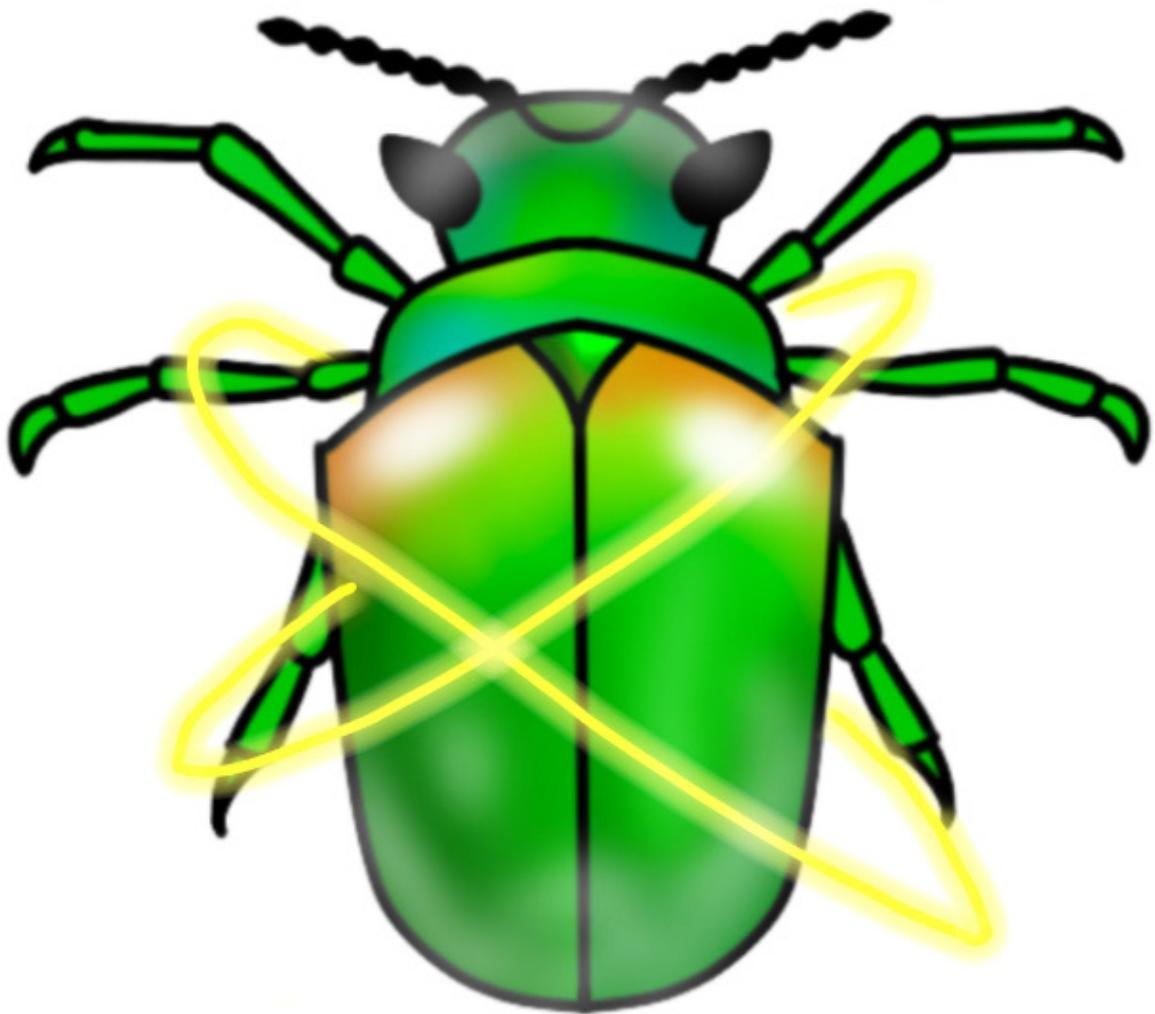


# Just A Beetle



By Year 10 Melville



# Write a Book in a Day



**THE KIDS'  
CANCER  
PROJECT**

Science. Solutions. Survival.

## PARAMETERS FORM

### TEAM DETAILS

STATE: WA .....

DIVISION: Upper School .....

SCHOOL/GROUP: Melville Senior High School (MELVILLE) .....

TEAM NAME: Year 10 .....

TEAM ID: 75 .....

### PARAMETERS AND RANDOM WORDS

#### Parameters

Primary character 1 Farmer .....

