



Timeless Ensemble

Crc Melton Junior Team 3



Write a Book in a Day



**THE KIDS'
CANCER
PROJECT**
Science. Solutions. Survival.

PARAMETERS FORM

TEAM DETAILS

STATE: VIC

DIVISION: Middle School

SCHOOL/GROUP: Catholic Regional College Melton (MELTON)

TEAM NAME: CRC Melton Junior Team 2

TEAM ID: 1281

PARAMETERS AND RANDOM WORDS

Parameters

Primary character 1 .. Football coach

Primary character 2 .. Army general

Non-human character .. Invisible friend

Setting .. Sydney Opera House

Issue .. A haunting

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

To the team of young students, who worked hard in accomplishing this story...

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This book is dedicated to people who inspire us, especially *you*.

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Prologue

“—We apologise to inform you that your proposal has been rejected after careful consideration by the Minister of Arts, New South Wales. Thank you for your interest in applying for the role—”

Grey smoke diminished throughout the thin air, smelling of death and salt, as dry pavement clattered beneath the heels of rutted boots. Streetlights flickered under the weight of the night and the thrum of the humble city sounded somewhere off in the south, the bustling of tooting vehicles accompanied by the tranquil waves overlapped one another in Sydney harbour.

A cloaked man stepped into the dusty moonlight, watching the pearly dome of the 20th century architected building that bathed in silver. Nothing stood between him and the detested structure except the cool breeze that chilled him to the marrow of his bones with a piece of crinkled paper, labelled in bold typed letters that laid in his grasp.

“Mistake,” he hissed.

His steely gaze landed on the letter before he flicked towards the murky waves that danced under the withering gleam of the moon.

Inky indignation spumed under his breath before simmering away as he chucked the crumpled sheet into the rocking waters, pale hand outstretched towards the sky, lips curled in distaste. He twirled around, the tail of his coat exposed into the dim illumination of a nearby streetlamp, revealing the dark blotches that stained his white dress-shirt and an inscrutable object in his right hand before he stalked off through the glowing glass doors of the building.

Chapter 1: The Introduction

The pale dewy moon illuminated the content and worn-out bodies of tonight’s victors. The stumbling AFL players spilled out of the musk and liquor filled tavern, drunken spells of bray laughter and chatter filled the frosty evening. Topsy stars danced between swaying branches and tall brass streetlights. The soft hues of honey and chestnut lit up the worn posters that lined the street walls. There were a fair few posters that had been put up recently: events and festivities displayed large and theoretical in florescent, bold colours.

“Hey, coach did you see that kick straight through the sticks?!” Yelled one of the men with a half-full pint of beer clasped in his hands.

“Oi, isn't that the fancy place you’re going’ later dis week coach?” Yelled another player, pointing at the largest poster of them all, while he popped a fresh one.

“Course, mate. I’m a big shot now, got my contract renewed and everything,” exclaimed Howard as he peered in the direction he pointed and skimmed over the posters.

“Heard they got blokes like Max Cullen and Michael Caton going, even old geezers like that Army General are comin’,” Mark added. Howard chuckled in a sarcastic agreement, not necessarily paying attention, and started to head off in the other direction.

“Imma head on home early, see ya boys around,” Howard said over his shoulder and threw up a peace sign as well, to which they responded with a half-muffled chorus of, “later coach.”

Chapter 2: The Performance

The guests started to enter the Sydney Opera House, one by one, each strolling across the red carpet into the event of a lifetime. Luxurious and opulent custom-fitted gowns and suits, each with its own high-end accessory file.

The crisp, cool air froze Howard’s lungs as he stepped out of the glossy black limousine into an ocean of cameras and blinding lights. The salty wind billowed the tail of his suit coat as he smiled and waved to the paparazzi. A hazy pale blue and grey streaked sky dotted with soft puffy clouds coated the evening. The radiant and pristine elegance of the opera house never failed to take his breath away.



Howard looked to the side, he and saw his old friend, Eugene Jones, the famed Army General known for manning defensive positions and rising in the military ranks in an astounding rate, who had been invited as a special guest that very night. “Hey there pal, it's been a minute, right?” chuckled Howard, in which Eugene smiled warmly to. “Yeah right, how you been buddy, you’re here to see the Conductor? Heard he’s something special.”

“Yeah, I'm here with my team! Seat 2-10”

“No way! I'm seat 11, small world!” Eugene laughed but quickly quietened down as he looked at the time, and realised he must go, “Well, it’s been nice to see you again, but I got to go— you know, my mates are waiting for me.”

