

Ocean's VII  
TEST SUBJECT





**Parameters:**

Primary Character 1: Tourist

Primary Character 2: Homeless Person

Non-Human Character: Guinea Pig

Setting: Daycare

Issue: Crossing the Country

**Five Random Words:**

Silver

Prickly

Clock

Patch

Struggle

**Word Count:**

4779

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To all the wonderful kids reading this,  
We are so glad to be writing this book for you this year. You are so courageous and brave  
and inspire us every day. You show everyone how incredibly strong you are inside.

*"With the new day comes new strength and new thoughts"* - Eleanor Roosevelt

With the very best wishes and lots of love,  
Zoe, Isabel, Maddie, Millie, Ellen, Emily and Sophie



## Jack

Smoothing his blond hair back, Jack stepped through the glass doors of the desolate airport and into the overwhelming heat of Wagga Wagga. Despite it being October, supposedly mid spring in Australia, a heat wave seemed to make the town unbearable. Dust particles flew from the ground, creating a haze over the already sleepy city. Greenery seemed to be sparse; only small pockets of trees gave any suggestion that the inhabitants of the town were receiving oxygen.

Hopping into a taxi, Jack took a moment to register his surroundings. Surely he hadn't chosen this bleak town as his place of vacation? The streets were lined with suburban homes that reeked of complacent husbands, snotty children and controlling wives. What would possess a person to want to live this type of life? He shook his head. He would never end up in a place like this - no, he would stay a bachelor. Jack regarded himself as an adventurer who went where life took him, without a care for consequences.

"Sorry," the taxi driver interrupted Jack's train of thought, "where did you say you were going again?"

Jack sighed, irritated, the help could be so infuriating. "I said I was travelling to the Wagga Wagga Motel, however, I'm just dropping my bags off and then you are going to drive me to the Wagga Wagga mall." He spoke slowly, as if the driver was incompetent.

Although nobody had asked, Jack said with an air of confidence, "I'm an extremely important officer of the law in England and as a result of my stellar record I was allowed a vacation. A colleague, also a high ranking officer of the law, told me Wagga Wagga was a nice place to travel to. Well, I won't be taking his advice anymore!" An unsettling silence prevailed over the taxi as Jack's comment lay in the space between him and the driver. As the driver turned into the driveway of the requested address, he glanced in the rearview mirror and scanned Jack's small frame. "What did you say your official title was in the law force?"

Jack smiled, "Well if you must know, I'm a security guard at Westfield London Shopping Centre. I know! I worked hard to get that position!"



The driver couldn't help but smirk at Jack's obvious narcissism, "So... you're basically a mall cop?"

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Wagga Wagga mall was a stark, imposing building towards the centre of its namesake. Despite it's less than attractive appearance, the cool air conditioning was a relief for shoppers. As he walked through the shopping centre, Jack felt himself craving some sort of catastrophe, an event in which he could portray his skills to the entire world. Alas, he knew that in a town such as Wagga Wagga, said skills were probably not going to be showcased.

Suddenly, a bulletin board caught Jack's eye. Pinned in the middle was a missing animal poster. A guinea pig named 'Patch' was apparently the animal in question. 'Last seen at Wagga Wagga Daycare.' Jack thought to himself, *'I'm a trained detective, and an incredible one at that. If I can save this daycare from any more trauma and retrieve their guinea pig, that's exactly what I'm going to do!'* Jack ripped the poster from the board and rushed out of the mall, heading in only what he could assume was the correct direction.

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"I'm sorry, we really are not in need of your... detective skills, Mr - sorry what was your name?" Janice, Wagga Wagga Daycare's owner, looked positively frightened as she spoke to the man standing before her.

"Greenstone, Jack Greenstone." He rolled his eyes.

"Well," Janice soldiered on. "Mr Greenstone, I'm not sure you understand, the reason we put that poster up was not to encourage a police hunt. It was so that if anyone had seen Patch, he could be returned. Now please, get on with your day and kindly leave the facility." Jack felt his face heat up.

"No, I'm not sure you understand. I'm an English police officer." He thrust a badge in her face.