Primary character 2 Bus driver .....

Non-human character Beetle .....

Setting School playground .....

Issue Driving test .....

#### Random words

Whistle .....

Light .....

Gold .....

Hungry .....

Bubbly .....

### 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

Copyright

Published by Year 10, Melville Senior High School (MELVILLE),  
Potts Street, Melville WA, 6156.

Fariha Asha, Joshua Cabutaje, Kevin Kongo, Arjun Mungekar, Ashwini  
Munekar, Lithika Senthil, Arwen Schifferli, Om Sharma, Noah Verney, Oliver  
Wegulin.

Copyright © Year 10, Melville Senior High School (MELVILLE).

All rights reserved. This book is copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for  
the purposes of private study, research, criticism or review, as permitted under  
Copyright Act, no part may be reproduced by any process without written  
permission. Enquires should be made to the publisher.

Special thanks to Mr Pearce and Ms Gregory.

**Dedicated to you, dear reader. We hope you enjoy our book.**

**- From the Year 10 Melville Students.**



# Chapter 1 - Imagination

As all the children gather their belongings, Teddy stands waiting, ready to dash his way out of the classroom. He glances at the teacher, then at the door. “How long til the bell?”

“Two minutes, Teddy. Push your chairs in everyone!” The boy jumps with a **bubbly**, almost contagious excitement that catches the attention of everyone in the room.

When the bell rings, he sprints out the door and onto the veranda. He snatches his bag, then slips his hat on, continuing on his way to the playground.

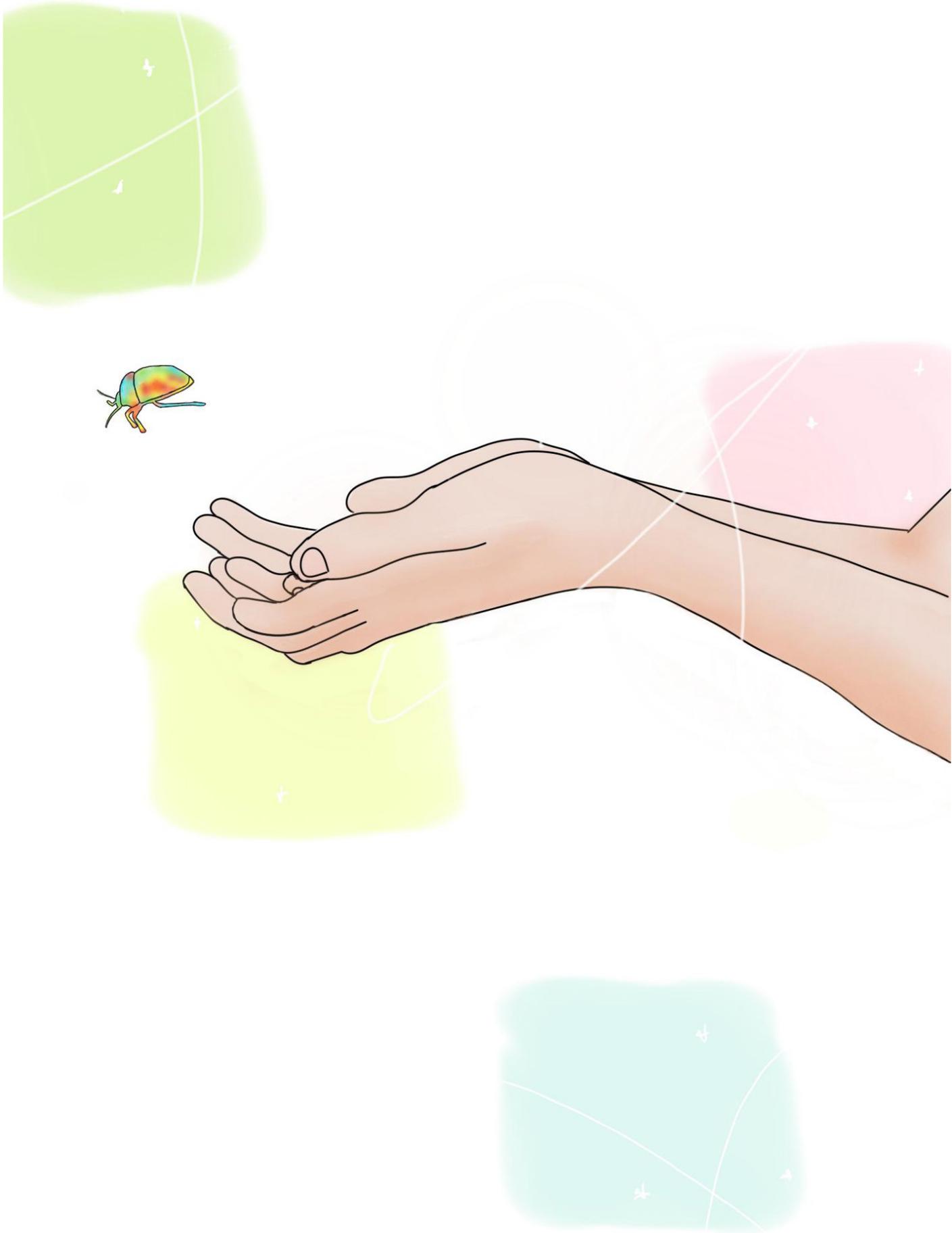
“Aren’t you gonna eat your lunch?” says a nearby teacher. Teddy turns back as he’s running, “Forgot it Miss. Sorry!” and continues on his way. The harsh sun batters on Teddy. He can feel the heat of the midday sun radiating onto his head. He pulls his hat further down as he continues his dash to the playground.