Eugene gives him a simple nod before being dragged away by celebrities, who constantly seemed to be squabbling and herding the special guest.

“Oi, Coach,” Mark called out from amongst the teeming whirlwind of extravagant gowns and crisp suits, standing in his own freshly ironed attire, “Where ya goin’?”

Howard gave him an undemanding smile and waved him off to join the crowd of exhilarated spectators as he turned back to admire the intricate designs of the embellished interior of the hallways. The light stretched on as far as the eye could see. He marvelled at the sophistication, hands tucked tightly into the pockets of his costly pants, and he continued maundering down the corridors.

However, the perturb emotion clung onto his skin like a sheen of sweat, a discouraging thought that he couldn’t brush off as his fingers trailed against the framing of matured

canvases. Taunting and lustreless undertones clawed at the back of his mind, but he ventured on nevertheless, ignoring such voices.

Don't look.

Howard's eyes widened at the despairing request; hairs risen at the back of his neck. Surely, it was only him in that corridor; at least, from what he can see in the low lighting. *Gosh, I must be hallucinating.* Breath hitching, his elbow grazed the bracing surface of metal, and he whipped around defensively, in order to find a strikingly esoteric door marred with begrimed carvings of faces; mouths jerked open in an eternal howl.



Don't go.

He took no heed to the warning, hands slowly lifted to press against the door before he pushed it wide open. It revealed... a young woman, stained onto a framed canvas in paints of oily tints and brushstrokes; her eyes glistened into a crinkled-eyed smile that graced her lips, pearly necklaces adorned her collarbones and silk crowned her milky skin.

Huh, he thought, all those weird thoughts for this.

“Coach!”

He turned around found one his players running down the hallway, cheeks puffed into a concentrated look before they yelled out, “The performance is starting soon!”

“It should be starting now,” murmured Howard,

As they, the people entered the stage, everyone was scrambling to find a seat while they chatted amongst themselves, and prepared for the performance to start, until the conductor came out.

“Thank you all for coming! It seems to be a wonderful night. I have worked hard to get these *kind souls...* to perform for you. Sit back, relax, and enjoy!” He smiled as he turned his back to the audience.

Everyone looked side to side, anticipation gleamed in their eyes. He lifted his arms up; everyone's eyes back onto him. Then the music begun, a mixture of violin and trumpets filled the room. The orchestra was a beautiful and harmonious song of old violins, angelic voices clear like glass, something between the harp of a siren and the call of morning sunlight. The melody was delicate and fragile as a silk thread; it sounded as if weeping souls were crying for salvation while being melodically in sync with one another. 'The Conductor's Song,' they called it, a perfect and eternal choir. To which everyone enjoyed the performance, Eugene, the well-known Army General, who had been specially invited, swayed along to the rhythm. It was a blast. Everyone was delighted, the conductor flipped his hands side to side, going down on his knees. He was the most dramatic conductor in the world— he got the best out of the composers, the whole crowd was astonished. This conductor was amazing, he had total control over his stage.



The music came to an end, everyone was amazed, and they stood up and went wild. There had never been a conductor this great in years. The conductor then slipped away alongside some musicians, though no one gave it much thought, and cheered for the performers.

Howard grinned, impressed at the spectacular performance and as he too, stood on his feet to applaud the musicians, he suddenly made eye contact with a sicken, paled woman, who's golden locks weaved around pearly jewellery that spiralled around her neck. *Hm, she looks quite rich to be a musician.* However, his thoughts are quickly ripped away as Mark grabbed his arm to exit out the theatre. Everyone then slowly shuffled to the exit, they murmured about the performance that was given.

Until a scream escaped from a distance.

Chapter 3: The Body

The shrill shout echoed through all the loitered guests, sending quivers throughout the crowd. Cold sweat bathed the front of Howard's temple, and his palms became clammy with perspiration as multiple men in black suits ushered him to safety. Something felt amiss. The sensation of unease and disquietude washed over the crowd in a wave. An immediate state of restlessness, panic swept over the cluster of guests. Simultaneously, bodyguards rushed to their clients and tried to manoeuvre them out of harm's way as security guards jumped onto their feet and sprinted towards the source.

A stampede of flashing sequins and expensive suits cascaded towards the grand opera exits as cameras flashed, fabric tore, and bodies pushed and shoved trying to claw their way out. The celebratory and sophisticated crowd was soon converted to a florescent mass of chaos, terror, and disarray. As the crowd congested and forced their way forward, Howard looked back and stole a glimpse of the scene that unfolded behind him.

