



the
Elf
of the
Sydney
Opera
House





THE KIDS' CANCER PROJECT WRITE A BOOK IN A DAY

Parameters Form

Team Details

STATE: VIC
DIVISION: Upper School (Required word count 3500 to 5000 words)
SCHOOL/GROUP: Our Lady of Mercy College
TEAM NAME: Jazz Music
TEAM ID: 903

Parameters and random words

Parameters

Primary character 1 Zookeeper
Primary character 2 Piano tuner
Non-human character Elf
Setting Sydney Opera House
Issue Missing the train

Random words

event
crisp
elastic
clumsy
bright

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

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Acknowledgement of Country

Jazz Music would like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which this book was created, the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people of the Kulin Nation and pay our respects to Elders past and present.

Jazz Music would also like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which this book will be read. We pay our respects to Elders past and present.

Thanks

Many thanks to our wonderful teachers. Ms Apfelstedt, Ms Morrison and Ms Salamone. This book could not have been written without their work, organisation and pizza. Thank you all
Xxx

Dedication

This book is dedicated to Morgana, a woman of endless creativity who always wanted to be an opera singer. Happy Birthday Mum! - Hannah W

This book is also dedicated to Dolly Parton and her imagination library. Inspiring reading in the hearts of children for over 30 years. We worked 9-5 to get this book done in her honour.

Lastly, this is dedicated to Gaston Leroux, the writer of 'Phantom of the Opera', who insisted until his death bed that his book was based on real events and real people. While this is not confirmed, we can assure you that this book is fiction. Thank you, we hope you enjoy reading!

Chapter 1

Christie arrived at the Sydney Opera House with a sense of excitement.

Michael, the monkey perched on her shoulder, was chirping ecstatically at the sight of the grand building.

The letter from her uncle had arrived three days ago, and Christie could barely sleep since then. She hadn't seen her uncle in so long, and with her busy zookeeper schedule, she didn't know when she'd have a free afternoon again.

Christie smiled as she walked towards the building, almost immediately spotting her great uncle waiting outside the building.

Despite the fact that the man was tiny, he was impossible to miss. A man of 87, Ernest was hunched over, his tiny T-Rex arms clutched by his sides, over his **elastic** pants stretching up to his waist. He had a permanent smile etched onto his wide face and large circle glasses, illuminating his eyes, just like Christie; the resemblance was unmissable.

"My darling **Crisp**!" beamed Ernest. "I have missed you so much!"

The small man looked up to Christie in delight, and she had to hold back her fondness as Ernest attached himself to Christie's hip, clutching onto her like a small child. Christie cooed as she bent down to hug her uncle. Michael quickly jumped off Christie's shoulder, resorting to safety behind Christie's back.

"I've missed you too, Uncle, it's been too long!" She let go of her uncle and reminded him.

"Also, I can't remember the last time someone called me **Crisp**. No one has called me that in years!" she whined. "You know everyone calls me Christie now!"

"But I am not everyone, **Crisp**!" he reminded her with a squeaky voice. "Now where is that little monkey of yours I've wanted to meet so badly?"

Michael peered out from behind Christie and spotted Ernest. Ernest shot him a sweet smile, and encouraged the monkey to greet him. Ernest bent down, stretching out his hand for Michael to smell like a dog. Michael inched forward and leaned into Ernest's hand with a small lick.

"Oh!" Christie yelped. "He likes you! It usually takes him a long time to warm up to people."

"Oh, he's just delightful!" Ernest beamed. "Now come on, let me show you two in!"

"Okay! But remember, I have to catch my train for my shift later. I told you we've got a special **event** there today!"

"Of course," Ernest reassured her.

Christie followed after Ernest happily. The old man bumbled up the stairs, his hips cracking with every step. He hummed to himself joyfully as he waited for Christie to catch up to him.

He retreated into his pocket and pulled out a mystical looking key.

“You’ve never told me why you’ve never left the Opera House, Uncle. I don’t know why you even work here, I know you’re terrified of stages.”

Ernest paused and avoided eye contact as he inserted the key into the front door. “That’s a story for another time, **Crisp**,” he answered forlornly. “When you’re older.”

