

---THE CAGED ORANGUTAN---



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SFCC Melton would like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which this book was created, the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation and pay our respects to Elders past and present.

SFCC Melton 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.

Chapter 1

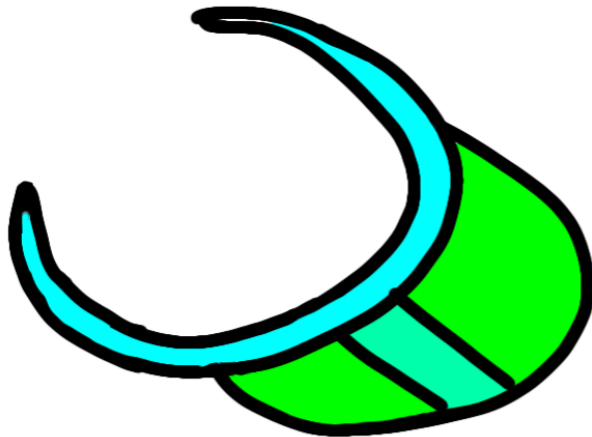
The twenty-three-year-old man's legs moved as if they had a mind of their own. After winning ten gold medals; he couldn't be stopped. John was running faster than the wind itself! Well... he could be stopped if the track wasn't obvious enough, considering his sense of direction definitely needed some work. This impressively quick man was known for... his uncomfortably short shorts which revealed more skin than the average person would like to see. But they were his dad's, and the old man was invincible when he ran in the 80's. These were his lucky shorts, and the others were just jealous that they showed off his muscular legs, which nobody else could even dream of having.

It was seven in the morning, and the birds were chirping their early morning song. The air was crisp and the dew on the lush grass had soaked into his shoes. John lived in an apartment just along the outskirts of Melbourne. His apartment, known as the City Break,

was the most expensive housing around. It had everything you could dream of... even a cinema! John, however, was particularly interested in the gym. It included an abundance of treadmills and even a running track – just what John was looking for. He would go there every morning without fail... except today. A complete newbie had decided to use the running track and fainted during the second lap... what a wuss. Nobody wanted to move him so they just closed off the track. But John was looking forward to another marathon today, and had to prepare for his weeks **event**. So, he just ran- no, sprinted to the bus stop to make up for it. This bus was supposed to take him to the marathon track.

Although ten kilometers sounded like a lot, it's nothing to John. In fact, he was almost there... maybe. John's legs started to slow down, his muscles ached with strain. He hadn't slept well last night, and he wished to just close his eyes and... no, he couldn't possibly! He must finish his run. The finish line was in his sights--he could almost feel the leather seats on his legs. He arrived at the stop right as the bus appeared. As he sat down, he felt all his worries leave his body. He is safe, he is warm.

"Nobody would notice if I just took a quick rest, right?"



Chapter 2

“Hey! Get up.”

“What? What time is it? W- Where am I?” John mumbled groggily.

The bus driver, fat, and very tired from his day of driving, sighed in annoyance. He then turned back to the wheel.

“This is my last stop. I don’t care if you don’t want to be here, I just want to go home. Please get off my bus before I call the police.” Terrified of ruining his reputation, John leapt up in his seat and sprinted off the bus. As it drove away, it left a trail of red dust that seemed to suffocate John – and temporarily blind him.

“YOU ROTTWEILER!” He yelled at the man. Slowly, he turned around to observe his location. There’s and as far as the eye can see. There was a small tuft of grass sprouting through the sand, and maybe a few weak trees that barely offered an inch of shelter.

Though John is exhausted, he walks about two kilometers until he hears a sound coming from behind him.

“Cut!” The voice was loud, and had a thick American accent. For a moment, he thought it was his dad back home – but no, he was back in New York. It’s been years since he was there, playing with his toys, and running around the house when his mother wasn’t home.

“Can we run that again please?” The voice cut through John’s thoughts like they were nothing but butter. He could feel his heart quicken as he started running toward the noise. Then, he saw lights, then buildings, then people – thank goodness. The person behind the front desk wore a rather spiffy suit with sleeves that swished elegantly whenever they moved.

“Oh, thank god you’re here! We need you for scene six. Your van is over there, you’ve got twenty minutes!” The person spoke.

“Wait, what? Where am I? I think I’m the wrong perso-” John began, but was rudely interrupted by the receptionist.

“GO!”

“Okay- okay! Calm down.” He insisted. John could hear the buzzing of all the flies around his face, it was like every move he made attracted them closer.