The colours of the playground merge together into a rainbow mess. Slides come out of nowhere, spiralling around the playground equipment. Poles emerge, standing tall above the rubber surface, holding the magnificent structure together. The distinct red colour of the ground reminds Teddy of the vastness of the outback, where the sun battered down even harder, red dirt in every corner. Where cows and sheep would mingle to search for food. As Teddy arrives in front of the colourful structure, he makes a sudden turn to his little red car. He opens the door and slides in with a style even a wealthy man could appreciate. A beetle sits on the wheel, glistening green in the sun staring intently at Teddy. He picks it up and sets it up on his hand. “Fly away, little guy.”

Looking out of the car, Teddy closes his eyes, takes a deep breath, and opens them once more. The vast outback appears in front of his eyes, as the playground slides sink into the ground, the poles turning white, flaking with bark and spreading out into giant gum trees. Kookaburras fly out of the trees to form a colourful flock surrounding Teddy’s little red car. Into the sky they go, disappearing into the large sun where the colours splurge out like wet paint and into the blue of the sky. They melt into various colours; too many for Teddy to count. The world around him is his own, his to control, and his to enjoy. The dashboard of Teddy’s car turns black. Glass slides down to form a large windscreen. A speedometer appears on the dashboard, and a large steering wheel spins into existence. The sleek windows and doors of the newly formed bus glisten in the **light** of the sun and a metallic silver paint slides over the chassis of the bus.

Teddy looks behind him, and rows of green leather seats stretch through the bus, and lights begin to turn on throughout the whole vehicle. Whirring to life, the bus rocks. The passenger doors open. Teddy adjusts the mirror, smiles at his reflection and puts on a pair of glasses. He turns the bus back off and steps outside to look around. Colours similar to the playground are apparent in the scenery and the sky continues to glisten in colours that Teddy thought were impossible. He walks along the bus, looking at its large metallic shine and covers his eyes from the reflection. To his surprise, a figure appears from the horizon. It quickly grows in size, but is hard to distinguish due to the harsh sunlight. Teddy can hear the person now approaching him.



# Chapter 2 - Theodore

There's an ear-splitting **whistle** behind Teddy, making his head spin.

"Hey, kid!" A man spits, all tattoos and shiny sunglasses, holding out a set of keys. Teddy swallows as he turns.

"I'm not supposed to talk to strangers." He says quietly.

The man snickers, turning the keys over in his hands a few times. "Listen, kid, are you ready for your driving test or not?" He frowns. Teddy thinks, for a moment, before nodding, walking slowly toward the man and the silver-painted bus that's next to him.

"I'm Teddy, by the way." Teddy says as he lowers himself into the plush, velvet seat.

"Theodore. Just keep it as Theo, though. Let's get this over with, shall we?" The man, Theo, groans as he slumps into the seat behind Teddy, brushing the scruffy hair from in front of his eyes. "O-oh. Alright." Teddy whispers, staring toward the dashboard, the endless array of buttons, switches and dials sending a shockwave of confusion and fear through his very core.

"Okay... clutch. Accelerator. Brake." He moves his feet routinely, mapping each pedal, testing how they move. Theo grumbles with every passing moment.

As the bus roars to life, the gentle clink of key against key rattles Teddy's brain.