“Uncle, I’m 34!” she protested.

“And I’m 87, what is your point?”

Christie chuckled and followed her uncle into the Opera House.

Chapter 2

"I have some work to do, would you join me?" he asked as the pair walked through the grand entrance way.

"Sure!" she agreed.

In the first room they entered, Ernest bent down and picked up a mini piano with a strap over it, and swung it over his back with uncharacteristic strength.

"What'd you need that for?!" she asked, eyes wide.

"It comforts me, when I think about-" he shuddered. "*-stages*"

"Fair enough." she laughed slightly.

They wandered through the hallways until they approached a musty rehearsal room, with worn grey carpet and torn up sound panels covering the walls.

As they entered, the monkey chirped in annoyance at the unpleasant smell of the room.

Near the door was an old fashioned upright piano with ornate engravings on the side. They depicted a peculiar scene. A tall elvian figure surrounded by musical notes interwoven with a repeated pattern of ripples. Christie felt instantly drawn to it for a reason she couldn't explain.

"That's a beautiful piano." smiled Christie, running her hand along the engravings.

"Wretched old thing, never stays in tune" dismissed Ernest as he lifted the lid off the piano and began fiddling with the hammer.

He tested the keys gingerly and made a face. "You still have perfect pitch?"

"It doesn't go away?" she scoffed.

"Would you sing me a mid D please," Ernest asked kindly, ignoring her question as he placed his fingers on the keys.

Christie obeyed.

Ernest continued, adjusting the keys as his niece sang. "Okay and now E, now G, oh and a D again, thank you darling."

"I do miss playing with you uncle..." Christie reminisced as she began singing "Kookaburra sits...!"

Ernest began improvising complex harmonises on his piano, joy overwhelmed him as he found himself transported to his living room years ago discovering that his tiny niece has perfect pitch.

They repeated the song several times before they really found their rhythm, the music transporting them beyond the small rehearsal room, as if they were inside a **bright** heavenly void; even the monkey began swaying in appreciation.

Then an impossibly high note overwhelmed all other sounds in the room.

Ernest stopped playing in surprise. "That was beautiful, **Crisp!** I've never heard you sing like that!" he exclaimed.

"That... wasn't me?!" she replied, alarmed.

Ernest's eyes went wide with horror.

"Hello my fabulous acquaintances!" boomed a voice, descending from the heavens. "My ears have encountered a perfect voice in my opera house!" Despite their compliment, their expression was deeply serious.

"Oh... thank you?" she replied. "who-

"No, no, no, NO!" cried Ernest. "It's not perfect, It's slightly off- I swear! The acoustics in this room are terrible. You misheard- !"

"ENOUGH ERNIE!" they yelled dramatically, waving their long pink acrylic nails. "I know what I've heard! See you again soon- ?" they raised their eyebrows in a silent request for her name.

"Christie." she supplied.

Ernest gave a muffled cry of horror as he buried his face in his hands.

The creature gave a devilish smile. "Thank you!" they said as they strode out of the room.

"What the-?" asked Christie.

Ernest gave another heavily full bodied sigh, and looked at Christie with a thousand yard stare.

"I suppose it's time you knew the full story..." he began.

Chapter 3

"A long long time ago I came to this opera house as a new piano tuner. I missed my train and just wandered inside. I was young and naive and didn't know of the Elf that haunted these **bright**, harmonious halls." Ernest explained.

Ernest turned to the Elf and leveled them with a stare. "Treble the Troublesome Elf."

"Treble is fine," they started nonchalantly, tipping their hat towards Christie. "And I haven't been 'haunting' these halls. You see, I love the opera, and I have made it my mission to hear the greatest performances across all of Australia!"

Ernest rolled his eyes at Treble. Christie raised her eyebrows in shock. She had never seen Ernest regard anyone in that manner before.

"For someone who loves the opera so much, you do a lot of sabotaging." Ernest pushed his glasses higher on his nose, and Treble gave an offended scoff.

"If a performance isn't perfect, it shouldn't play! And trains, they are just so easy to sabotage"

Treble stomped their oversized boots like a toddler. "That is why you, my dear," Treble pointed at Christie, their acrylic nails nearly making contact with Christie's face. "You must put on the perfect opera. So I can fulfil my mission and continue my travels around Australia."



