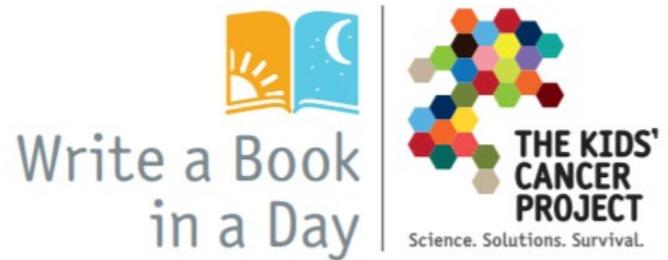


The Curse
of the
Carrowary

By: The Benova
Creative Club
Originals



PARAMETERS FORM 2019



TEAM DETAILS

STATE: QLD
DIVISION: Upper School
SCHOOL/GROUP: Benowa State High School (GOLD COAST MC)
TEAM NAME: Benowa Creative Club Originals
TEAM ID: 546

PARAMETERS AND RANDOM WORDS

Parameters

Primary character 1 Hip hop dancer
Primary character 2 Pet sitter
Non-human character Cassowary
Setting Dungeon
Issue Missing the train

Random words

Community
Skipped
Magic
Canvas
Sings

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THANK YOU

To the reader

Excuse me, do you know what you have done? You might not know it but it is because of you that a madcap group of students got together to dream up this story for you in a one day fuelled by terrible snack combos and lots of laughter. So thank you, this is for you and because of you.

To our supporters

The Rotary Club of Broadbeach has continued to support our entry for the second consecutive year. Thank you for prioritising writing, illustrating and reading opportunities for the next generation.

Thank you also to all those who gave donations and made this book possible.

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Chapter 1: A Phre\$h Start

Darcie twirled the strand of raven hair around her finger. She contemplated the odds. They were stacked against her. The likelihood of receiving a call back from the interview. She wiped the beads of sweat that had begun to pool across her brow, although some broke free and dripped onto her black denim jeans. A sudden screech drew Darcie's attention to the **community** of tech-obsessed oxygen thieves she called humanity.

A flash of vandalised metal and reflective windows flew past in a rush, releasing an ear-piercing screech of metal against metal. Darcie leapt from her seat and began racing after the train. That train was meant to take her to her job interview, the one that would get her out of her pet sitting job. A feeling of defeat flooded her chest and an overwhelming wave of realisation washed over her. She was going to stay a pet sitting lowlife forever. However, as her self-criticism began to subside, a repetitive chugging sound filled her ears.

As warm light began to race its way out of the tunnel, Darcie felt a sudden urge to be closer to the comfort of the glow, slowing, from her run. Step by step, she walked towards the edge of the train platform. A wall of freezing air threw her back towards the bench that she had been draped over only moments before. The most elegant of train carriages, a deep crimson in colour, with the most extravagant golden highlights, printed together like an exquisite **canvas**.

As the doors opened, Darcie leapt to her feet, slung her satchel over her left shoulder and stomped on the train with her combat boots. She found herself in what she imagined was the pinnacle of Victorian society. The doors closed behind her and the train began its slow chug forward. Darcie looked around, noticing the interior walls were a deep mahogany, covered in a thick coat of glossing lacquer, rays of light bleeding from the copper gas lamps mounted across the cart. Panels donned in elegant emerald green velvet wallpaper was inserted between the hand carved pillars on the sides of the train. Painted on the roof, a cloudy yet starry night that looked as though the stars were moving inside the ceiling of the dome shaped barrier.

An out of place figure caught her eye. A boy, maybe nineteen, sat cross-legged on the royal blue satin chair, dressed as though he were attending an 80s themed party. He looked towards Darcie, an odd smile across his face.

"Hey, babe. The name's Phresh! You want to come chill next to the best hip-hop dancer in Australia?" he asked confidently.

As Darcie was about to make her response, the lights began to flicker and went out, the train cart began to jerk and came to a screeching halt. A rough voice radiated its way from an unknown source.

"Good afternoon, passengers. Welcome to your destiny."



Chapter 2: The Curse Of The Emerald Egg

The voice was old and low, as if gravel were in his throat.

“It appears you have not paid your entry fee. I cannot let you go further.”

The lights suddenly flickered back on, complete with an entirely new world beyond the windows. Darcie saw too many trees to know where she was. The sky's colour seemed grey and cloudy despite there being no clouds in the sky at all. There appeared to be no wind or any signs of life beyond the greenery. Everything was frozen in place. Her eyes drifted to a painting before her, the **canvas** on the painting had changed. The eeriness gave the young woman goosebumps.