John finds himself walking in the direction the receptionist gave him. Eventually, he came across a van.

“I hope this is the one,” he thought as he walked inside.

Chapter 3

“U- Uh, so, guys..?”

No one even glanced at him. Actors and producers alike stood around in groups; the same exhausted look plastered on each of their faces. One of them stared John up and down from the corner of her eye, then – tired face breaking into a *laugh* – looked back at her group.

John followed her eyes' motions up and down his own outfit, the beige polo and loose brown belt fitting in a way that completely butchered his athletic physique. His shorts, the same stupid, ugly colour as his shirt, went below his knees, giving him a dorky appearance. Altogether, he resembled a child who had to wear his older brother's clothes for a beige park-ranger themed event.

John had never felt humiliation up until this point, only the 'head-high, chest-high' pride of being the best at everything. Now, shame and rage tied a tight knot in his chest, one that made his heart beat more intensely; that flushed his face into a shade of crimson.

"Guys! Can someone please explain why I'm here?! I have a marathon to win and instead I'm stuck in the middle of nowhere! Is this a prank?"

"What are you talking about?! Shut up and prepare for your role!" An equally assertive voice yelled out behind him. So, John – overwhelmed and ready to explode – decided to just go along with it. For his sanity's sake.

'Prepare'. *What does that mean? How do I prepare?* He wondered. But every thought he came up with didn't match up to form a sensible answer. At this point in his mind, the answer to two times two was probably three.

After a while of staring into the vast, endless hills of red sand, and at the clear blue sky that stretched out infinitely, a sudden sound abruptly broke him out of his stress-fueled trance. A far-away voice spoke of words he couldn't catch, one unlike all the others chatting and complaining behind him. It was a lot more... *squeakier*. *Eugh...*

Out in the distance was a big metal cage beside another van. John slowly walked towards it with curiosity, trying to figure out what the movement inside could be. Upon approaching closer, the creature turns out to be an orangutan, hands grabbing onto the bar, body rocking back and forth.

"Good eye, might!" (*G'day mate!*) It spoke, watching John closely.

"Who the hell are you? Why the hell are you here?" John questioned, crouching down with his right hand on top of the cage.

"Ooh ooh ah!" (*I don't know- they hate me!*) The orangutan replied, spinning in an agitated circle.

John's head tilted curiously. "Okay, so I can understand you via some sort of telepathy as well."

"Good eye, might!"

"Yeah, I know! I got 20/20 vision. But my name isn't 'might'. It's John."

"Oi might! Aough!" (*Cool! I am Orange.*)

"Great. Just great." John buried his head in his hands, sighed as heavily as possible, then looked back up.

"Hey, Orange. Did you get pulled into this without your consent as well?"

"Ooh." (*Yep.*)

"At least I'm not the only one."

"Ooooooh! Ah ruough?" (*Ya reckon they will give you money?*)

"No."

"John! Johnny-boy! Get back here, we're starting!" Someone's voice rang through and reached John's ears. John looked behind him, where a man gestured him over. He turned around with a heavy feeling that Orange notices.

Orange does a spin. "Nough."

"Sorry buddy, I gotta go. See you later." As he walks back, four people pass by him, heading towards the cage. He doesn't bother acknowledging them.

"You'll be working with the monkey. I mean the orangutan, or whatever it is. Seems like you guys are friends already anyway." John turned his head to the van, the four people pulling Orange's cage towards the set.

"Oh."

Chapter 4

John watched as the scenes swapped over and times changed, props getting thrown to the side and demands getting spat over actors bustling around behind the camera. He stood there confused... what was this even about? He'd just met a... an orangutan, or whatever they were called, and was forced into a disgustingly hideous costume. Suddenly, a pair of hands landed on his shoulders, and he lurched forward from the force, getting

pushed onto the scene.

“Come on- get in place! We need this shot done yesterday.” A sharp, twangy voice struck him from behind.

“Hey- what gives?!” John argued. He was **clumsy**, and working to regain his balance. He spun around to notice a... well, what looked like a frazzled receptionist with a clip board in hand. They gave a sharp tap to the edge of the board with their pen and pointed over toward the camera.

“Scene six. We need you.” The receptionist’s gaze narrowed down at John’s attire, seeming somewhat pleased that he’d actually changed into costume. They let out a slow breath and turned toward the director and murmured something to the man.