Janice sighed, "Yes, you have shown me this and it says you are a security guard, so thank you for your... passionate interest in our lost guinea pig, but I will call my local authorities if you do not leave the premises this instant. And if you ever return, the consequences will be far worse!"

Jack scowled and walked out, clenching his fists and trying to contain the rage that had boiled inside him.



"No", he muttered to himself. "I'm a real detective. I'm a good person... and I shall find that lost guinea pig if it's the last thing I do, with or without her help."

# MISSING

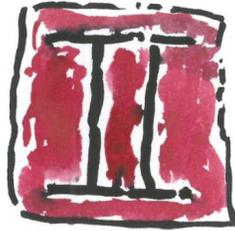
Guinea Pig lost. Last  
seen at Wagga Wagga Daycare.

Please Contact at

0431 250 508

Answers to "Patch."





## Pete

The dust covered my shoes and flew into my eyes. I sat at the edge of road near the daycare, the perfect place to take in my surroundings. I watched as people ran in and out of the mall as though their life depended on their speed. The land was scorching and the sun glared down angrily; it wasn't a surprise they wanted to escape the heat. My dark hair fell in my eyes and my beard felt **prickly** and awful. Still, there was no money to spend on razors. No money even for a room.

Ma had warned me that if I stayed with her, I might end up living on the streets and that I should “take care of myself first”, but I couldn't leave her. She was sick and needed my help. And now... now she was gone. She died one year ago on October 20th, 2018 to be exact. The anniversary of her death would be in two days.

When she died, I had nothing left. The nurses had let me stay at the hospital while mum was there but when she died, I was forced to leave. With no home to return to, I ended up on the streets. I was in Sydney, but the streets there were harsh. The stigma around homeless people meant that no one there was willing to help or offer assistance.

People were better here. Most nights someone gave me a shelter. Janice, the main carer at the Wagga Wagga Daycare, had always been good to me. She had let me stay there when I needed to. And that was how I met Patch. He was the daycare's guinea pig. He was my only comfort, the only one who kept me going. Such a loyal and supportive friend. I missed him.

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I checked the daycare door again. Around ten minutes ago, I had watched a short man take the poster into the daycare - I had assumed he'd found Patch. If not, I didn't even want to imagine what Patch was going through. Janice seemed hesitant to help me find him, but I couldn't understand why. I still insisted that she put up the posters. Someone needed to find Patch. He could be in danger...



The sound of a slamming wooden door pulled me out of my thoughts. I snapped my head toward the sound and watched as the man strode out of the daycare towards the main square.

“What a bit -” The man’s eyes flashed with anger and his mouth was curled into an ugly grimace. I inched closer, listening, determined to know if Patch had been found. When his demeanour held no clues, I walked toward him, silently begging for an answer. He glanced at me, with a typical look of disgust.

“No... I am not giving you my money. You’ll just go spend it on drugs, and I am not supporting that.” His thick english accent was infuriating.

“We’re not all like that!” I replied indignantly. I took a moment to regain my composure before continuing. Patch needed me to be nice. I had to know what the man knew and yelling at him wouldn’t help. “I just... please, have you seen Patch?”

“Patch... what do you -? The guinea pig? No.” He stared at me, an incredulous look plastered on his face. “You know this thing?” He shoved the poster towards me.

“This ‘thing’ is my friend. Will you help me find him? He went missing five days ago. I promise I’ll help you - you can call me Pete,” I stuck out my hand.

“Jack Greenstone,” he stared at my hand, a disgusted expression on his face, as though he was afraid he would catch my filth. After a few seconds more, I let it drop.

“So you know what happened to him? I’m a detective, you see.” His arrogance could not be mistaken for confidence. He held himself in high regard, clearly with no thought for anyone else. But something told me he would help me find Patch.

“Wait... so you will look for him?”

The man shrugged.

“I would. But the old bag in there won’t let me search for clues. And I can’t get in there without her.” I flinched at his rude comment.

“I’ll help you. Janice will let me in. If you come tonight we can look for clues.”

“We?” He asked. I nodded curtly, staring at him. “Fine. Eight o’clock. Here.”





## Pete

The cold night air embraced me. I pushed the door of the daycare open, dashing inside to disarm the alarm system. I had watched Janice enter the code multiple times.