He wished he hadn't.

The body of the Army General laid unconscious on the luxurious floors of the amphitheatre. His eyes were open, but they were vacant and hollow, as if his soul had been detached from him. His once stern and austere face turned discoloured and bruised. Howard had to look away as he tried to contain his shock and a tear from slipping out.

“What happened to you, buddy?”

A mob has formed around the corpse as cameras flashed and people gasped and gossiped. The urge to vomit overcame Howard while he took in the scene. Frustration and anger built up as the General's proud uniform and medals covered with dust and debris from the guests' shoes. Howard pushed the men in black out of the way and strode over to the deceased general and took off his suit coat, gently placing it over his face.

Howard stood up and saluted.

Chapter 4: The Investigation

Everyone was stunned about what happened to Eugene, nobody could believe what had happened to him. *Who would want to hurt poor Eugene?* He was such a kind humble soul. Everyone talked about the incident. Commotion spread left and right; people gossiped as to what happened the night before. Eugene was a highly loved man who had no problems with others, so his death was such a shock to the community. His sweet glazing eyes always gave you a sense of comfort and a welcomed feeling. Everyone whispered amongst themselves about his death; it is truly one of the most puzzling crimes.

Eugene was heavily grieved.

He was very well known within the area, he gave people hope and happiness; it was a series of unfortunate events, especially for Howard. His childhood companion was gone, he was determined to find what happened to his friend.

The mysterious death of Eugene, the beloved Army General.

Everywhere Howard looked, Eugene was everywhere: in one way or another, in newspapers, the radio, the television, posters, and everything else he laid his eyes on. He couldn't escape it; *how could something has happened to his dear friend?* It was impossible, the cause of his death was never told. They had ruled out all medical problems. It wasn't on purpose, there was no cause for his death. The police couldn't figure out why he was bruised, no one saw him exit, so how did he get there? All these questions, and still no answers.

Those thoughts filled Howard's head as he walked by the newspaper stand and overheard a conversation.

“Did you hear the guy who passed away without a cause a few days ago? Well, they supposedly discovered a cause. It is Alien Hand Syndrome,” one spoke.

Howard was startled over the rumours that were circling around about his friend's death. *Who would do something like that?* He had to do something, but what? He was determined to find out. Howard scrambled to figure out what to do, but his mind was spinning in all types of circles until they came to rest on despondent eyes and rosy pearls.

Chapter 5: The Painted Lady

His chest *burned*.

Howard contemplated whether if it was the fact, he had run across Potts Point and Woolloomooloo, or the merlot adrenaline that sparked through his pulsating veins. But somehow, he was anguished by the abnormal hammering of his heart that threatened to shatter through his trembled ribs. Breath laboured and short, he pushed through the glass doors of the Sydney Opera House with stiffened palms as he stumbled into the empty box office.

Is it true...? His eyes darted around the vacant lobby before he sprinted through contoured hallways of smooth carpet, without a care if his sneakers stained the rich fabric with speckled dirt. With muddled recollections of lavishing dresses and curdling screams, he suddenly halted in front of the mahogany door; the carved appearances stuck a portentous ambiance that shuddered through the vertebrae of his spine.

It was worse than that night, after he realised that his intuitions may be true.

Howard gently lifted an agitated hand, his fingers latched onto the bronze handle; it was cold and the moment his alarmed skin pressed against the cool metal, faint wails echoed behind the clouds of suspicions that stormed his mind. He squeezed his eyes and flung the door open.

His heart collapsed into a glum pit as his quivered gaze met the preserved look of the woman that perched on the dingy wall; the *exact* one that he caught during the performance. Nausea lifted into his tightened throat and unsettlement came to a rest in his stomach, his feet unconsciously backed away from the act drop. *It's her.*

“Are you lost, sir?” an unknown, silky voice mused from behind him.

Startled, he pivoted around in consternation, earning a harsh whiplash from the sudden movement as he noticed the formally dressed man, that stood at the doorway with a queer grin. The futile glint in the unlit eyes of the stranger bespoke such calamitous ardour, who tilted his head at the silence Howard gave him, “You shouldn’t be here.”

The unnerved impulse that chimed in his thoughts, admitted to the stranger’s statement. “Do you, do you know her?” Howard cautiously questioned the newcomer, and subtly pointed towards the canvas of aged paint and the recognition that reflected in his dark irises already confirmed his question.