John paused for a moment. He didn't sign up for any of this, yet here he was. He was *supposed* to be elsewhere, having the time of his life. But no, he just HAD to be forced into acting like an Australian actor, by some receptionist he didn't even know existed until... like- he couldn't even remember how long it's been. But he couldn't just stop- he's expected to be playing his part... well, the part he was assigned without consent. He wasn't even given a script! He could just improvise and hope it's socially acceptable. He'd never had to do that.

Eventually, the director called out. It was John's time to shine.

Chapter 5

After the excitement died down, and John's first scene was shot and finished, John reconvened backstage, exhausted, and feeling like a fool—an idiot.

“I hated that.” John mutters, a scowl meeting at the end of the sentence. He moved to a sigh, rubbing at his temples with nothing else but frustration and annoyance. John was meant to be running a marathon at this point—chasing the finish line, pushing through the tape—BASKING in the glory as the audience cheered, for he came first place!-- He fantasized, before a loud noise clattered, causing him to turn around in instinct.

It was the orangutan. Orange was its name, from John’s memory. It was caged up.

The iron bars were a **bright** and ever vibrant clash against the orange of—well, Orange. The animal was gripping tightly at its trapper, making noises and lashing out like it made any difference. John felt a slight surge of guilt, before it was quickly overcome by the feeling of pity. Orange seemed pretty alright-- despite the previous conversations with the thick accent—, and overall someone he could possibly get along with later down the line.

“Oi, oi, oi!” Orange spat, staring up at John with an intent that could not be quite placed. John was seemingly gifted with the ability to understand Orange, so his eyebrow perked like **elastic**.

“What? I don’t have the key. I don’t know what you expect me to do,” John complained, before Orange interjected—

“Auurooanh..s...” (*I don’t want to be here either!*) Orange then proceeded to make a sharp jump at the door of his cage, causing John to recoil.

“Mrooongngg!!” (*You are not in a cage, you can get key! This cage is of human creation!*) John blinked. Orange had a point—not that he’d admit it.

“And how do you expect me to get such a key? I don’t even know who’d have one. I wasn’t meant to be here at all, Orange.” He trailed off when he caught a glimpse of Orange’s glare. It was a stern, mean, mean glare.

“OuuRrAAnnG!!” (*Then we should escape together! Move faster, before night breaks!*) Orange was quite loud, so John shushed him hard in dismay.

“FINE. Just don’t get us caught before this plan even begins!” His accent was jarringly thicker, overpronouncing his r’s like any British actor playing an American—only that.. He WAS an American.

Chapter 6

“You want the key?” A voice spoke from the shadows. Stepping into the light like a cliché movie flick—was the... receptionist? From earlier? John blinked, confused.

They seemed dismayed; their expression scrunched, almost reading hesitance before they looked away.

“You did well enough. I don’t see why you need to leave WITH Orange. He... he belongs to set.” They visibly cringed saying that, biting the inside of their cheek before they began clenching and unclenching their fist. The ache hit them instantly. They have always been empathetic by nature, especially towards animals. Roselia had always been like that.

“.. Even I can see that saying that isn’t truthful to yourself, Rosie.” John crossed his arms, on guard.

“Don’t call me that. Read my nametag and try again.” They bristled, and he just cocked a grin and let out a huffed snort.

“Brrraooanngg..” (*Mate... you’ve gotta listen to them.*) Orange shook his head.

“.. what?” Roselia blinked, before John rolled his eyes--

“Don’t you understand that? He’s on your side anyway, so it doesn’t even matter.” He huffed, and Roselia just shrugged, showcasing an eyebrow raise.

“Anyways.. I-I *suppose* I can help you. It was my mistake bringing you here anyways—and...” They made eye contact with Orange and their gaze softened, before it scrunched again in pure agony, their expressions tilting upwards, a pout making their lips.

“Fine. Orange can go with you. I can probably convince the director to let me ‘pack away’ Orange for everyone--, since it’s not anyone’s favorite job.” Roselia sighed, returning their face to their familiar neutral poker face.

“You just have to give me some time. Wait until it reaches eleven and meet back. Obviously Orange will stay here—unless you take him.” They gave a glance to John, and John just nodded, picking up the handles of the cage—as Orange complained about the shake.

“Mrooong!!” He screeched, before both John and Roselia gave a look for Orange to SHUSH, or they’d get caught instantly!

