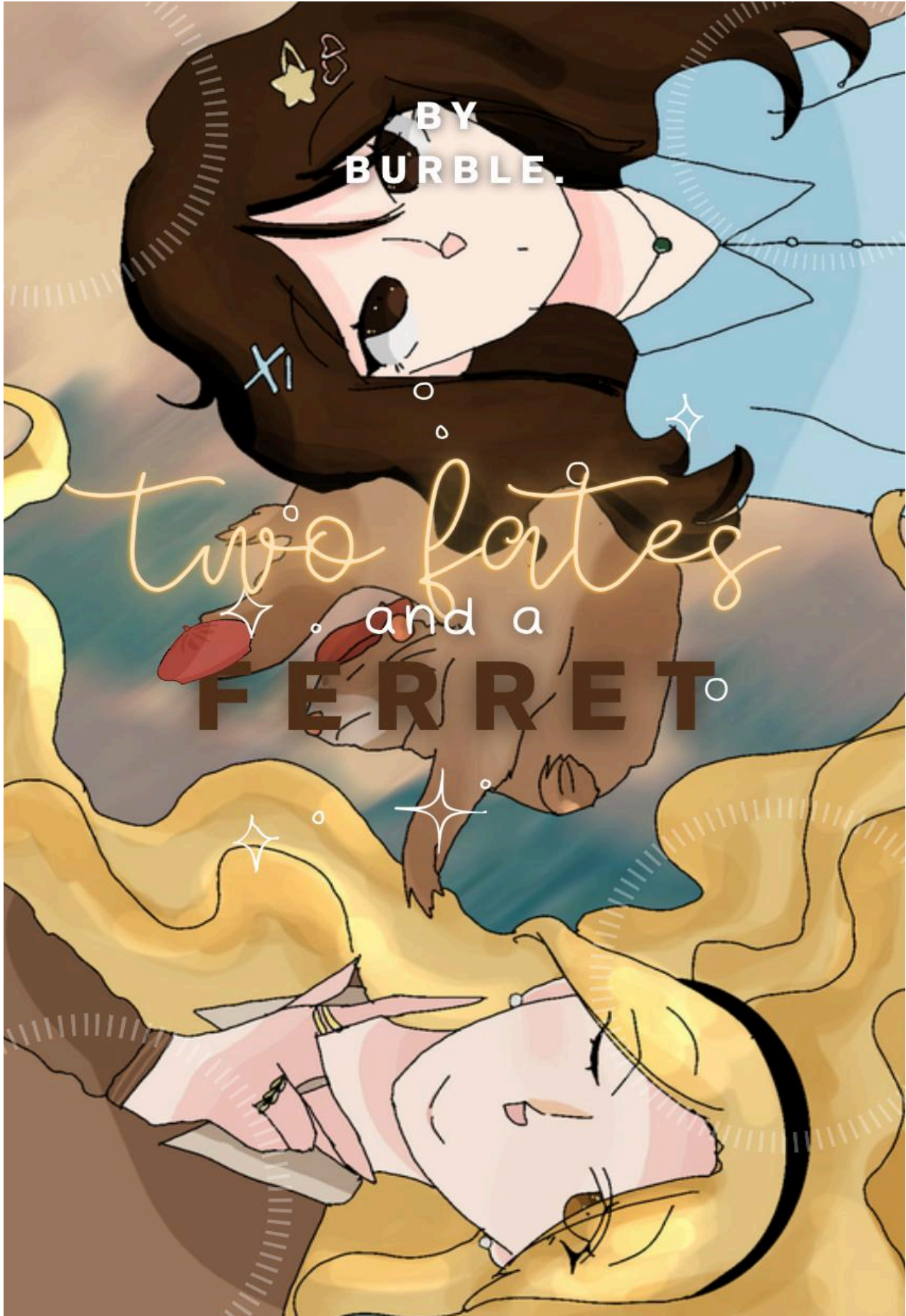


BY
BURBLE.

two fates
and a
FERRET



Copyright

Published by 431 Elizabeth Dr, Bonnyrigg NSW 2177

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Illustrators: Emilia, Emilie, Salina

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THE KIDS' CANCER PROJECT
WRITE A BOOK IN A DAY

Parameters Form

Team Details

STATE: NSW
DIVISION: Middle School
SCHOOL/GROUP: Bonnyrigg High School (BONNYRIGG)
TEAM NAME: Burble
TEAM ID: 1548

Parameters and random words

Parameters	Random words
Primary character 1: Journalist	.. swept
Primary character 2: Window washer	.. clazzing
Non-human character: Ferret	.. faked
Setting: Construction site	.. wrinkled
Issue: Moving to another state	.. quirky

Instructions

- Start no earlier than 8am
- Write an original story:
 - based on all **five parameters** (above)
 - including all **five random words** (above) as written, 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

Dedication

This book is dedicated to the warriors whose bravery and strength is an inspiration to all who know and don't know you! We hope that Viviana and Aria's journey will bring you a sense of determination, and that Mister Suda brings you a cheerful sparkle of happiness in your soul!