“Ah, yes,” the stranger let out a hearty chuckle, leaning against the doorpost, “Young actress, Laura Williams, such a young angel she was.”

“Was?”

“She died 11 years ago.”

And with that, Howard was out the door.

Chapter 6: The Run

Howard had to understand when he had learnt that the woman in the orchestra was dead. She was just a soul. But Howard pondered about, how could that be? He saw her right in front of him, was she a twin? It made no sense to Howard; all these possible scenarios did not end right.

Howard came to the thought of everything he saw, piece by piece. The conductor and his orchestra left a few seconds early, just coincidentally before they found Eugene dead. Was it a coincidence? A million thoughts rushed throughout his head, but one stuck out to him. Was the Conductor taking peoples souls? Howard knew what he had to do. He had to leave.

As Howard rushed out of the creepy eery room and into the hallways, he knew he was next. He didn't know how long he had, so he had to make the most of it, but it was like a maze, it wasn't this complicated when he first got in. Every turn he made, it was into a dead end, there was no escape to be found. Again, he turned right but, to no surprise, there was a dead-end. The Conductor had messed with his brain, and it drove him absolutely crazy! Finally, he made it to the exit, but what in front of him shocked him.

“I can't believe this... all this time” Howard yelled. He felt like a fool.

Howard stood there shocked. The Conductor stood there, he glared into the ground with his fists tucked in tight, figuring out what to do. No one had ever figured this out. He was impressed but at the same time he was very much threatened.

“What was your plan? Did you want to take everyone's soul eventually? What is wrong with you!” Shrieked Howard.

The Conductor still stood there. He stared into the abyss; he couldn't just let his plan fail like that. He needed to do something about this man. So, he did what he had done to everyone else. But first, he had to create a diversion in order to cast his spell.

“I'm sorry we have never officially met, I'm The Great Conductor,” announced the Conductor.

He walked around the room, trying to find another diversion,

“What! What is going on? know who you are and what you're trying to do,” uttered Howard. He took a few steps back, not knowing what the man was capable of.

The Conductor hissed an angry sigh, and wondered what to do next, then he got an idea.

“Look, I will be back and tell you everything. Trust me,” said the Conductor in a calm voice.

Howard took a deep breath and let the man out. He had a bad feeling, but it was the only way to get something out of the Conductor. Whilst Howard stood in the room, the Conductor ran to

grab his baton, which held some of his spells. He then strutted his way back to the room in a quiet manner and peaked through the door. Howard looked around the room, the Conductor knew that was his time to strike. So, he did what he originally planned to do.



Howard's heartbeat stuttered against his jaw, pulsating ever so slightly in tune with the rhythmic melody. As his eyes clouded and dimmed, his consciousness withered away leaving a gaping void in its wake. All traces of who he was diminished as his body drowsed off into an eternal slumber.

His soul was gone.

Epilogue

With feet winding around the grand theatre, a young girl slipped past the velvet curtains that encased the cushioned seats of the auditorium, delight graced her facial features as she wandered through the empty aisles. The cacophony of pattering rain and thunder outside didn't bother her, she whirled about the theatre, glittery gold lights casted down on her.

If mum doesn't see me, she thought mischievously, she looked around in case her mother had finished that utterly monotonous conversation she had earlier with the governor of New South Wales, I can probably just slyly tiptoe past her; she wouldn't even notice me.

Argent thunder glimmered down from the vexed clouds that engulfed the unlit sky outdoors, downpour pressed harder against the frigid windows and an inauspicious melody elevated in the gelid air of the amphitheatre. The girl looked up curiously at the tune, each muscle of her body enthralled in finding out the source of the alluring sound before a frightened shriek flew past her jutted lips at the sight of a bulimic man that watched her from the doorway of the cloakroom. She was quite sure it had only been her mother and her, along with a few other guests from the board group of architects that had received an exclusive tour throughout the Sydney Opera House with the state governor and a few other state officials. *Then, who is he?*

"Young lady," the man called out affably, a direful smile lifted the corner of his blue lips, "You seem to have noticed me! Are you lost, love?"