"2367#," I muttered under my breath.

I went into the back room, the cage like a magnet drawing me in. It was sitting on a closed set of drawers and toys littered the floor around it. As I stared in at the cage, I realised Patch couldn't have escaped. I knew him well, and he definitely wasn't smart enough to manage escaping, not to mention the fact that he loved his cage and wouldn't want to leave. If he had gone, it hadn't been by Patch's choosing. The only conclusion I could draw was that he was... stolen.

"God!" Jack thumped in the room behind me. I turned around and couldn't help but laugh. He clearly had stopped by Johnny's department store and picked up a detective costume. The hat and sunglasses sat awkwardly, making his already small head look miniscule. The mustard yellow trench coat made him look like a bad imitation of Sherlock Holmes.



"Wh - what are you wearing... why?" I smirked. He ignored me before heading over to the desk on the other side of the room. "I don't think you'll find anything there. Janice wouldn't have any records of Patch being stolen."

"He was stolen? Are you sure?" His eyes held a glint of excitement.

I rolled my eyes and started looking for clues myself, in a more worthwhile place. The bottom of the enclosure was still covered in hay that was dry from the lack of an occupant.



The food and water left in the bowls had begun to smell awful. I peered back behind the chest of drawers and began to pull out fallen toys and other odd objects.

I continued looking into the gap, and noticed one more object was lying almost under the drawers. “Jack! Come over here!” I pointed to the object. “I’m too big to fit down there. Can you please get that?”

He grunted and knelt down muttering something about dust and allergies. With his small stature, he easily reached the cylindrical object. He brought it into the light and we read the label. “Buprenorphine”.





## Jack

It had been about an hour since Jack had sat down on the daycare floor and opened his computer. Despite his efforts to create a silent oasis for himself, the whirl of the ceiling fan and Pete's pacing meant reaching his goal was a **struggle**. This was, after all, the most important case he had uncovered in his career as a detective. Well, technically a mall cop wasn't an official detective, but what did that matter? Jack had skills that no one else in this town had and it was time to put them to use. He decided to follow the lead the pill bottle provided. Jack typed 'Buprenorphine' into the computer and as soon as he hit enter, a flood of articles appeared on the screen.

*"Buprenorphine - every veterinarian's favourite drug to sedate animals undergoing surgery."*

*"The safest and longest sedative for animals out there - Buprenorphine"*

*"The veterinarian's guide to Buprenorphine - how to safely administer to patients"*

But it wasn't until Jack had scrolled through several pages of results that a title caught his eye.

*"The hidden secrets of Buprenorphine - and how to know if your pets are a victim"*

Now here was some information. As he called Pete over, he smiled at himself. Really, he ought to invest in opening a private practice! He glanced up at the **clock** on the colourful wall. After just one hour of investigation, he had come up with more helpful information than most detectives could in months!

"Jack? Jack? For goodness sake, if you're going to get my attention you've got to at least stop talking to yourself!" Pete growled.

It was then that Jack realised he had said that last part not in his head, but out loud.

"Oh, right, sorry," he uttered, trying to remember what he was going to say in the first place. "Hey, check this out. I've found a really useful blog, talking about how Buprenorphine is used by criminals. There's something about a lab, too, called Mandalis, in Kalgoorlie."



“Do you think we should -”

He cut Pete off before he could finish.

“We should go visit the lab and conduct field research to see if we can find more about this drug.” That was another thing good detectives did, they conducted field research. Leaving through the information brochure from the motel he kept in his pocket, he found an advertisement for a car rental service. “Let’s meet at the rental place first thing tomorrow morning. We’ve got a mystery to solve.” Next to him, Pete rolled his eyes.





## Pete

Jack continued to complain as we took the keys to the rental van. It was infuriating. But I kept reminding myself, this was for Patch. The van was a dull red four wheel drive and looked like it had taken a fair share of bashings. I opened the driver door carefully, not wanting to break it while Jack slammed the door. The seats were old and tattered and scorching to touch, but if this van took me to Patch, I didn't care.

We drove for hours before the silence became too much, continuing down a straight dirt road through the middle of the desert. I tried to make friendly conversation. "So... what brought you to Australia?"