The man, 'Phresh' (or whatever he was called), turned around, tracking the noise to an old speaker set in the wall. He was clearly frustrated. “What do you mean I didn't pay upon entry? Don't have a cow, man!”

The voice continued, “To repay for your ignorance, you will find me the Emerald Egg.”

Both passengers frowned. What on earth was he talking about?

Phresh waved his hands around in annoyance. “What kind of joke is this? I would've taken you seriously if it weren't for that lame name, bro! I ain't finding you no 'Emerald Egg'.”

There was a concerning pause from the voice, faint breathing broke through from the wall, distorted. Then, a gruff growl was heard, and the speaker crackled abruptly as the announcement had ended. They jumped at the sound.

Darcie made eye contact with Phresh, both bewildered and uneasy from the sudden event. What were they to do now?

A loud bang echoed from the train cars ahead, as if someone had burst through. Darcie's eyes widened. The sound of angry, quick footsteps came into range, growing louder and more terrifying as it closed into the door at the end of their car.

The door swung open, but there was no one there.

Phresh turned to Darcie and frowned again, his eyes squinted, clearly confused. What? Nothing about this was making sense.

He yelled as a force grabbed him from his puffed jacket, lifting him from his seat and dragging him towards the girl's direction. Darcie dug her fingers into the cushioning, hoping that her grip would keep her glued to her seat. She felt the air around her change, like someone was reaching for her as the boy in the outdated clothes got closer.

“No! NO! Back off!!” She yelled.

A weight gripped Darcie's shirt, pulling her out of her seat. She swung her arms to grab something, anything to stop her from leaving the train. She didn't want to leave, she couldn't leave! She would be late for her interview!

The wooden doors swung open forcefully, strong winds blasting through. With negligence, the force threw the passengers off board. They both hit the cold concrete ground.

The speaker crackled on again, the voice louder than ever, echoing throughout the train and strangely, their minds.

“BRING ME THE EGG OR BE STUCK HERE FOR ETERNITY!” the broken voice roared. The winds seemed to swirl around the invisible figure and the train car, as seen from a few leaves that had gotten caught in the current.

The wind flowed into the car, the doors shutting behind them. An ear-piercing whistle sounded from the train, and the machinery roared to life, the wheels screaming as moved forward. Before Darcie could react, the train raced forward, and in a sudden burst of light, disappeared.

Phresh groaned, rubbing his head as he glanced up to where the train had been. “What’s his damage?” he muttered.

Darcie took the moment to observe the surrounding space; it was another train station. Similar to the one she’d left, but it seemed more uncared for, unused-
Abandoned?



She wasn’t sure, and neither was Phresh from his expression. She got to her feet first and offered a hand, but the guy refused and instead bounced up himself. Darcie was still making her mind up on this boy.

They wandered around, trying to become more familiar of their new location, calling for any other person who may be there. After no luck, they finally decided to check their best-saved-for-last spot, a large subway staircase that descended below. Darcie stared beyond the stairs, squinting her eyes in hopes to make out anything in the darkness below. They finally gave up guessing, and Phresh shifted in his spot, a smile stretched across his face.

“After you, gorgeous.”

Chapter 3: The Skeleton Conductor

The stairs flowed downwards, an almost endless stream of steps ending at a dark void. Darcie picked up a stone and threw it down into the darkness, listening to it as it **skipped** down the stairs “1, 2, 3” she counted before it hit the bottom. Bottom of what, she could not tell. Moss, cracks and patterns as old as time covered the stone walls, disguising whatever secrets this station was keeping. A pungent smell was emanating from below, a smell so horrid even Phresh started to gag. Soft creaks and ticks were coming from the darkness, growing louder and louder as they approached the floor. Concerning as this was, they pushed on, their first mistake. Less than three steps from the stairs, they heard a scream.

“HELP!!! I think I might have got a wee bit lost down here!”

Its source was a skeleton, sitting in the corner, wearing a three-piece suit, a conductor’s hat and almost entirely shrouded in darkness. It was as if the lanterns were trying to hide him. His bones creaked and groaned, echoing to create the ever-present howling of the dungeon. Terror quickly flashed across Phresh’s face as he let out a small shriek, startling Darcie more than the skeleton before them.

“Could you keep it together?” she whispered harshly, keeping her eyes on the skeleton.

“Sorry dude”, whispered Phresh, trying to keep his cool, “but he’s like, a SKELETON!”

“Oi, you two” shouted the skeleton. “I know I’m a wee bit skinny at the moment, but you don’t have to be rude ‘bout it”.