Message

Dear Reader,

Greetings! Our team "Burble." can't wait for you to read our book! We really enjoyed working together as a team and making this book, and we hope you enjoy reading the story just as much. To be

completely honest, it was a struggle at times, ending up with us rushing a lot of it, but we all think that the final product is actually really cool! Enjoy!

Acknowledgements

We thank our amazing team, Burble, who put 12 hours of hard work into this book. We also thank our incredible teachers who looked after us while we were putting our blood, sweat and tears into this, and answered our many questions. Remember to always keep your head high and stay strong!



Prologue: One-sided Trepidation

In the scorching summer sunshine, beneath the stretched shadow of a tall gum tree was a fountain and two students. On the campus of the New South Wales university there was a breeze that rushed by, formulating a current for the birds in the clear sky.

The taller of the pair was currently a third year undergraduate bachelor in Communications, sitting on the smooth slate ledge of the fountain, examining the veins of the gum tree's leaf. Her straight black hair was being **swept** in the wind, obstructing the scholar's eyesight and impending their analysis.

The other was a blonde academic also attending classes for the Bachelors of Communication just like her dear friend beside her, an aspiring Journalist in her second year of university. Their belongings were sprawled sporadically across the concrete pavement underneath the water fountain in a mess of books, sheets and pens.

The two girls looked at each other as the third year stood up, clearing her throat.

“I’ve decided that I’ll be dropping out of the university, I have to leave tomorrow to go back to Western Australia for my family. I also doubt that I would’ve done any good in biology — even though I love nature, I’ve hardly passed my classes- and the content is too difficult for me to grasp.” She flicked the gum leaf into the fountain, it floated up and down like a dim dinghy.

“This is goodbye, Viviana. Thanks for everything.” The black haired girl bid farewell, sprinting to the corridor beyond the fountain as she held a skittish air.

She rested her eyes upon her closest friend one last time, before getting up and grabbing her own bag, walking away. Her silhouette disappeared as it turned the corner, her black hair swishing behind the walls.

“Aria...” Her voice cracked. Viviana’s sad eyes lingered on her own bag and where Aria once was a few moments ago, but she did not pursue her friend. She turned to face the boring little leaf that was floating around the water in the fountain, the very one that Aria placed. It was a very uninteresting leaf, there wasn’t anything special about it.

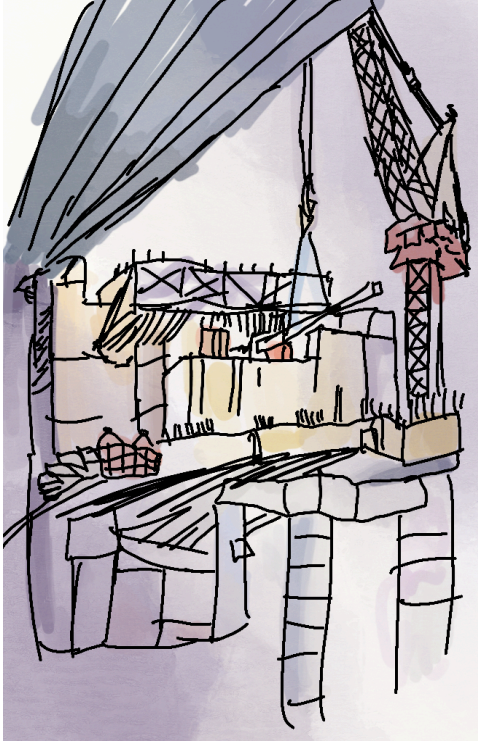
There were hundreds of identical leaves around her, a few falling into the reflective water just as Aria’s leaf had fallen too, but they were all trivial. Meaningless to Viviana. Leaves were just a simple part of Mother Nature, with nothing to make them stand out.

Even then, this girl with beautiful gold locks and a wavering heart had decided that she would keep that leaf with her, forever.

Chapter 1: The Reconnection

She let out a silent breath as the engineer led her to the construction site. Mister Suda, her loyal brown ferret followed obediently behind her. There were so many interesting scoops that could be written about with this new information — including the fact that there was a lot of debris. A lot.