Theo perks up. "Paid a good deal of cash for her," He says, patting the steering wheel fondly, "and if you get even a scratch on her, I'll personally hound you for every penny you've got, okay kid?"

Teddy gulps. "I'll... try." He looks out toward the road, harsh red against yellow-green weeds making up most of it. Boring and plain, and so straight it would make a ruler cry.

The city doesn't have roads like that.

"Now, start slowly, about 40." Theo watches like a hawk over Teddy's shoulder. Teddy feels himself tense up, uncomfortable and stressed, and slowly accelerates.

But he doesn't get to 40 km/h fast enough.

"The pedal- It's right there!" Theo groans, shaking his head, and Teddy's knuckles curls over the steering wheel.

"I'm sorry." He whispers, breathing harshly. He accelerates harder this time, digging his foot into the floor. The bus jerks forward, and Theo slips, landing on the seat behind him.

"Don't you wanna get out of this lame old town?!" Theo shouts aggressively. Teddy nods, too shaken to trust his words.

He feels the blood boil beneath his skin, and before he can think rationally, acidic words slip from his tongue. "Well I think you should go – Argh!"

It takes a moment for the weight of Teddy's words to set in. "I-I'm sorry..." He stutters, glancing hopelessly out the black tinted windows.

Theo groans, pulling his aviators sunglasses down from his eyes. "It's fine." His voice has an angry tone to it, one that reminds Teddy of the teachers when the class refuses to listen. "Just get going, kid."

Teddy's hands are still shaking as they drive along the dirt track, every miniscule instruction that leaves Theo's mouth pounding in his head. "Slow down here, kid. The rocks are loose." Theo nags with every movement Teddy makes.

The two drive for what seems like hours, rust-red dust staining the silver bus.



“Great. Now I’m gonna have to hose it down,” Theo complains as they pull through a particularly soft dip in the road, dirt and gravel spewing from behind. Teddy keeps driving, trying desperately to ignore the whining of his travel companion. It feels like someone grating away at his ears.

“I can hose it down if you want?” He offers hopefully, in an attempt to bridge the gap between the two.

“Nah, I can’t put that responsibility on a child.” Theo retorts, patting Teddy on the head. Teddy rolls his eyes, staring out the windscreen.

He just wants to be out of this boring, bland town, and into the fun and exciting city where things actually happen.

As Teddy settles into a decent pace, a beetle glides onto the side mirrors. It’s green, with a shiny, gold tint to it. Teddy smiles as it flies away, and as it does, the road slips away from him, morphing into wonderous sand dunes.



# Chapter 3 - Tunnels

The summer sun shines strongly in the sand, as the kids frolic and fool around. Teddy speeds through the dunes, being careful to jump over any castles in the way. Teddy's now cruising through the deserts. As he drives, he kicks the sand back recklessly, circling around the playground for as long as he can. The lunch time bell rang five minutes ago, but to Teddy, it seems a lifetime. He's too busy drifting through the arid lands of the school to notice anything that's going on.

Teddy's bus is adrift, just like his mind. Thoughts appear and disappear quicker than ever. He is the crown king of the desert. The ace driver of the outback. The rider of the sands. Riding. Driving. The test. Teddy lingers onto that thought for a while as he slows down. He walks, finding a place to think, and as he strolls, he makes his way to the dim, quiet tunnel.

The tunnel is an alley of blinding darkness; a place where the shadows gather quietly as one crawls through the space; a place where many find loneliness, and Teddy finds peace. He sits on the bark on the ground and hunches inside the small hole, in hopes of finding an answer.

Teddy looks at the beetles scattering around, crawling through the bark, leaves and other discarded waste. They are all bunched up together, single file, without a sense of direction or destination. It's at this moment, staring at the bugs beside him, that Teddy thinks to himself, what if I'm just like these beetles? Unsure, small, weak, confused. I don't know what it's like in the city, and I'm not sure if I want to be there anyway. How do I do things people in the city do, how do I talk like people in the city do, how do I live like people in the city do?

"You seem a little lost there, mate," Teddy turns to his side, to see a long shadow at the end of the light. A familiar figure appears, bending over to see him through the tunnel.



"Theo?"

"What are you doing here, kid?" he ponders, "You should be out and about in the playground. What brings you here, in this lonely, dark ... hole?"

"I don't know if I want to do the driving test. I'm not sure anymore."

"I thought that was all you ever wanted to do, kid."