"Why are you homeless?" He asked curtly. I stared at him, horrified by his blunt manner. I didn't like talking about that, but I didn't really expect more of Jack. He was rude and awful, and if it weren't for his determination to find Patch I wouldn't be so patient. I clenched my fists and continued driving in silence.

As we neared the closest town, Cangerin, I heard the screech of sirens. "Police", I sighed. We slowed down as soon as they came into view. I wound down my window and politely looked out. "Good afternoon officer, can I help you?"

"Good afternoon sir. I'm sorry, but this is a roadblock. Please vacate the vehicle and step over to the grey tent." Jack protested loudly. He pulled out his pathetic badge and screamed something about being an "English officer of the law." I whacked him on the arm and gestured to the policeman. Jack rolled his eyes but followed their instructions from then on. We were met at the entrance of the tent by another officer who began to question us.

"What are you men doing crossing the country?"

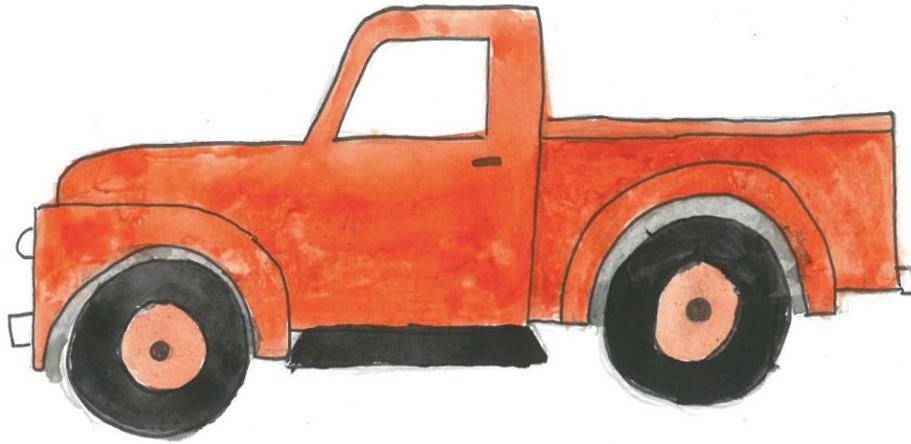
"We're going to a drug manufacturer..." Jack started. I shoved him in the ribs. This did not look good for us. They would be looking for drug smugglers. Cangerin was a known town for drug abuse.

"Ignore him..." I started. "We're going to rescue my guinea pig. Well, not mine exactly. He technically belongs to..." I trailed off when I saw the look of disbelief on the officer's face. *Crap*, I thought.



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After an intense session of questioning and searching our vehicle, the officers finally came to the conclusion that we were nothing more than a pair of deluded men who meant no harm. Although their assumption didn't bother me, Jack swore about the "bloody Australian policemen," as we drove to the nearest motel.





## Jack

Jack slammed the **silver** motel room keys onto the peeling receptionist's desk. "I wish I could say thank you for the service, unfortunately, customer service seems to be a foreign term in this part of the world, and as an English officer of the law, I will be making sure that your standards are reviewed!" He shoved his badge in the receptionist's face, turned on his heel and stormed out of the room. Pete followed, apologising for Jack as he went.

"What the hell was that?" Pete shifted in his uncomfortable seat, his eyes focused on the road.

"What do you mean?" Jack looked genuinely confused.

Pete seemed to almost laugh, "I mean the way you treat any staff we come into contact with! They have a job too, they're just trying to make a living, they aren't bad people!"

Jack smirked, "Oh Pete, didn't you see the way they treated us last night? Honestly, their manners were absolutely atrocious! A motel is supposed to have a little more class than that godforsaken place! You'd think after spending money to stay the night, they'd have been a little more gracious! Ha! *They aren't bad people!*" He mocked Pete's voice and laughed uproariously at his own joke.

Pete pressed down on the accelerator in anger. "Woah Pete, for God's sake! Slow down," Jack sat upright in his seat and held onto the dashboard until Pete returned to the normal speed. Sighing in relief, Jack leaned back into the scratchy fabric.