“This is where the infrastructure collapsed,” The engineer said, gesturing to the pile of rubble and concrete.



There were metal beam scraps lying around, ready to injure anyone who tripped on the hazard. “We think a pigeon must’ve scuffed the beams, creating a crack in the concrete as it.”

With every word he said, Viviana scanned the area, taking notes of it; debris everywhere, not one single spot was clear of it.

The engineer paused and looked over to the girl. An unusual journalist, that one. Who’d keep a ferret as a pet? And what was up with its weird beret?

He nodded slightly at her.

“Well, I’ll leave you be, please notify the receptionist when you’re done gathering your notes for the day.”

Viviana nodded, looking for a place to sit. Most of the trees in the area were nowhere to be found, but there was one peculiar tree. A eucalyptus tree. Its dusty, olive-brown bark was slightly chipped off, and the seeds were in clumps, clinging desperately onto the fallen branches.

Viviana could spot the apartment just barely in her line of sight — that was the complex she’d signed into, for the next couple of days.

This article will be a unique one, after all how many vital infrastructures collapse due to something as comical as a pigeon?

The eucalyptus tree’s roots ran along the whole site. The gnarled, grotesque trunk loomed before her, almost glaring at her. Viviana could hear an intimidating deep voice in her head, a result of her wild imagination: ‘Kneel down before me, or I’ll tell the wind to howl so loud that my branches will fall on you!’

Viviana dusted the leaves away and sat down against the trunk of the tree. She could feel the rough bark against her back as she pulled out her journal from her tote bag. She looked around again, observing the site as Mister Suda nestled himself into her lap comfortably. Viviana adjusted his vermilion-red beret to fit on his head.

A warm memory flashed before her eyes — how enthusiastic her old friend Aria was for Mister Suda’s little hat:

“Awh, he’s so cute!” A familiar voice rang inside her head. “Ooh, can I sew a little hat for him? Aren’t you French-Australian? What if I make him a little beret? He’d look so adorable!”

Hearing Aria’s voice, even if it was just a figment of her imagination, warmed her distant heart. She missed that girl so much. Another memory replayed in her head...

There was a loud scraping noise, and a squeal from Aria. Viviana looked down at her coffee-coloured coat and found a baby ferret, with three peculiar little spots on his forehead, on her coat's sleeve.

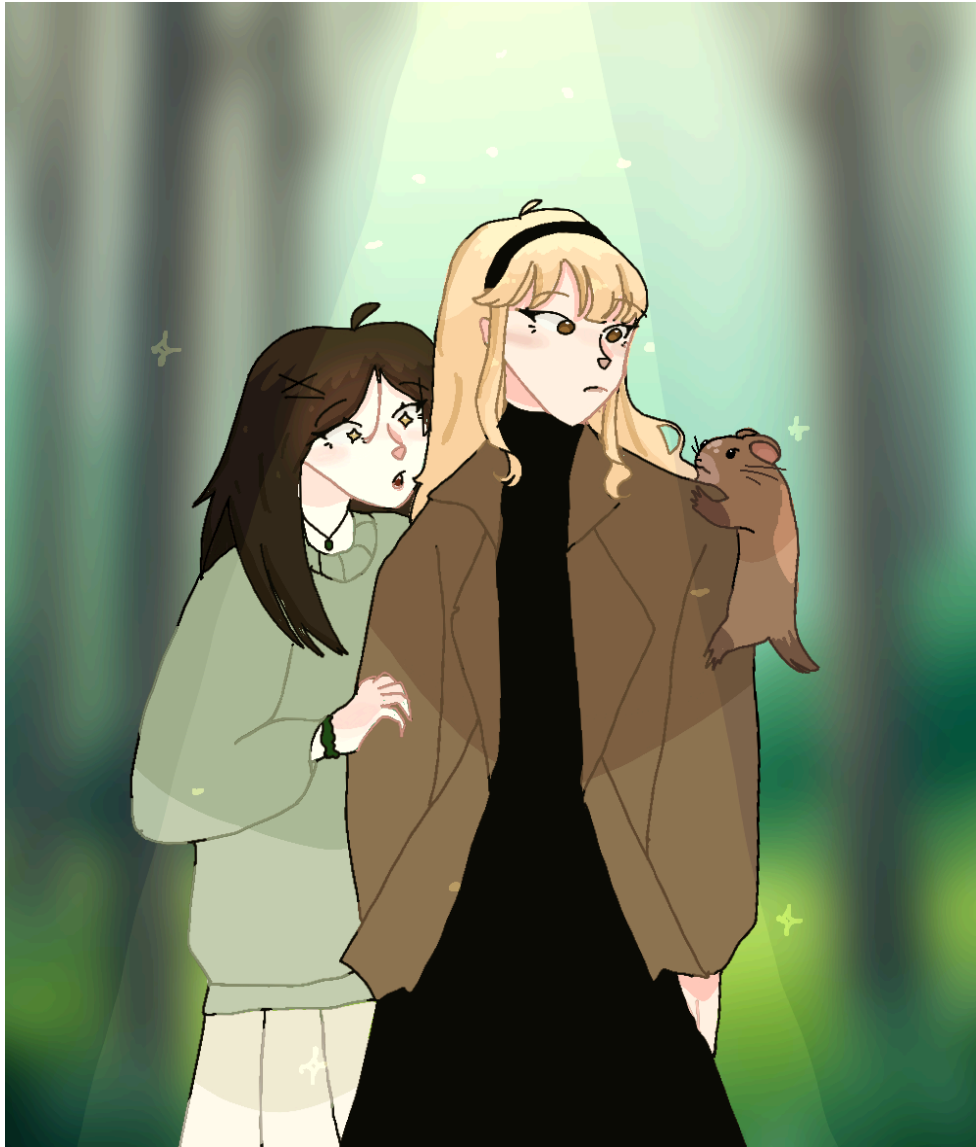
It looked like it was running from something... but from what? As though perfectly on cue, a playful baby dingo pried its way through the thick tree trunks, tumbling down as the ground beneath it started to crumble.