"I want to leave the farm," Teddy says softly, "but what's the city like?"

Theo crouches down to face Teddy, who is gazing down at the sticks on the ground. He lets out a little giggle, then a heavy breath before he answers, "I don't know what to tell you, buddy. The city is the greatest place imaginable. I have done things beyond what you can dream."

"But, what about the people? They don't seem to have fun in the city. They're all just little beetles, doing things they don't want to do."

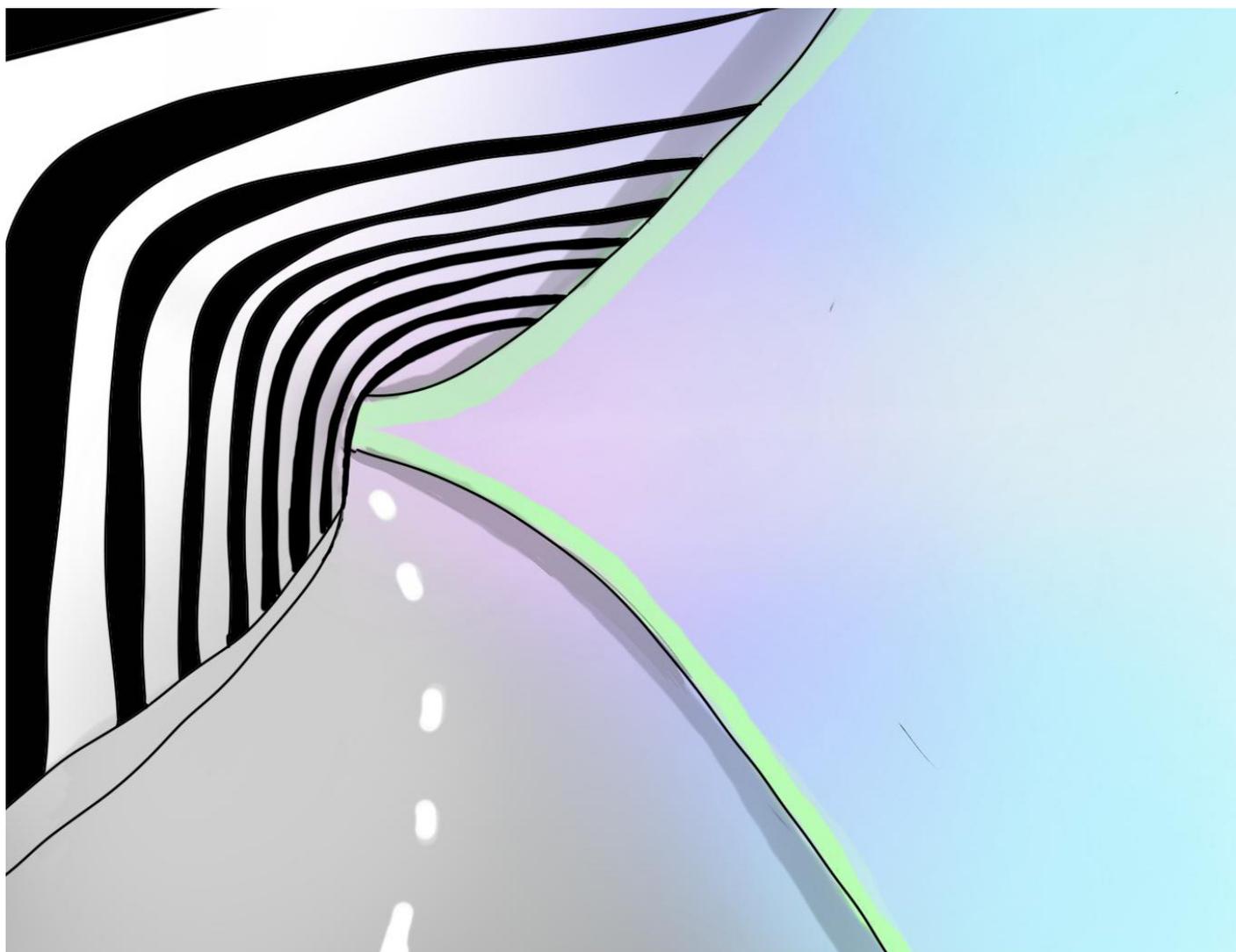
"Are you kidding me?" Theo smirks in disbelief, "People in the city have more fun than you think."