Stunned silence fell over them. They knew it could talk but seeing it do so was still disturbing. This very fact should have given them both a heart attack, yet Darcie’s nature got the better of her.

“My sincerest apologies, Mr Skeleton... uh, it won’t happen again? My name’s Darcie. Who are you?”

“It better not happen again, lassie. I’m the conductor of that cursed train up there. Uhm, you two don’t happen to know the way out, do you?”

“Why are you Scottish?” asked Phresh.

“Hush, you. Maybe this guy could help us find the egg.”

“I don’t know about no eggs, sweetie. But if you’re looking for anything in this maze, you best look out for those monsters, eh!”

“Monsters?” Asked Darcie.

“Monsters!” exclaimed Phresh.

“Yeah, you know, like Nessie? Anyway, do you know the way out or not? I’ve been stuck here since that stupid train up and left me here!”

“Wait, what kind of monsters? The train was cursed? How did we get here?” Darcie was beginning to panic. First the missing train, then the interview and now this!? Worst yet, she

had to endure all of this with Phresh of all people! The most cocky, prudish guy she had the displeasure of meeting.

“I’m sure you’ll be fine. Just be careful of my cassowary, Carl. And never touch it’s egg. I don’t know what will happen if you do but I’m sure it can’t be good.”

Darcie could feel the time ticking by. She had to get to her interview. The darkness stared at her, urging her to follow it, to chase it. Followed by Phresh, she entered the darkness.

Chapter 4: The Trapdoor

The gloomy atmosphere ahead cautioned them to feel weary and distressed. Whatever was ahead wasn't going to be easy. But turning back now wasn't an option. If they wanted to get home, they had to do this – it was now or never. The smell of rotten eggs and meat filled their noses as it wafted through the air. They knew they were close to their first monster. They rounded the corner and their face met with a series of doors, labelled only with numbers one to three. Their first major choice had developed in their head and the uncertainty began. Phresh lunged his way forward to door number one without hesitation. He urged it open to find nothing but a pitch-black dark room with a small light on the other side. Darcie made sense of a small trapdoor just big enough for them to pass through.

They slowly stepped inside, leaving the door open behind them, however it didn't allow enough light to pass through to clarify whatever was in front of them.

From in the corner, a loud, rustling resounded and a mysterious, fluorescent plant emerged from the shady corner of the wall. Its skin looked prickly but also smooth in a strange kind of way, almost like **magic**. It stood above them with its overpowering presence. A thumping pain filled their heads, the company of a powerful, evil creature bewildering their minds. It became chaotic and confusing, but they pushed on as they attempted to escape to the nearby trapdoor. As the carnivorous plant lifted up its tendril, Phresh let out a wail which somehow managed to freeze the creature. In a moment of clarity, Darcie realised what they had to do.

“Keep making that sound,” she called out, “for one reason or another, its soothing that creature!”

As they ventured to the other side of the room, the flytrap looking plant was dancing to the music, making a soft, gentle humming noise.

“It **sings!** Ha, that's amazing!” Phresh exclaimed.

When Phresh said this, he had stopped singing. This meant the creature was no longer under its spell. Darcie latched onto Phresh's arm and hurled him towards the trapdoor. The creature started rotating around to catch them, but it was too late. They had slid through the trapdoor and made it to the other side. They stood up, ready for their next task.



Chapter 5: The Trial Of The Tiger

The unlikely pair stood in a dark hallway, their eyes only able to distinguish a metre in front of them.

“Whoa dude, this crib is super dark!” breathed Phresh.

Darcie’s eye roll was almost audible. “I cannot believe that the person I am stuck with is a fresh prince wannabe,” she uttered under her breath. Then she noticed a torch emitting an icy blue flame. She grabbed the torch and strode down the ominous path, Phresh hesitantly inching towards her.

“Hurry up you dingbat!” echoed down the hall and Phresh mustered what little courage he had and muttered “Word”.

With the walls now illuminated, the pair noticed that beneath the mossy stones were illustrations of a creature unknown to them.

“It’s like some kind of doggy looking thing? Grody to the max, yo,” said Phresh.

Darcie’s eyerolls got more frequent. “Who the hell was your English teacher?”

Before Phresh could answer they arrived at the end of the hall, in front of them was an old door covered in the moss that lined the rest of the dungeon. Beneath it was an engraving of the same creature painted on the walls. Darcie and Phresh looked at one another and nodded.

As they shoved the door open, their eyes were overcome with blue light. Suddenly they were standing in a giant hall with ceilings that seemed to go on forever, Darcie’s eyes widened in amazement.

Out of nowhere the two heard a jingling of metal, like the sound of dangling car keys.