“What is a dingo doing on the campus grounds?” Viviana asked, not expecting an answer from anyone.

Aria replied, “Wasn’t there a chem student who found a dingo in his backyard last month? It got taken away and rehomed in the bush. This one is a baby dingo.”

The ferret scrambled around, his tiny little claws clinging onto the fabric of her coat. He adjusted himself accordingly, before shrilling quietly and looking above at Viviana with his pure black eyes.

“Awh! It’s so cute!” Aria squealed, peeking behind Viviana as her black, eyes twinkled brightly.



The girl blinked, the memory slowly **faded** away.

“Mister Suda, how about we go get some lunch?” Her words echoed across the entire site.

Viviana turned to Mister Suda expectantly, expecting a loud shrill of excitement. But instead of looking into his eyes as black as an abyss, she was instead faced with his beret — the blood-red beret — on the ground. There were paw prints in the gravel, but the roaring wind had blown them away, smoothening the dusty construction site.

She inhaled sharply, both in anguish and in shock. Where was Mister Suda?

Viviana pinched the bridge of her nose, anxiety flooding her. She looked at the construction site one last time, taking note of all its flaws, before leaving the area. *The engineer said I had to tell the receptionist when I left the site... there's no time for that now. I need to find Mister Suda.*

She walked to the gate, opening it and then shutting it behind her. Every movement creaked with agony, groaning and moaning. Viviana held her bag tightly, out of nervousness and fear, before setting off to find Mister Suda.

She heard a *loud* familiar shrill, and her heart started pounding. She ran towards the spot where she heard it. “Mister Suda!” She choked out. As the girl with glowing gold hair ran, the sticks crunched beneath her feet, “Mister Suda!”

Chapter 2: Don't let the ferret cross the road!

Aria hated every second of this. She had already unattached herself from the strap and was now stumbling over herself on the ground. She hated heights but unless she wanted to work at a fast food restaurant with teenagers as her coworkers then she'd have to suck it up.

The miserable woman propped up her exhausted body on a small wooden crate. Coworkers that she didn't recognise were scurrying around like mice, squeaking and murmuring with such haste that her fatigued mind couldn't register their words.

However, Aria's brain could make out a shrill squeak of a... ferret?

Aria half-heartedly and lazily turned her head towards the bustling road. Her mind would have to be pretty messed up to start hallucinating ferrets on the city streets of New South Wales.

My brain feels like slop, how'd my brain start dreaming about weasels?

After a few seconds of squinting at what seemed to be a very long piece of poop on the road with stubby legs — Aria concluded that she wasn't hallucinating.

Good news, I'm not delusional.

Bad news, there's a ferret crossing the road.

Contrary to what most sane people would do, instead of panicking or screaming — Aria groaned out of annoyance.

Aria rubbed her tired eyes. When she blinked and saw a scarlet beret Aria immediately recoiled like it was instinctive. Aria must've rubbed her eyes and blinked hundreds of times but the small squeakings from the ferret didn't get any quieter.