"What, put on the perfect opera?!" Christie exclaimed. "I can't do that. I'm a zookeeper, not a singer."

Treble's face split into a large smirk.

"Well unfortunately, Christie, you cannot leave this place unless I release you. I will do no such thing until I see my perfect opera." Treble turned to Ernest, "Just ask your Uncle here, I've had him trapped here for 60 years."

"60 YEARS!" Christie shouted, gaping at her uncle. It was starting to all make sense now. The pasty skin, the hunched over back, and the fact that Ernest seemed to fit so well in the Opera House that he could have been one of the pieces of furniture.

"Yes, 60 years." Ernest signed and turned away. He stared fearfully towards the main stage, wrinkled hands clutching the strap of his piano holder. "My fear of stages has kept me from even getting near a performance. I can only tune the pianos perfectly and hope someone will come along and satisfy Treble's musical desires."

Christie moved forwards, taking her Uncle's wrinkled hands in hers.

"It's okay Uncle, we'll figure this out together."

"Well figure it out soon," Treble splayed themselves over a row of seats, swirling a golden chalice in their hand. "It's been quite a while since I've seen anything impressive, and your voice is sure to put on a fine show."

"Well, that's not the choice you can make! I am not a singer, I am a zookeeper." Christie tightened her grip on Ernest's hand. "And I have a train to catch!"

Christie dashed out of the room, dragging Ernest behind her.

"Crisp! What are you doing?!" Ernest shouted.

"I'm getting us out of here." The duo took a sharp turn around a corner. "Come on, Treble can't make us perform, if they can't find us."

"HEY! Come back here!" Treble's voice could be heard down the hall, heavy boots thudding on the ground. They were being chased.

Chapter 4

Christie sprinted through the halls of the Opera House as fast as her legs could carry her. Her mind was racing just as fast: how could Ernest keep this from her? And, most important, how was *she* supposed to sing an opera piece good enough to satisfy a *magic elf*?

There: an exit door. A way out of this nightmare! Christie seized the doorknob, pushed through... and found herself back where she started, at the back of the stage room, Ernest tumbling out beside her.

"What-?" Christie spluttered. "How-?"

"Christie, you don't understand," Ernest tried to explain. "Until Treble's happy, there's no escaping this place."

Christie spun around swiftly, surprised by how her uncle immediately recovered in a roly-poly. "Uncle? How did you do that?"

"I am incredibly flexible, **Crisp**," he smiled chirpily.

"But-but-" Christie stammered. "-you're so old!"

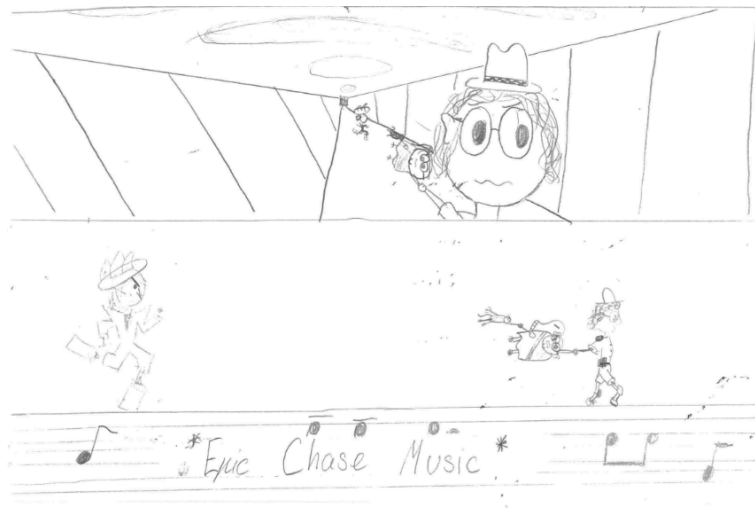
The smile dropped from Ernest's face as he pursed his lips in annoyance. "I'm going to ignore that comment, because I need you to listen to me."

Christie rolled her eyes. "No, I *need* to catch my train and get to work, that **event** relies on me!

"You don't understand, you *will* miss the train." Ernest warned.