They don't sit around doing nothing. No, no, they go outside, go to the movies, walking in the park, riding on boats, in theme parks – there's so much to do in the city. Not like the boring, old farm, where you play in the grass and feed animals. You just need to open your mind, boy."

"But you're a bus driver, Theo. All day, you just ride buses for people, and when you're done, you go home. You don't have time to have fun."

"And here I am, kid, still as happy as always. Take my word for it, the farm will slowly wear you over and out. You'll be fine if you keep on living in the little world of your imagination. But once that's gone, you'll just be left **hungry** for something more. And the farm won't be able to give you what you want. But the city, if you go, you'll never forget about it. So take that test or be like the beetles, with no goal, no dreams..."

Teddy looks up in the roof of the tunnel. The city, it seems like paradise. A new world. He turns to Theo to ask him more. But only to find he isn't beside him anymore. Teddy slowly crawls out of the tunnel, away from the nesting ground of the beetles. Now he knows he wants to take the test, and he finds himself not only hungry, but starving to drive.



# Chapter 4 - Consideration



He thinks about what Theo is saying. He starts driving the bus through the large traffic lights of green and **gold**. The experience is enthralling. He's focused on the white road markings, making sure to be in complete equilibrium on either side.

"But what about my family and friends?" He asks as he approaches the next traffic intersection. Theo appears to look frustrated with his simple question and mutters something under his breath. Teddy looks back at the rubber road in front of him, spiralling on, like the ridges on his water tank at home.

"Will I have to leave them back here if I listen to you?" He asks Theo, wilfully waiting for an answer. Theo sighs and rubs his palm of his face, chiselling it with more hatred and impatience. "Well of course you will have to leave them behind. This is your decision and if you cannot handle leaving them here, maybe you're not old enough to make this choice," he says, with disgust encasing each syllable. Teddy looks at the lights. Once again, they become green and he steadily accelerates the large bus through the traffic. In his line of sight fluorescent cones begin to rush across the street.

"Slow down the bus. I'll be charging you for damages if anything happens to my sliver beauty!" Theo roars across the multitude of obstacles. Teddy lifts his foot off the accelerator pad and grunts a few words of annoyance under his breath where Theo can't hear him. The orange glow of the cones starts to reflect on the ground as he gets closer and closer.

He thinks to the times he has helped his dad and mum on the cattle farm. Will they be able to do everything without his help? He thinks of the horses who he feeds everyday with such care and compassion. Will they refuse to eat if someone else tries to feed them their daily meal? He sees his little home and the red dirt road that guides him there. Will his new home in the city be as warm and delightful and the one he knows and loves?

"Pay attention to the road mate! I can't believe you would be daydreaming in a bus." Theo exclaims to Teddy, an incredulous look glaring into his small soul.

"Stop bossing me around! I can't concentrate with you telling me what to do all the time!" Yells Teddy, tethering to the edge of his manners.

Finally, he arrives at the roadworks of the city landscape. A large OUT OF ORDER sign is on the road before him. He looks beside him to see the commotion of the other drivers on the road. There again, he sees the large cone markers. He starts to dodge them as they rush past him on the busy turn. They laugh at him, taunting his focus. Will the people in the city laugh at him too?

A far-off indignant cry.

"Ouch! Watch where you're going!" Yells a kid. He's hit a marker.

"Sorry," mumbles Teddy, his eyes on his shifting feet.

"Sorry won't fix anything in the real world," Theo informs him, looking at him as a disappointment. Teddy keeps looking down. Will he make these mistakes in the city? What will happen if he does? Does a sorry really not help in the city? The beetle flies under him and he stares at it curious. He must follow it. It's the only thing that will help him. He starts the engine again and begins to chase it.

"Wow you're very stubborn, aren't you?" Theo says as he rolls his eyes in disgrace. Teddy ignores

him and keeps on its trail. Its vibrant wings call him on the risky uphill path. Solid metal lines guide his path up, like the playground ladders. He revs the engine to climb the steep surface, hands tight on the heavy steering wheel. He reaches the top of the great hill and looks at the fall below him. He's made it. Only one more obstacle left. He can do it. He knows he can. If only Theo didn't yell at him so much.



# Chapter 5 - The Hill

The sheer drop of the hill looms before him. As Teddy inches forward in the bus, he gulps and sneaks a look at the man sitting in the seat next to him. Theo catches his glance, and snickers. "You don't have this. You're going to fail, just a mere farmer like the rest of your family. You can't achieve anything in life. You're just a weak little beetle." Theo smirks.