The dark-haired girl looked from side to side, observing if any other employees noticed the shrill cries of the ferret stuck in traffic. It took a few seconds but Aria willed herself into removing herself from the crate.

The ferret was wandering on the road as if it was foreign to common sense, Aria wasn't sure how smart ferrets were but she knew that they were at least smarter than dogs.

Maybe this one had a problem with its brain.

Regardless of the ferret's IQ, Aria ran onto the road like there was no tomorrow and scooped up the strangely calm, hazel-brown ferret into her arms. As adorable as the delicate fluffball was, Aria's primary goal was to not get hit by a car.

Impulsively, Aria ran to the other side of the sidewalk. She was high on adrenaline and she wasn't exactly in the best state to begin with. When her shoes hit the pavement, she stumbled over a pebble and scraped her knees on the cold stone.

When Aria carried herself to her feet, she groaned out of frustration. "Where the heck is that noodle rat?"

I save one life, and then it leaves without even saying thank you!

...I guess ferrets can't really say thank you ... but it could've at least stayed for a bit!

Aria let out a pathetic whine and was about to run across the street again until she heard a voice behind her.

"Mister Suda! There you are!"

The words that were vocalised behind Aria weren't scary in the slightest, not even surprising. It was the voice that said them. "Why did you run out onto the road, you know you're not supposed to— Aria?"

The dark-haired girl froze on the spot, her back was turned on the sweet-voiced woman and Aria contemplated the pros and cons of turning around to look at her.

"...Viviana?" She responded.

"Is that really you? I—I haven't seen you since university, how have you been?" Viviana's genuinely elated voice softened Aria's tense shoulders and the window wiper reluctantly turned to look at the familiar blonde woman. Light and curly hair, dark sage green eyes and fair skin. She looked just the same as Aria remembered, but still infinitely more different.

"Yeah... Uh.. it is. I've been doing..." Aria looked down at her pants covered in dirt from the pavement and her **wrinkled** uniform. This was not an optimal choice of attire to be wearing at a fateful reunion. "I've been doing alright."

Aria continued, "I should be going back though, I'll get chewed out by my supervisor if I don't. I'm sure you have important things to do as well. It was nice seeing you though!" Right before Aria was about to walk onto the road again, Viviana grabbed onto her right wrist.

"Wait! Do you still have my phone number? We should catch up and talk!"

"Oh, I mean..." Aria quickly glanced at the small ferret perched on Viviana's shoulder. Aria's mind was no longer foggy and she could vividly remember who the little weasel was and why it seemed so calm with her.

"Y'know what? Sure, why not? I still have your phone number so we can arrange a meetup or... something. Is that okay?"

"More than okay." Viviana smiled and Aria couldn't help but reciprocate it.

Chapter 3: A Connection over Coffee

Even out of work, Viviana still dressed chic and classy. Her dress clung around her body, swaying in rhythm with her walking as the heels of her black leather boots clicked against the concrete pavement ground.

With every step, every movement, cat-like eyes turned to look at her, some in awe, and others with envy or hatred. Her pearl earrings gleamed with pride as the **dazzling** rays of sunlight hit them.

The cafe should be just around that corner, she thought, her mind flipping back to the note of the time, and location that Aria had set for them to meet up.

She reached the entrance of the vintage classic cafe, spotting her tall friend sitting, her head resting on her palm.

Aria was perched against a clear glass wall, next to an intricate although small, woollen tapestry depicting a conch singing among anemone. The dusky colours of the cafe calmed the emotions between the two.

After a long silence, which was filled with the chatter and laughter of the customers, Viviana spoke.

"So, how have you been these years?" She asked finally.

"I've been... alright. Not the best, but I guess life has been decent", replied Aria, but vaguely, as though she wasn't really there in the moment.

Soon enough, they started catching up on their new lives, ignoring the world around them.

After a while, Aria said something surprising:

"I didn't think you'd actually keep the ferret," she said quietly.

Aria's words left a thought echoing throughout her mind. Caught by surprise, she glanced at Aria's face. That's when she looked into Aria's eyes for the first time in years... *I forgot what she looked like.*

Her eyes were deep. Her beautiful black eyes — deep, dark and mysterious eyes — looked like the windows to a soul that knows no other reason for living than to give the world a little wonder. Her eyes, as dark as the night, like pools of ink, devouring light in their intensity.

The universe was captured in her longing gaze, and then that's when Viviana realised that that's what it truly meant to stargaze. Viviana sat down in front of Aria and blinked, breaking out of her trance.

She took a sip of her mocha coffee, still warm and frothy.

“What do you mean?” A puzzled tone was heard.