"Not if you leave me alone so I can get out of here, Uncle!"

"Please listen to me, Christie," he asked her, his voice soft and melodious. Christie listened and looked at her uncle.



"I have known Treble for 60 years. Once they have made up their mind about something, there is no changing it. They will keep you here until you put on the perfect opera."

Christie sighed. "They're still just a little elf. No match for a determined human."

Christie set off, darting down a hallway, finding an exit sign at the end. Christie smiled in triumph, clutching onto the knob and pulling it open. She gasped as she nearly ran head first into the brick wall that had suddenly appeared where the exit door was.

She stopped suddenly and caught herself by the doorframe, Michael squeaking in fear as his owner nearly plummeted into the wall. She panted and turned around, spotting her uncle's head peaking out from a corner, watching her quietly.

"If you're not going to encourage me, could you at least tag along for the ride?" Christie asked, panting.

Ernest peeked out from the corner and nodded shyly. Christie clutched onto Ernest's tiny T-Rex hand and pulled him along with her.

In a whirlwind of activity, Christie found herself desperately running down every corridor, every backstage stairway, Ernest close on her heels, but to no avail. Every time a door opened, she was stumped by a dead end.

Chapter 5

Christie had been running for what seemed like hours when she collapsed against the dead-end.

She was exhausted, sweat dripping down her face, and panting as she slumped against the wall, placing her head in her hands.

"I can't do this, I can't do this." she repeated to herself.

The familiar clicking of Ernest's hips echoed through the dead-end hallway. Christie looked up in surprise as she found her great uncle stumbling over to her.

"You seem sad, **Crisp**."

Christie had to stop herself from letting out a sad laugh. "I am, Uncle."

"It is alright, Christie." Ernest patted Christie's head awkwardly. Christie could feel the tears welling up inside her eyes as she buried her face into her Uncle's shoulder.

"You know you can always play here, perhaps Treble could let you go if you put on the perfect performance."

Christie sniffled into her Uncle's cloak. "But I can't, Uncle. I just know I can't do it."

Ernest's voice turned stern at that moment. It was a tone that Christie had never heard from the bubbly old man before. He pulled Christie out of his shoulder and placed his hands on her, forcing her to confront him.

"Christie Knickerbocker," he started. "I have been a piano tuner for over 60 years. And in that time I have never encountered a human, nor an instrument that has more perfect pitch than you."

Christie looked up to her uncle, wondering if all of the self doubt she had carried over the years was actually false.

"If anyone can put on the perfect show for Treble, it's you."

Christie sniffled and she nodded after a small pause. "Okay, I'll play."

A smile beamed across Ernest's face as Christie accepted the mission. "That's great, I'm really proud of you, **Crisp**."

"I will play," Christie elaborated, "-if you help me."

A shadowy look dawned across Ernest's old face. "Christie, you know I can't-"

"Then I won't either," Christie cut him off. "-and the show will be doomed."

Fear made itself home on Ernest's face. His wide blue eyes watered with anxiety. Christie could almost see the stage that Ernest was imagining in his eyes.

"Come on, Uncle, I can't do this without you." she begged him.

Ernest bit his lip and nodded, swallowing the lump in his throat. "Okay, then. Let's put on a show."

Christie smiled at her uncle and sniffled.

"What's this about a show?"

Treble The Trouble appeared before the niece and uncle. They stood there triumphantly, a smirk on their face as they offered the uncle and the niece a hand each.

The uncle and niece shared a glance before accepting the help. The elf pulled the pair up and smiled.

"Let's put on a show!"

"Hang on, but we can't get any musicians here. They all missed the train!"

Christie had an idea. A terrible, incredible idea. She couldn't make it to the **event** at the zoo, that was clear. But perhaps, she could bring the zoo to her.

"Watch this."

Christie opened her mouth and waited for the melody to come to her.

Chapter 6

A melodious sound erupted from Christie's mouth. The **crisp** note shook the hall and amazed Treble and Ernest.

"Wow...**Crisp**, that was beautiful. I've never heard you *actually* sing like that," Ernest commented.

The sound of animals footsteps coming to the Opera house quickly grew to a thundering rumble.