Teddy ignores him, and revs the engine, making the bus start forwards down the steep hill. The road's length doubles, and the height increases fivefold. Teddy's breathing quickens as he sees the potential danger. He accelerates down the mountain, picking up speed. Theo yells.

In that moment of speeding down the hill, Teddy's focus heightens. He knows what to do instinctively, slamming on the brakes, and switching from 4th gear down into 2nd. He relishes the feeling, and realises he's nearly at the bottom of the steepest hill he's ever been on. Theo's eyes widen.

"So you managed to get down the bottom of the mountain, but this is as far as you go. Within the next few minutes, you'll mess up. I *know* you will." He regains his arrogant composure.

Teddy ignores him, cruising along the road, and shifts into 3rd gear. The bus accelerates to the speed limit. Suddenly, a bug flies past his eyes, distracting him, and he loses control of the bus. He stomps on the brakes, but it's too late. He crashes into a tree, the jolt of the collision shocking him through his bones.

Getting off the ground, the kid he hit turns around.

"Watch where you're going, you idiot!" the kid sneers at him. Teddy gets up and dusts the sand off himself.

"Sorry about that..." he mumbles.



\*\*\*

He blinks, and looks at the seat where Theo is sitting. Or, at least, where he *was*. Teddy looks back to the tree, and back to the driver's seat. He's crashed. He's a failure, just like Theo said. He can't do anything right.

"You're just a weak little beetle." echoes Theo's voice around his head. "You can't achieve anything in life."

Tears roll down Teddy's face, silently. He failed. Like always, like everyone says. He can't do anything right.

He starts up the engine again, and went back onto the road. He drives on, shaky, swerving all over the place. He loses control again, and strikes another tree. The engine cuts out.

"No. I can do it. Stop crying. I can do this. I haven't failed yet. It's not over," he sobs to himself. It isn't over, not yet. He hasn't failed.

Revitalised, Teddy restarts the engine.

It sputters out.

Teddy slumps on the steering wheel.

Is there even any point in trying again? Why bother?

"Weak, little, powerless child." Theo says, appearing in the seat again. Teddy tries to ignore him, but tears are still falling down his face, like his hopes always do. His hopes are always dropped.

He is never able to do anything.

Theo continues, "You know. Some people are like caterpillars, and they do what's right and bloom into butterflies."

"But you Teddy! You're nothing.

All you are is. Just. A. Beetle."

Theo smirks again, and gets up to leave the bus.

"I guess that's that, then."

No. Teddy thinks.

"No." he says, out loud.

The arrogant smile fades from Theo's face.

"What did you say?" Theo asks, trying not to laugh.

"I said, NO!"

Teddy turns the key, and the engine roars to life.

"I am not weak. I am not powerless. I may be just a beetle, but I can do anything."

Teddy switches into reverse, backs up the bus, and moves out on to the road. He guns the engine, with the brakes on. The bus responds perfectly, the engine growling something fierce. He presses down the accelerator pedal, and the bus jumps forward. Teddy swerves around the cars coming towards him, and drives into the left lane. Determined, he shifts into the third gear, and cruises down the road, dodging every obstacle.

\*\*\*

Teddy drives past the obstacles, drifting over to the massive seesaw.

The bus races over the frail bridge, suspended across the canyon, swinging mildly in the wind. Teddy's heartrate increases rapidly, matching the thrum of the engine. But, he pushes through, and the bus crosses the canyon without error. Theo isn't too happy, however. In fact, he's looking a bit pale.

Theo seizes the grab handle.

"I'm not feeling too well. Ah jeez, I didn't think you could actually do all of that." He laughs nervously, seeming agitated.

"You've... shocked me. Your driving... it defied what I believed would happen. I... I can't be here anymore."

Theo's voice fades away but Teddy ignores him, and driving on, ever steady. Eventually, Teddy looks at Theo, but he isn't there anymore. This time, for good.



# Chapter 6 - Reality

It's over.

Teddy rides through the vast fields of blue and orange turf, accelerates past the swirling towers and gargantuan canyons that mark the land's new challenges for him. Slowly, the road calms and Teddy begins to feel that his drive is reaching its conclusion.

He finds a lone parking spot soon. It's grey, rectangular and oddly real amongst his dreamlike surroundings. He sticks his head out of the window, feeling the rush of air against his face, and glances from one end of the horizon to the other. Flying kangaroos and massive, colourful magpies look back at him, but there's no other vehicle around, nothing in this field of colours and dreams that can use that parking spot except for him. A twinge of finality pangs in him as he slows his bus to park.