Aria looked at the coffee in Viviana’s hands, steam evaporating into the air.

She still orders the exact same coffee...

The Viet-Chinese girl cleared her throat. “Well, when we first met Mister Suda, he was clinging onto your coat. But you didn’t particularly look impressed or drawn in by his cuteness. You looked... how do I say it?” She trailed off. “Ah, that’s right. You looked disgusted by it.”

Viviana blinked at her, the ferret nestled in her lap, seeming as though it was slowly dozing off.

“Uh... I actually don’t know. He seemed different. I guess it was the aura he had surrounding him. I felt like... it matched me.”

Aria, sipping her latte, hummed a tone of approval at her answer.

“You’re right, when he was crossing the road by himself, he was walking exactly like you!”

Viviana smiled softly. “Did he?”

Aria nodded, and giggled under her breath.

The girl with dark hair, like shadows were painted permanently on it, stared straight at Viviana’s hair as it swayed and shimmered in the sunlight.

Her gaze drifted off to her headband. It looked the same. Like the one she always wore in university. The rays highlighted Viviana’s hair, making it seem as though it was glowing and magical.

Another long silence. Mister Suda broke the tension with a loud shrill, but the pair continued to stare at each other.

The two girls were the complete opposites of each other. Viviana had grown up and matured unlike her friend Aria.

Viviana’s hands were crowded with rings, golden and with various gems varying from diamonds to rubies, shimmering in the sunlight which complemented her outfit of beige and cream. Viviana was more of an autumn girl, while Aria was the opposite: an early spring girl. Aria herself had stayed almost identical since their days in the university.

She’d kept her straight black hair and comfy clothing with bright fabric, resembling the flowers and animals of spring. She hadn’t matured very much, if anything, she had grown more immature, ignorant of managing her time. Awkward silence remained for a while with neither of the participants eager to converse although filled with joy to see their distant friend one time after what felt like an eternity of separation. Soon the clock struck 1 and the baristas closed the cafe to take a break.

Viviana and Aria bid farewell to each other, and left for home.



Chapter 4: Time waits for no one

It seemed as though yesterday had drained all her remaining energy, if she even had any left. She was as weak and frail as a twig in the cool winter's air. Aria woke up in a terrible state, groaning out of spite and pain. She quickly ate some breakfast and hurried to the train station, a piece of bread in her mouth.

She knew that she would be late to work; she couldn't let that happen. It would be her third time this week. She'd just arrived at the train station, sweating, and quickly tapped her Opal card.

She could see her train from a distance, *'It's the last chance'*, Aria thought. *'I would surely get fired!'* She was panting and sobs escaped her mouth as she ran as fast as she could towards her train, but the train doors closed directly in her face just before she could step on it. Aria stared at the closed train door, her mouth agape. She couldn't process what had just happened. She was sweaty and her makeup had washed away; she felt like cold water had poured all over her. It was all over now. Aria's phone went off, ringing loudly; it was her boss, calling her frantically, she answered the call trembling—

“H-Hello,” Aria mumbled quietly, at a loss for words, knowing what was to come.

“Aria!” was the first word to enter her ears.

“WHERE IN THE WORLD ARE YOU?!” She winced at the intensity of her boss' voice.

Even though Aria's boss didn't mention it, she knew that the consequence of being late one more time was to lose her job. She already had 2 strikes. The saying went 'Three strikes and you're out'. And she was about to get her third one. Aria felt as the ground swallowed her whole, she didn't know what to do.

Just as Aria lost all hope of arriving to work on time the next available train finally arrived at the station, a screeching whistle blew to signal the new train. Her heart raced, maybe — just maybe — she wouldn't be late to work.

It was a tense hour on the train. It stopped at each stop, and she could hear the clock ticking in her head. It all seemed like it was taking an eternity. *Just hurry up, would you? There aren't even people waiting at most of these stops, just skip the stations so I can arrive on time!*

For her, every second felt like it was being slowed down 10 times more, until finally, Aria arrived at her workplace. Gulping, she entered the building, the glass doors opening ominously, as though signalling her arrival: 'Finally, Aria Lee is here! 15 minutes late, for the third time in a row!', and she started walking down the halls to her boss' office.

She could feel the higher ranks looking down on her with their judgmental eyes, and warm sweat ran down her face. She clenched her fists in nervousness, the palms of her hands warm and clammy.