Roselia stepped away, keychain clicking against their chest as they turned, walking back into the darkness. John raised the cage, giving a mumble incoherent as he began to trudge Orange away from the backstage area, out of view for the few hours they have left before the plan begins.

Chapter

7

Roselia prepared themselves to get the key.

“Hey! Mitch! I can lock up the animal beast for you, after hours.” Roselia called out to the director, who then turned and raised an eye.

“Why? I can do it.” He blinked.

“Just to help out. It IS my first week, and I want to do as much as I can for you and the crew.” Roselia spattered out a clean lie, before showcasing a grin.

“Alright. Fine. But the key needs to be returned before midnight.” He pretty much folded instantly, as the job as stated is not desirable in the slightest. Some incidents with aggression, but, nonetheless.

The clock ticked down, every second accounted for.

John and Orange hid out in the trailer meant for the actual actor—that he got the keys for—that never made it to the set. He and orange argued constantly, but still, they got along enough to wait till eleven.

Roselia was there first, tapping their feet impatiently, checking the clock again and again—clearly agitated they were late. Late by five minutes, but late is late to Roselia.

John walked in with the cage, dropping it rather rudely enough that Orange hissed at him—a strange noise—and a strange sight.

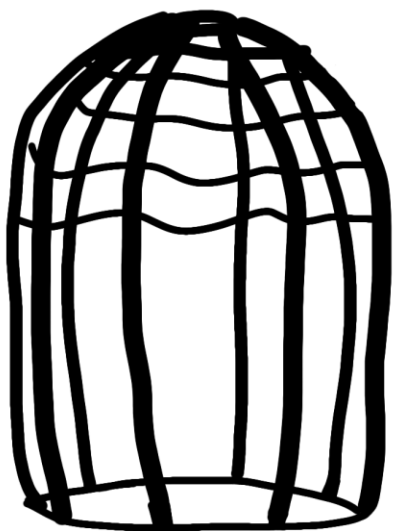
Roselia cursed at John;

“John! Don’t treat Orange so aggressively! It creates a LOT of noise, and is just HORRID to watch!” They spoke in an otherwise hushed tone.

The backstage area had some spry mats placed for flooring, a tent for an area—as they were in the outback—and a bit of a wind pickup. It was covered in dull colours, and well—had nothing more than a cold palate. It was a clash to the natural warm hues of the outside—as the foliage and fauna came to a sleep.

The area outside of the set was commonly pitched black during day fall. This is the case due to the fact lanterns are scattered across filming grounds—and not anywhere else. So, it was a risk to even think about entering the forest at this time, or anywhere in the outback.

If they were to leave, they'd need to get onto the main highway—and catch the bus there. That is the best bet they have—taking into consideration they will need to hide Orange on the bus, and in the general public (including around the set)—but, a plan is a plan—and it is better than nothing.



Chapter 8

"I will distract the director and other cast members; You sneak over to Orange and unlock his cage. Getting him out will be the difficult part, just figure that out at the moment." Roselia blabbered, uncertainty lacing their voice.

"Ok got it, I will make sure Orange makes it out safely. These calves can do anything." John exclaimed while attempting to flex his calves but failing miserably.

"Just go get Orange and leave the distracting to me." Roselia replied with an annoyed expression slowly creeping up on their face. Roselia walks up to the rest of the cast and Orange's owner asking them what will happen with the rest of the movie. John goes up to Orange to unlock the cage. Orange starts to make a ruckus and the cast, and director starts to get suspicious.

"What's going on?" One of them questioned, a concerned look crossing their face.

"It's probably trying to get our attention, or it's just doing it for fun," Roselia said, trying not to give away the fact that John is breaking Orange out of the cage.

"I don't really care for that... *thing* anyway, so it doesn't matter what it does." Orange's owner spat bitterly. Roselia allowed themselves to breathe. Orange and John wouldn't get caught.

"Come on buddy, stop making so much noise. I'm trying to help you." John explained, his expression softening.

"Oi might, Oi!" (You're going to get caught, they have cameras, not that they care to check them but still. This is a bad idea.) The orangutan stressed. John spoke back.

"Well if they don't check the cameras, what do we have to worry about? And besides don't you want to leave this place? You know you are not getting the right treatment."

“Oi, I reckon.” (But what if they see me leave? I don't really... blend in). Orange asked as he started to calm down. The realization set in; he was *finally* going to leave.

“I didn’t train and build up my calves for nothing!” John laughed, resting his hands on his hips in a triumphant manner.