After a moment, Jack spoke again, "See, right there Pete, you obviously have issues controlling your emotions and I wouldn't have expected much better - " With anger painted clearly across his face, Pete slammed his foot onto the breaks as the car screeched to a stop.

Pete turned to Jack, fury distorting his eyes, "You... what makes you so bloody special? Huh? You wave that stupid badge around like you're royalty, well you're not, you're a security guard, a mall cop! Yeah that's right. I can read that badge and I know what it says!



You aren't a detective, you are a sad middle aged man who can't get over the fact that your life is dull and boring!" Pete finished, exasperated, leaning his head back on the seat, trying to regain his breath.

For once in his life, Jack Greenstone had no words. It wasn't true, he told himself, he was a detective, he was a good person... He repeated the same mantra he had been telling himself since he was a little boy, but it felt like a lie. No it wasn't, he was a good guy. Jack turned to face Pete, both mirroring the other's overwhelming fury.

"Why am I even listening to you? You're homeless and your only friend is a guinea pig, which I have been gracious enough to try and find for you!"

Pete clenched his jaw and spoke through gritted teeth, "Honestly, crossing the country with you has been more of an issue than finding Patch in the first place, you arrogant idiot!"

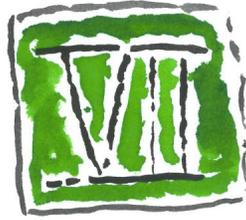
Jack slowly cracked his knuckles, "What did you just call me?" The barren landscape around them now felt suffocating in the decrepit van.

"I called you an arrogant idiot and I meant it, now if you don't mind I'd like to continue our drive without your antics, so either realise you're not perfect or get out of this car! Take your pick!"

Jack had to choose wisely - although the rental car was under his name, he was under no impression he could beat Pete in a fight.

"I'm not sorry for what I said, but I'm going to stay for Patch and because... this is the most... meaningful thing I've done in my life." It was the first time Jack had felt truly honest with anyone.

"Well, good!" Pete started the car again and Jack could have sworn a shadow of a smile appeared on his bearded face.



## Jack

'Mandalis Scientific and Cosmetic Research Laboratory,' the sign stated. Grey slabs of concrete formed the building and created a shadow over the desolate landscape. Jack felt his heart thump in his chest as the building loomed over their now seemingly small car. "Umm... Jack, slight issue." Pete gestured to the spiked fence, trapping their goal in a cage. "Oh no!" Jack slid down into his seat. "No, surely, we can still ask to just get a little look at their research right? We'll tell them why and I'm sure they'll be happy to help!" Although Pete and Jack both knew in their hearts this was probably untrue, it both gave them an air of confidence as their car came to a stop next to the security guard on duty.

"Name?" The guard asked gruffly, sneering down at their derelict vehicle.

"Oh I'm Jack Greenstone and this is Pete Fields, we-" The guard cut him off with a shake of his hand. "Do you have an appointment or are you an employee? I will need to see proof of both."

Jack forced a smile. "Neither, however-" Once again the guard stopped him, "Then you will have to leave, sir."

Jack realised this attempt was going nowhere, so he thought of the only thing he could in the situation, "I am an English officer of the law and I am here to conduct research!" He shoved his badge into the guards face. He could sense Pete's disapproval but he continued. "If you do not let my companion and I in, I will let some very important people across the sea know of the terrible service here and also that you clearly have something to hide at Mandalis!"

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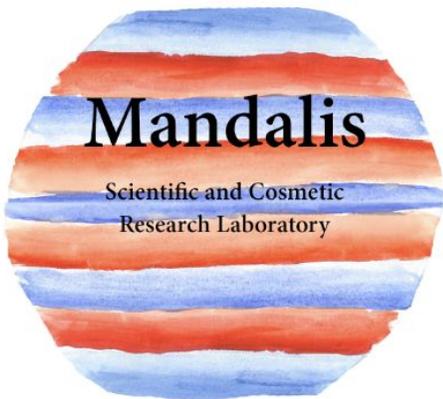
"I can't believe that actually worked!" Pete whispered to Jack as they strode down the Mandalis corridor to the front desk, accompanied by a guard. "Hi, how can I help you?" A petite blonde woman smiled up at them. "Well, you see, my companion has had his guinea pig stolen and we discovered a *Buprenorphine* bottle at the scene of the crime." Jack and Pete smiled as the receptionist looked at them blankly.