It's odd, stepping out of the bus. As his feet hit the ground, sending a cloud of rainbow dust through the air, he feels small, almost as small as a beetle himself, and yet, it's a different kind of feeling than before. It doesn't feel like he's dwarfed by his doubts, now, but... that he knows how to handle them. The tearing divide between his two futures, the rural farmer and the slick city-driver, suddenly doesn't seem like that big of an issue.

At last, his fantastical world stands before him. A world of laughter, daydreaming, wonder. But something lies beyond it, beyond the illusion. Teddy closes his eyes and takes a deep breath in.

City.

Town.

Driver.

Farmer.

Beetle.



Gently, he exhales and opens his eyes. And the thick veil of his imagination – slowly – begins to lift, and the rolling, magical landscape morphs to the rural, rustic playground Teddy's known his whole life. Vibrant colours grow dull and desaturated, and the ground beneath his feet shifts from beautiful, coloured turf to ragged dirt and gravel. He's in the real world now, he thinks, listening to the change in sounds and smells, calm outback fauna replaced with shouting students and equally as loud teachers, the scent of fresh grass swapped for smoke.

The real world.

He looks back the way he came once again with new eyes, traversing the landscape with his gaze. Familiar landmarks now look small and insignificant, simple childlike elements in a school playground, same as they always were.

The long boring road? A simple gravel path dug into the dirt. The massive tunnel of darkness, blinding his path as he drove? A small tunnel, over a stretch of pathway, barely ten meters in length. The rows and rows of fluorescent cones, roadblocks he'd needed to swerve around? Just a crowd of playing kids, and the duty teachers in high-vis vests trying to control them.

Even the treacherous mountain, where he'd crashed, is only a small hill when the lens of his imagination is removed. A regular, plain, boring hill.

And finally, Ted feels something underneath his fingers, and he watches his bus, his trusty bus, shift too. Gone is the slick, shiny six-wheeler he'd had his journey on, and in its place lies the cheap ride-on toy he was driving around the whole time, smooth chrome swapped for fading red

plastic.

Teddy can't help but feel down. His whole world, gone. Of course he's in his school's stupid, broken, playground. What else was he expecting? The sun hangs dead above him, its radiance choked by rainclouds, letting only fragments of **light** through.

But even in the poor setting, kids play around, Ted notices. From his sour mood, he watches excited yelps and happy little games, each kid in a fantastical little world of their own. And his dreams are suddenly validated with a thought, a thought that even through the dirt and the heat and the dreary weather, the rusty junkyard equipment and the ruined, dilapidated buildings, hope remains. The journey had been imaginary, but his feelings are real. His realization is real.

His hope is real.

There is no shame in wanting to see the world, he realizes. Wanting to drive in the big city, skyscrapers around him. But that doesn't mean he has to ditch his home altogether. The discovery is simple, and yet, it warms him, and Ted can't suppress a smile as he looks towards the horizon, an emerald beetle flying past his vision.

It's the end to his journey, he realises. The conclusion to his little driving test.

Did I pass? Did I beat all my obstacles, win in the end?

The only one who could tell him is long gone, lost in a haze of anger and emotion. Theo, his future-self. The slick, city bus-driver. The ideal, who Teddy had wanted to be once, at the beginning of this long and perilous road.

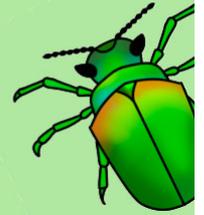
But not anymore. Now, Teddy is his own person.

Farmer and bus driver.

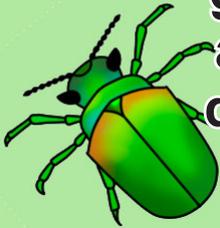
He can be both.

Riiiiiiiiing! Riiiiiiiiing!





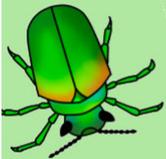
**Frequenting the school playground is one of Teddy's greatest pastimes. It's as if there's a whole world to explore. Much to do, much to see. Much to go on an odyssey.**



**Even his imaginary mentor Theo, is here to help. Driving his way to the end. Bumbling about at times, but it shouldn't be a bother to anyone?**



**But as much as Teddy wants to stay here, to remain stagnant in time, Theo gives him the notion of another world to explore. The world outside.**



**Recommended Age (13-16 years)**