“Dude, what’s that?” quavered Phresh. The jingling was soon replaced with a guttural growling.

The duo began to quiver, they knew whatever it was couldn’t be good. Out of the shadows came an enormous dog-like creature, its eyes filled with anger.

“It’s a Tasmanian Tiger!” At her words, the ancient beast began to charge forward. The giant jaws snapped centimetres from their faces – luckily for them the monster was shackled to the stone wall. But there was no way past him to escape. Out of the corner of her eye, Darcie noticed a vat of oil used to light the torches, in a split second she devised a plan to overcome the trial. “Phresh distract him!”

“Wait what!”

“Just do it!” With that Phresh ran the opposite way to Darcie and with his quick reflexes, threw his prized sneakers at the beast’s head.

“OVER HERE YOU DUMB DOG!”

The tiger, seemingly angry with this insult, charged towards the shoeless dancer. Darcie ran towards the oil vat, grabbed a torch along the way, and then stood the torch up in the oil - her plan was working!

“PHRESH ,OUT OF THE WAY!” Darcie threw the vat towards the tiger, Phresh just managed to duck out of the way of the explosion. The tiger stumbled and fell to the ground. Victory was theirs!

“Hurry, before he wakes up.” Darcie ordered. With the tiger defeated, the pair sprinted down another darkened hallway.

Chapter 6: The Funky Fight

Phresh and Darcie stopped running, and collapsed onto the moist, dark green, moss-ridden floor.

“Well, wasn’t expecting that.” Darcie begun, “Also, is it just me, or is it start to get hotter?”

“Yeah, dawg.” Phresh replied, “It’s probably because we’re getting closer to the egg.”

They rose to their feet and began to make their way to the next room, following the pungent smelling corridor. When walking, they came across a large opening in the wall leading to the next room. Low, guttural, *womping* sounds arose from the room nearby and the two proceeded cautiously.

Phresh turned the corner followed by Darcie and stopped suddenly when met with an imposing creature with large glossy blue and black plumage with dangling ruby-red wattles. The ancient cassowary.

The giant bird looked as if it had been waiting and watching for their arrival. The predator, close to the ground, readied itself, prepared to charge.

Darcie’s heart began thumping loudly. But without another moment’s notice, Phresh stepped forward confidently, planting himself farther in front of Darcie and stretched his arm out, defensively, and declared, “Don’t worry, babes. I’ve got this.” Darcie’s stomach churned away, worrisome of Phresh’s outcome, wondering if the hip-hop dancer could actually fight.

Phresh readied and began dancing and busting moves in front of the mighty monster. He continued, spinning around and simultaneously kicking both legs and arms out. He landed on his feet and pointed two fingers towards the cassowary in a beckoning motion, challenging the bird. Darcie, on the side, no longer felt worried of Phresh’s result but rather raised her palm to her face and sighed loudly.

The cassowary, however, begun to bob up and down and shaking its spiky black, vestigial wings. Phresh begun dancing again, in time with the bird, both of them keeping their distance and striding in a circle. The cassowary challenged him, bouncing up and down while it dug its ginormous claws into the mossy, stone ground.

As the cassowary sped up, Phresh attempted to keep with the bird’s pace but in a long, hard second, his toe crossed over behind his ankle, causing him to crash him to the floor, stomach first. Without hesitation, the bird sprinted towards Phresh, jumping on his back and digging in its claws in triumph. Phresh had lost the dance battle and wallowed in the pain of the cassowary’s claws ripping through his shirt and gripping his shoulder blades.

Just out of sight of the triumphant bird, Darcie ran to the shimmering, emerald egg in the centre of the room sitting on a pedestal. With effort she picked up the huge egg in her arms and turned to back to the bird which was lathering itself in victory.

“Hey, you!” Darcie called.

The cassowary swivelled to see Darcie holding the egg above her head distractingly. The bird protectively begun to sprint towards Darcie, in for the kill.



Chapter 7: The Chase Is On

Now holding the shimmering egg, Darcie ducked out of the way of the charging cassowary which ran right into the wall behind the egg's pedestal. Darcie rejoined Phresh who was lying on the floor in pain.

"Hey, you got the egg. Good..." he trailed off.

The giant cassowary womped furiously, staring down the pet sitter and hip-hop dancer, having gotten up from its previous crash landing. It looked to Phresh, then to Darcie and finally, to the egg she held. Its eyes squinted and filled with rage. It took a step forward, its claw coming down with a powerful stomp. The floor beneath it began to crack. It took another step forth, the cracks spreading to the walls. Darcie and Phresh stood there, petrified, their fight or flight instinct overtaken by fear. They looked to the imposing avian before Darcie noticed something behind its feathered body.