"I'm confused - what does this have to do with Mandalis?"



Jack handed the bottle to her. “Well we did some research and you are one of the only places in Australia who produce this particular sedative, so we assumed that you would probably have an idea of how-”

The receptionist stood up suddenly. “I think I should probably get a representative of Mandalis to speak to you.” In an instant she was rushing out from her desk and into a hall leading towards the rest of the building. Unfortunately, at that exact moment a man with a mask came rushing out of a small room with what seemed to be blue secure boxes stacked on top of each other on a trolley. As if in slow motion, the blonde woman collided with trolley and both entities fell to the floor.



The sound was deafening as the boxes hit the floor. Jack reached to pick them up and return them to the man, however, a scratching sound came from inside the box. What on earth was that? Jack wondered. A whimpering noise started to occur as well. “Don’t you dare open that box sir! That is Mandalis property!” The man was advancing towards Jack after having helped the blonde woman up from the ground. “Well I do dare!” Jack opened the latch and Pete screamed.

“Oh. My. God! Is that... oh my god!” Pete took the box from Jack and lifted the guinea pig out of its confinement. “It’s Patch! I’d recognise you anywhere from your brown **patch!** But what is this? You’ve got a rash and your fur is missing here!” In that moment, Jack could only see Patch and Pete. Pete looked elated, his features far softer with a smile on his lips. Despite the advancement of several Mandalis security figures, the bond between the animal and human was unbreakable. The shouts of guards shook Jack from his reverie and he screamed at Pete, “Run!”

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The tires of the car squealed as they sped out of the Mandalis Lab. Jack was breathless with fear but when he looked at Pete, he couldn’t help but laugh. Pete stroked Patch’s fur and Jack dialed the emergency number as the car sped off into the distance.



## Epilogue

It had been about a month since the case had been closed. Since then, Jack had flown back to London. The animal testing lab had been shut down quickly after it was discovered, and the owners were each serving ten year prison sentences. Apparently Janice had sold the guinea pig due to “an economically difficult time for the daycare.” She claimed to have had no idea of the ongoings at Mandalis. Other corporations had also been involved in the scandal. Buprenorphine had been used to transport the animals.

In regards to Patch, he was enjoying a life of luxury as Pete’s companion, who had moved into an apartment not far from where the daycare centre used to be. With help from government benefits, Pete had built a new life for himself as a janitor at the local primary school where Patch had subsequently become quite the celebrity.

Jack had seemingly returned to a life of standing on guard at Westfield London. He constantly yearned for something better, but unfortunately, another lost pet poster never came his way.

It seemed that what had started as a search for a missing guinea pig turned into something far bigger than the people involved. Patch may have started as a class pet, but his life story was one that touched the most unlikely people.





## Authors' Note:

The reason we chose our story to incorporate animal testing was because this horrible practice is still occurring today, and people need to be made aware of the oppression that the animals endure just to give us cosmetics. Animal testing is a cruel and inhumane way to ensure that our products are safe for our use. The harm that occurs to animals when being tested is far greater than the benefit that these cosmetics bring to society.

By the end of July in 2018, the Australian government has elected to put in place a legislation that will ban all animal testing for cosmetics in Australia.

Animal testing includes; Injecting or force feeding animals, which involves force feeding animals with potentially harmful substances which can lead to disfiguration and damage of organs. Another method that is used includes exposing animals to radiation. When this happens, animals can grow tumors, become very sick, and, in extreme cases, death. As well as this, the industry also removes organs and tissue from the animals. This is done to deliberately cause damage to the skin and to organs so that we can see the damage that the cosmetics might inflict in commercial use.