Her heels clacked on the smooth wooden floor, until she reached a room where instead of wood, there were tiles. It was placed in a very intimidating pattern, as though each deep ocean blue diamond was an arrow pointing towards the boss' office door. She stood in front of the door, looming over her and slowly lifted her hand to knock on the door. Aria didn't even knock, before the door opened unexpectedly, causing her to be off guard. The springtime woman stumbled into her employer's office, a surprised gasp escaping her mouth.

Her boss, already sitting facing her, had his hands clasped together.

"So... Aria," her boss started, his words sounding like a hiss of annoyance. He glanced at his Rolex, dabbed with gold and diamonds. "You're 15 minutes late," he hissed.

"I-I know..." she choked out. She was fidgeting with her hands and avoiding his stare.

"Do you know what that means, dear Aria?" His gaze darkened.

He took out his meeting notes book, and flipped to a page that had Aria's name marked on it in red. There were 2 big lines that stretched across the entire page. The boss took out his pen, and marked another line beside the other two.

I'm done for. My three strikes... she thought, sweating. It felt like someone had wrapped a sharp chain around her neck, and she couldn't speak.

"It means I'll have no other option than to fire you."

Chapter 5: Help is always appreciated

Aria had decided to facetime Viviana. She hadn't told her the context behind it, only a request to have a little 'chat'. What Viviana didn't know, though, was that Aria was going to start full on ranting and breaking down.

~•~

She wailed loudly into the microphone. Her face was red, her eyes were puffy and she looked almost like a circus clown.

"I can't believe I got fired! I got all my three strikes in a week! Is that a new record or something? Will it be in the history books?" She sneezed into the crumpled up ball of tissues she had in her hand.

"Life is so hard, sometimes. I feel like I'm slowly losing connection with my life, I can't even recognise myself..." her voice hitched.

Viviana looked at her friend through the screen, eyes wide and contemplating what to do. She had never comforted anyone before, and she wasn't the type of person who wanted to try. "U-uhm... Will it be okay?" She said quietly, uncertain of what to say to comfort her doom-stricken friend.

"No, it won't be. Not until I get a new job. I don't understand. I've been struggling with finance and I haven't gotten out of this deep hole I've buried myself into."

Viviana blinked again, her ferret climbing onto her shoulder. Mister Suda shrilled happily, almost as though he was trying to calm Aria down.

“Well... you’ve hit rock bottom, right? The only way left to go is up!” There was no expression in her voice; though it was a good line, Viviana had an emotionless face.

Aria sniffled, her voice felt oddly broken, like there was that missing ball of light and determination in her tone, “Maybe, but I can’t do that if I don’t know how to do an interview.”

“Ah, alright.” Viviana ‘put her thinking cap on’ and furrowed her brows. “Perhaps we can practise that, then?” She nodded at her own suggestion, pleased at how smart she was. Her face was plastered with careful consideration as she took into account Aria’s position.

“I only got a job at the cleaning company because my cousin recommended me to them,” she took a deep breath, trying to gather her words together. “He put in a good word for me—”

The girl, who had a liking for rings, cut her off. “Okay, I see where this is going. You’ve lived life on ‘easy mode’. You dropped out of university, and you only got a job because of your cousin.”

Aria winced at her fierce comment, but then again, her friend wasn’t the type of person to sugarcoat things.

She had calmed down a bit. “Owch, words hurt, y’know?”

“Okay, I have a plan.” Viviana said, ignoring Aria’s comment. “There are three spots remaining in the company I work at. You could apply to the office. I’ve seen your work. I know you have the potential to do this job.” She paused, making sure Aria understood what she was saying.

Mister Suda hopped into the phone, causing it to tip over. Ignoring what had just happened, Viviana continued her mastermind plan.

“I can help you write your resume and we can practise your interview.”

Aria looked at her friend gratefully and smiled brightly.

“I think you’ve just saved my life,” she said, beaming.

~•~

They worked hard, brainstorming things for Aria’s resume. After a while of trial and error, they had come up with the perfect response. When they finished, Aria was more than grateful, and was doing little happy dances with Mister Suda. All the hard work they put into writing the resume showed, with past documents of Aria’s achievements sprawled across the library’s table. There were loose sheets everywhere, but regardless, they’d finally complete the resume.

“Now what? The interview?” Viviana asked, gathering all the sheets and stapling them together. A light giggle escaped Aria’s throat.

“Am I allowed to just say that I’m sick and I can’t attend the interview? Just hand in my resume!” she exclaimed with a joking smile. They laughed, but Viviana said that ‘maybe it would work’.

Finally, she handed in the resume to her boss, who was overjoyed to have an enthusiastic new employee who would be as productive as her best worker (aka Viviana).

Now all they had to do was wait for their final answer.