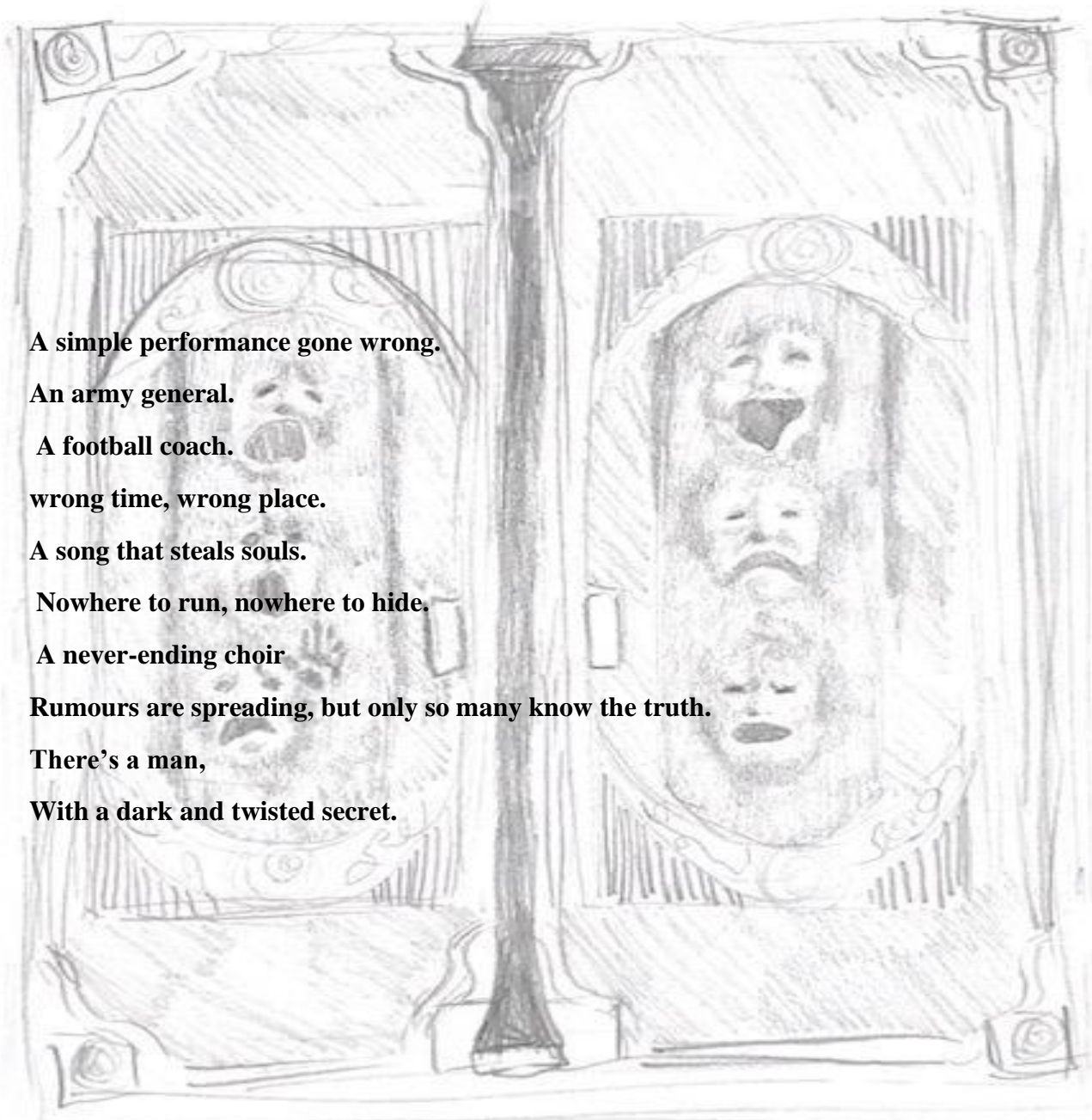
Don't go.

The girl nimbly nodded her head, her baby teeth bit onto the silver lie, nervous hands clasped in front of her as he approached her; his shadowed eyes observed the auriferous dome of the theatre, to the clamorous thunder that cried outside then landed on her once again. With a cordial simper, he pulled out a gloved hand, and insisted her to take it, "C'mon, sweetheart. Let's find your mother."

Curiosity killed the cat.

But I didn't mention my mother, she realised, and took another step back. The man's eyes glinted perilously as he spoke again, "Take my hand, love."

Don't listen



A simple performance gone wrong.

An army general.

A football coach.

wrong time, wrong place.

A song that steals souls.

Nowhere to run, nowhere to hide.

A never-ending choir

Rumours are spreading, but only so many know the truth.

There's a man,

With a dark and twisted secret.