Clive Phillips, a Professor of Animal Welfare at the University of Queensland said the following after the legislation was put forward:

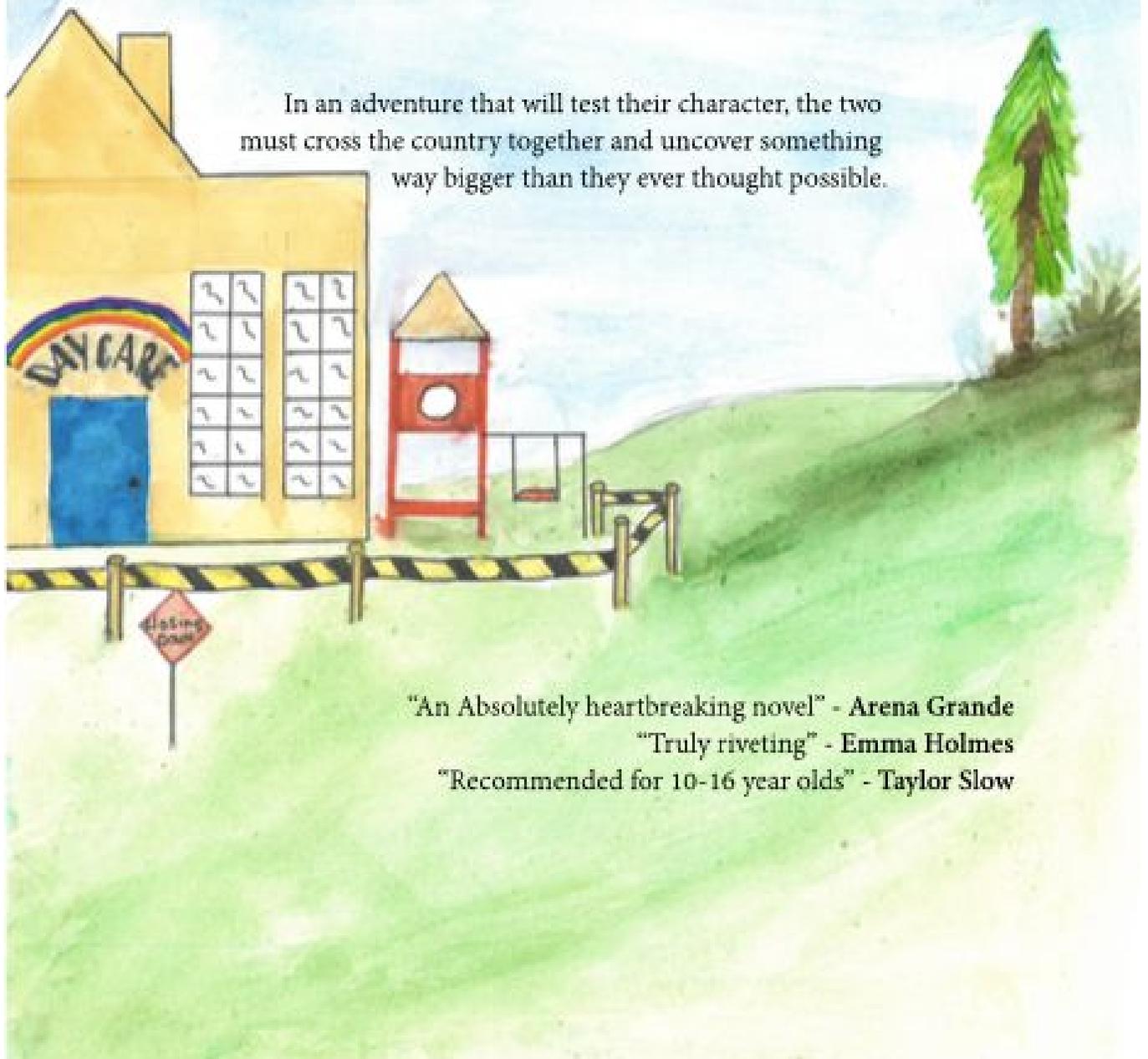
“The proposed bill will save animals from the suffering often associated with testing... Australia’s New regulations will be a small but valuable step towards this future.”



Jack Greenstone and Pete Fields couldn't be more different  
- a so called detective and a guy living on the streets.

But when a beloved guinea pig goes missing, they are  
united in the need to find out what happened.

In an adventure that will test their character, the two  
must cross the country together and uncover something  
way bigger than they ever thought possible.



"An Absolutely heartbreaking novel" - Arena Grande

"Truly riveting" - Emma Holmes

"Recommended for 10-16 year olds" - Taylor Slow