Chapter 6: New Beginnings

Aria felt more than excitement and bliss as she boarded the plane with Viviana. “Viviana I can’t express how grateful I am for your support,” said Aria shyly, mumbling and avoiding her gaze.

“It’s okay, Aria, that’s what friends are for!” There was a long pause between the girls before they laughed with each other.

~•~

Viviana and Aria exited the plane to NSW where Aria would stay with Viviana.

“You don’t know how thankful I am for this,” Aria said gratefully, “Don’t worry, that’s what friends are for.” She smiled.

The friends gleefully left the aeroplane, soon picking up their luggage and going to Viviana’s place. After a while they finally reached Viviana’s house “Viviana! Your house is stunning!” exclaimed Aria, her eyes sparkling with delight. Before Aria could say anything else, a bag quickly zoomed past. “I guess you should set up your belongings here, go ahead, make it feel like home,”

Moving was one of those things that are easier said than done; Aria and Viviana, although best friends, were very different. Aria was messy and left her clothing everywhere and Viviana was the biggest clean freak ever. Often they got into arguments about Aria’s behaviour and contribution to the shared apartment.

~•~

“Let’s go home now and enjoy dinner.”

As the two girls go into the house together, Aria slips and falls onto one of the boxes. “Are you okay, Aria?” asks Viviana.

“Yeah, I’m okay, I just got a little bit too excited and I thought we already finished moving but I guess not.” Aria rubbed the bridge of her nose.

“Well, I agree moving states is a hard challenge but we will get through this together!”

Days pass though there is no luck at all for the both of them. They are struggling with moving and working all together but despite all of that they never gave up and still tried to work it out

Epilogue: Pure as the Driven Snow

As soon as the door opened, animal noises filled their ears. Chirps, barks, meows and even growls are heard. Ever since they'd moved in together, Aria had been begging for a pet. Viviana saw no point in it, as they already had Mister Suda.

After many endless months of begging for one, tactics including powerpoints, speeches and begging, Viviana had finally given in to the idea of a new pet.

The thing is, she didn't know how picky Aria was.

"Why don't we get a puppy?" Viviana asked, pointing to the litter of puppies. "Well I don't think a puppy would get along with a ferret," Aria said, shutting down the idea almost instantly. She'd been denying every suggestion, claiming it 'wasn't right for her'. Just as Viviana was about to object, a worker appeared.

He seemed to have overheard their conversation, filled with suggestions and rejections that went back and forth between the two of them.

"I think I know what you guys might be looking for," he said, smiling warmly at the two of them. Viviana and Aria exchanged curious glances. He led the two friends to the ferret enclosure and that's when Aria saw it.

"That ferret is a young kit, and is rather weak as its muscles aren't as strong," the worker said, gesturing to a ferret in particular, but Aria wasn't listening. Her eyes were glued to the ferret, all its adorable features standing out. It was shrilling and doing whatever other sounds ferrets make.

It was quite full of energy, which was a surprise, considering it was still weak. The 'noodle rat' — as Aria liked to call it — seemed very **quirky** and bubbly. Its white fur coat, which was very fluffy and perfect for cuddling, was dirty. Maybe someone had rubbed dirt on its jacket repeatedly.

Mister Suda was shrilling welcomingly towards the ferret. It shrilled back happily.

The ferret was as pure as the driven snow, its personality reflecting on its snow white coat.

Aria gasped, and pointed to it, her eyes sparkling. "I want that one," she whispered under her breath, as though mesmerised by its beauty.

Viviana chuckled. "Mister Suda seems to be getting along quite well with it."

The employee cleared his throat and corrected her. "It's a 'she'."

"He's like a big brother to her," Viviana said. Though it seemed like she had ignored the employee's comment, she did correct herself and used the right pronouns.



“I’m naming her Miffy!” Aria said defiantly, grinning from ear to ear.
The name did suit the ferret.
Viviana, Aria, Mister Suda and Miffy continued living their happiest lives.

The End



"RUN ALONE IF YOU WANT TO GO FAST, WALK TOGETHER IF YOU WANT TO GO FAR."

Viviana Whitlock and Aria Lee hadn't seen each other since either university days, but a chance encounter at Builder's Ground reignites their friendship. Now a successful journalist and news anchor, Viviana is thriving. Aria is not so fortunate, working as a window wiper with money scraps and a rocky relationship with her supervisor.

Their reunion is packed with nostalgia and promise but Aria's joy is abruptly overshadowed when things just don't go her way. Hanging by a thread, her future is uncertain and Aria is forced to enter a new world unknown to her.

But this time, she won't be alone.