The pedestal the egg had been resting on appeared to be sinking. Suddenly, the room shook violently. Darcie, Phresh and Carl all lost their balance, falling over. Parts of the ceiling broke off and smashed on the ground. Phresh held his side, pain coursing through his body. Darcie stood and helped the hip-hop dancer to his feet.

"You alright?" the pet sitter asked, concerned for his safety.

"Yeah, it's just a few broken bones. I'll live to dance again," Phresh joked with a wan smile. Darcie could see his lie, but she didn't have much time to call him out. The cassowary womped once again, this time more fiercely. Its head lifted to the roof, its throaty womp echoing upon the broken walls. It looked down to Darcie and Phresh before it lifted its foot and prepared to charge once again. Another small tremor started but the cassowary continued unaffected. It charged forth but its run was cut short. Through the tremor, more rocks fell from the roof, one of which fell onto Carl's head. He fell down, sliding across the stony floor, coming to a stop just in front of Darcie and Phresh.

"Well, that was lucky." Darcie said, a little awestruck at their luck.

"Yeah, it was." Phresh responded, equally dumbfounded.

"Hey, we need to get out of here. We have the egg, let's go!" Darcie exclaimed. As they ran back through the mossy maze, tremor after tremor threatened to trip them but they went onwards. Walls were crumbling about them, torches falling from their places, their blue fire burning brightly through it all. The two unlikely heroes rounded a corner before a deafening womp resonated around them. Carl was back up and it was chasing them. Neither turned back to check but they knew they needed to pick up the pace if they were to outrun this bird.

The two of them ran back the way they came, making sure to go through any and all doors they left open. They ran past the Tasmanian tiger, still in the same place they left it. Thankfully. They continued around another corner, finding the carnivorous plant, still firmly in the ground. Darcie and Phresh came to a halt. It had yet to notice them. Darcie risked a look back and could see Carl rounding a corner just behind them. Another tremor struck. Phresh grasped Darcie's arm and pulled her forward, charging into the room of the carnivorous

plant. Before the plant could react, a large section of the ceiling broke and fell on top of him, crushing him underneath a pile of rubble.

Darcie looked back to the plant before seeing the malevolent cassowary jump over the rubble and continue his hunt. Desperately, they rounded their first corner. The bird barely missed them - instead running into the wall. A wave of relief coursed through Darcie as she spotted the exit up ahead. The both of them ran still, both now acutely aware of the footsteps they left. Only a few more steps to go and they'd be free.

Three.

Two.

Darcie reached forward and turned her head to Phresh. However, before she could see if he made it, she was bathed in a blinding light.

Chapter 8: The Getaway

She stood firmly again on the solid dry concrete, away from the weirdness, away from the craziness. She was confused, what had happened? She thought it had been a dream though it seemed too real. Her lungs began to wheeze from the massive quantity of air passing in and out of her chest. She was trying to calm herself, but she still couldn't. Couldn't escape the pain. With a gush of air, a familiar silver train hurtled from the darkness, into the light. It seemed normal to her now like reality had uncovered itself.

The brakes screeched as the train finally come to a complete halt. Anxiously she leapt up, fearing that if she didn't catch this train another weird one would reappear, so she caught it anyway. Fruitlessly, she tried to recall what she was doing before. Before the *disappearance*. The air in the half-destroyed train was cold and thin like it had been touched by ice. She walked slowly throughout the empty carriage. She sat down hard on the uncomfortable seat; all she wanted was to forget the dungeon experience forever.

All she wanted was silence and that's all she got. A place away from everyone and everything to relax. She felt like she wanted to sleep forever, she was exhausted from the dungeon's trials and monsters. She didn't know how, or why but finally, she was free. She let her tired eyelids close as the train's rocking motion lulled her to sleep.

She woke to a sudden screech of the brakes. It was the train's last stop, the Docks. She didn't live far from here meaning she could just walk. As she went to stand up to face reality again, she saw a flashing green light come from her satchel, it was extremely bright. Considering, she never carried anything bright and bulky in her bag, she had also a hate for the colour green, she was curious to know what it could be. She stood up and lifted the soft fabric. A large, oval-like, shimmering green object sparkled the semi-darkness.

Her eyes widened as a sharp crack spread across the egg...

Darcie, a young pet sitter, is on her way to a job interview.

But when she misses her train, she finds herself on a crazy journey to retrieve a magical cassowary egg in the deepest depths of a terrifying dungeon. Read along to discover how Darcie her new friend, Phresh, take on many dangerous challenges and try to break the curse of the cassowary.

Recommended for ages 10 and over.