Christie stands proudly while Ernest takes a few steps back, saying "I knew you had these abilities, but I didn't think you were Snow White!"

Thinking about what Ernest said, she turns back to him,
"Well, I knew I could, but not this many animals!"

The animals entered the house with a dramatic flair. Lined up in a conga line, the elephant leading, Christie was welcomed by the extravaganza of the animals she cared for.



Christie wouldn't have been surprised if her animals stormed through the house in a **clumsy** manner, but instead they strutted in with extreme grace and form, as if poise came naturally to zoo animals.

"Now that we're all here. It's time to put on a show." Treble smiled earnestly.

And so they did. The animals danced gracefully. Christie sang beautifully, accompanied by Ernest, shaking like a leaf on the stage. The show was a wonderful success.

As everyone congratulated one another, they were ultimately thrilled that it was such a big triumph.

Standing up from their seat, Treble clapped, their applause silencing everyone else in the room.

Treble slowly descended down the staircase and bowed in respect. Applause consumed the room as Christie and Ernest realised Treble's dream.

"I'm happy I got to experience such a delightful moment. I have been able to achieve my one goal in life. To create an opera worth performing," Treble thanked them.

"Thank you-" Christie began.

"You're welcome." Treble cut her off. "You should thank me for making you do this. Without me this opera would be nothing"

"Yeah, Yeah. Thank you for making us do this," Ernest rolled his eyes half-heartedly.

"Alright peeps, it was lovely chatting with you guys, but I have to fly and go haunt another house. Later". Their acrylic nails swiping through the air as Treble vanished from sight.

"Okay, well, that happened." Christie commented.

She hugged her uncle, proud that she had finally overcome her fear of performing.

Then after around 30 seconds of celebration, every musician that missed their train at the opera suddenly appeared.

The murmurs of the musicians filled the auditorium as they contemplated what had just happened.

"Wait, who are you guys?" Christie questioned.

"Who are *you* guys?" the musicians questioned back.

"I asked first." Christie argued.

"Well I asked second," a member of the musicians argued back sassily.

Glaring at one another, Christie finally glanced away, her facial expression and tone shifting immediately.

"Well, my name's Christie, that's my Uncle Ernest, and these are all the animals at the zoo. I'm a zookeeper and I can talk to them."

Everyone paused for a moment.

"That's a story." a violinist popped up. "-Anyway...have you guys seen a short, crazy person wandering around here? They're the reason we missed our train. And I'm still annoyed about it."

Pondering it for a minute, Christie stammered, "I think so. They wanted us to put on an opera performance, the most amazing one. They said they wanted to go to see all the best performances across Australia. Or something like that. So reluctantly, we did the performance. / think it went really well. Anyway, we did it and the show and afterwards they left."

Taking a big breath, Christie stared at the shocked faces of the musicians as they comprehended what had happened.

All their blank faces suddenly exploded with questions.

“How?”

“We didn’t know they could be defeated!”

“Oh my gosh!” Someone exploded into tears

“How do we thank you?” A trombonist asked.

“It’s nothing.” Christie shrugged. “I think it was good for me to practice my singing skills.”

“That’s ridiculous. Of course we have to do something,” a percussionist argued.

Christie pondered for a moment.

“What if you were a zookeeper during the day and did opera singing at night here?” a trumpet player asked.

Christie’s eyes widened. “Wow. I’m so honored...”

Everyone stared at her expectantly.

“Yes! Sorry I would love to. But I don’t understand. You never actually heard me sing...”

“True, but if you were able to get rid of Treble, then I’m sure you’re a good one.”

Christie smiled at her new friends and her uncle. Yeah, she certainly was a good one.



Zookeeper, Christie Knickerbocker goes to visit her uncle at the Sydney Opera House. Nothing special, nothing interesting. Until Christie sings a tune that astonishes the resident Elf of the Sydney Opera House, who commands Christie to sing in their perfect opera. But Christie doesn't want to sing, she needs to get the train to get back to the zoo! Will she be able to escape the Opera House and return to the zoo, or will she be stuck in the Opera House forever?

"This hurt my brain reading it." - Anonymous

"Hehehe" - me

ALL AGES

