HIGHLY COMMENDED
YEAR 9 AND 10 CATEGORY

A Story in Miniature

The long walk home

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The problem began when I found a briefcase in a hedge.

It was black, expensive looking and, most importantly, locked. Naturally, I picked it up. At this point, I should probably mention that I had absolutely no reason to touch it. Unfortunately, curiosity is a powerful force, and within ten minutes I had told my friend Daniel, the school receptionist, a police officer and a man walking a dachshund that I had discovered what was clearly an extremely suspicious briefcase.

The police officer took it from me and examined it carefully. He then looked at me with the exhausted expression of a man who had just realised he was going to have to deal with something ridiculous.

'Where did you find this?'

'In a hedge.'

He sighed. Apparently, the briefcase belonged to a magician performing at the shopping centre nearby. It contained his equipment, including, according to him, 'the rabbit'.

I laughed.

He did not.

'Where's the rabbit?'

I thought about the hedge. 'Oh.'

We ran back.

There was no rabbit. There was, however, a trail of tiny white footprints leading away from the hedge. So began the longest and strangest walk home of my life.

We followed the footprints through a bakery, across a football field and into someone's backyard. The trail eventually led us into a retirement home, where we were confronted by an elderly woman holding a broom.

'Are you boys looking for something?'

'A rabbit,' I said.

She nodded thoughtfully. 'I wondered why that little fellow was stealing my slippers.'

We found the rabbit under a bed, but before we could catch it, it escaped through an open door. Daniel eventually gave up and went home. I considered doing the same, but by then the rabbit had become a matter of personal pride.

Several hours later, I finally caught it outside a petrol station, where it was attempting to eat a packet of chips. I carried it all the way home, exhausted, filthy and deeply questioning every decision I had made since 4 pm.

When I opened the front door, Mum stared at me.

'Where have you been?'

I looked down at the rabbit. 'It's a long story.'

She looked at the rabbit, then at me. 'You've been gone for six hours because of a rabbit?'

'I didn't realise it was going to be this complicated.'

The rabbit hopped into the kitchen. Mum watched it disappear behind the fridge. Then she looked at me.

'Well, you'd better take it home.'

I nodded. 'Where does it live?'

She pointed towards the window. 'Next door.'

I stared at her.

Apparently, I had walked 15 kilometres across Melbourne to return a rabbit to the house directly beside mine.

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