects were eliminated as if Flaps controlled the whole deck.

The Head detective clamped cold cuffs around the miner's shaking wrists. "I promise it wasn't me you crazy cockatoo! You've got the wrong guy! How were you so good at Black Jack! How come you were so lucky in this game to win every match?"

Kurt threw a stare of disdain towards his prisoner, and muttered, "I just got lucky. But I'll let you onto a little bit of secret." Tilting his top hat, Detective Flaps revealed a glittering Waratah that blinded Larry and stunned him into a silence of reserved defeat.

Before the innocent man could comprehend the cockatoo's crazy scheme, he was being led towards a police car, and the only piece of evidence had disappeared back beneath the detective's sleek top hat.



Epilogue

The wailing sirens and booming voices echoed throughout the manor, gently rocking the chandeliers out of their dormancy. Hues of red and blue painted the kitchen walls as Shelly placed the final touches on the hotly anticipated meal – a spread of brown rice and beans, boiled leeks and steamed kale, fruits and vegetables, just for Detective Flaps and his group of guests.

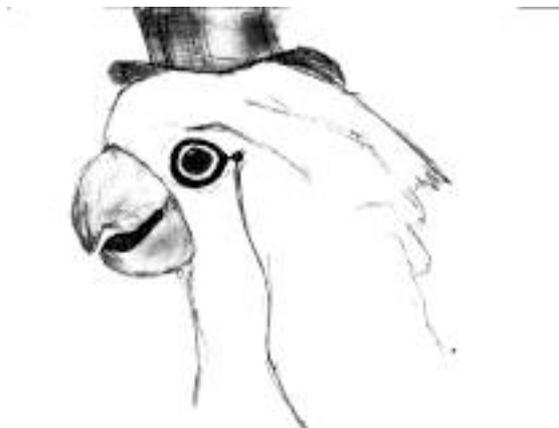
Carrying the platter of food and drink, Shelly sauntered her way through the winding corridors, proud of the meal she had finally made. “My oh my, these ladies and gents best enjoy this delicious meal,” she said, grinning.

Her crawl came to a halt as she found the dining room empty. “Mr. Flaps?” She asks, with a subtle quiver of the voice. No response - only the bellowing alarms from outside. From the archway of the dining room, Shelly could see Kurt’s office door ajar – an uncommon sight within the manor. Making her way to the office, she exclaimed, “Mr. Flaaaps? Dinner’s ready and you and your friends’ meals are getting cold!”

Likewise, the office was empty, with only the flailing curtains draped across the window and what seemed to be an empty box atop Flaps’ desk. “Mr. Flaps? Don’t mind me, let me just clean up this mess he-“ She stopped when she saw what was inside of the box, a pile of pins, pamphlets, and hats, all reading, “PAUL IAN FOR MAYOR.” She stretched further in, revealing a collection of coal filings across the bottom of the box.

“Bu-but... Mr. Flaps couldn’t have. He wouldn’t have.” She attempted to reason with these objects, “I mean, surely, he’d be a fan of Paul but this just don’t make any sense at all...” Her thoughts were interrupted with the bolts of red and blue, seemingly beckoning her to recognise the truth. He’d framed those poor people and stolen the Waratah for himself. His promotion, new house and newfound popularity were all the result of his nasty crime, and he’d almost gotten away with planting fake evidence. What kind of detective was this man?

She hastily shuffled outside to the police officers, crying out, “He did it! He did it! Mr. Flaps stole the Golden Waratah!”



A



After a terrible crime, it becomes the responsibility of a recently promoted cockatoo detective to track down the thief. The Golden Waratah has been stolen from the hidden garden, and it's up to Detective Kurt Flaps to crack the case.

The stolen waratah bestows incredible luck upon all who hold it, and four individuals who have experienced such luck in the past year are brought to the hidden garden of Eucalyptus Grove to get to the bottom of the crime.

It will take on intense game of blackjack, and a bit of luck, for the detective to solve this case.



V