“I’ll outrun them it’ll be fine.”

“Oi...” (Okay, if you say so.) The orangutan reluctantly followed along and stepped out of the cage. They snuck over to the exit door. It looked pretty heavy, but it was no match for John and his unforgiving strength. He pushed the door open as carefully as he possibly could without making too much noise... but the door made a low creak which made the cast and director look over and give their attention to what was happening.

“Sorry, I didn't hear what you just said.” Roselia glanced back to the cast in hopes to try and gain their attention again.

“Whatever, I don’t get paid enough for this,” One of them mutters under their breath, as they all turn back to Roselia to finish what they were saying. Orange and John made it out before they accumulated any more suspicion. The **crisp** night air wisped in Orange’s face as he closed his eyes and took a deep breath.

“Oi oi... might...” (I’m finally... out...) Orange sighed for the first time in years the **bright** sunlight blessed him as slightest smile could appeared on the orangutan’s face.

“Let's go, I've called a taxi.” John ushers Orange over to where it will be picking them up. He shoots Roselia a text letting her know that they have successfully left, and for her to meet them outside.

Chapter 9

“Before I go... do you want to go through the movies with me?” He raised an eyebrow and smiled with half his teeth showing in the hopes of trying to impress them.

“That would be an amazing idea...!” John's smile grew on his face as he anxiously waited for their full response.

“My girlfriend would love that!” They smiled.

“Y-you’re... taken?... r-right... Umm- never mind, don’t worry about it- I changed my mind...” He said awkwardly.

“I’m going to go with Orange. I’ll give you this.” John handed Roselia a \$50 dollar note.

“Have fun with your girlfriend at the movies, I don’t want to intrude.” A soft smile – that shows that he is happy for them, but also disappointed – was plastered on his face. He wasn’t able to pull the person that he so desperately wanted.

Orange signals to him that it is getting way too weird, and that they should leave now. John doesn’t understand what Orange is trying to say in the moment--- but once he said,

“Oi might.”-- So he realizes what Orange was trying to convey. As he slowly walked away from his dream, Orange looked up at him with a disapproved look.

“What?” John said annoyed.

“Oi good eye, might? I reckon.” (She has a girlfriend so what? You could have still been friends.) Orange grumbled

“I know.” John frowned.

“I don’t really want to be in the middle of someone’s relationship...” he explained. Orange nodded understandingly as he got into the taxi. John stood there for a moment trying to process this moment before he got in the car.

“I wish I just said we should stay friends” John whispered to himself. As he climbs in the car, Orange gives him a little nudge to let him know that he is there for him. As they

arrive at the apartment complex and find their room, John realizes that his apartment may be a bit too small.

“I did not realize how much equipment I own” John said. Orange nodded in agreement.

Chapter 10

5 years later...

The orangutan lives happily with John; they sometimes find their way to contact Roselia-- to check up on them-- and send them and their girlfriend flowers; as a *thank-you-for-being-my-friend* gift.

Roselia occasionally responds and sends John and Orange a thank you note; signed by both them and their girlfriend.

The people that abused Orange have now been charged with multiple counts of animal abuse, and are facing multiple fines to the point the whole company is faced with a fine of up to 600 penalty units. And so, it was shut down from producing any more movies with live animals included. Orange got the revenge he finally deserved and destroyed his previous owner's career-- so they can't make any more movies and is subjected to doing ads for very controversial companies.

While John was out shopping, he saw Roselia and their now wife, with a child. A soft smile appeared on his face as he knew they were happy together.

He went up to Roselia and said hi; he was introduced to their child as a friend that unexpectedly wandered into their life.

"Haha, that's one way to put it!" John laughed,

"Well, it is true." Roselia replied.

"Anyway, how is Orange doing, if he is still with you that is?" They asked.

"He's doing well actually; we've managed to find somewhere else where we can live together instead of my previous apartment. It was too small for us all to fit in," John explained.

"Fair enough." Roselia replied.

"Wait I haven't even introduced you to my wife!" Roselita stressed

"This is Megan. We've been together for about 7 years now-- just married 2 years ago and adopted this little one last year."

They explain while patting their child's head.

"And what's your name?" John asked the small child in a soft, parent-like voice.

"My name is Claudia, I'm 5!" She holds up 4 fingers while a smile gleams on her face from ear to ear.

“What a cutie.” John said while smiling back at her and messed up her hair.

“Hey my hair! You messed up my hair!” Claudia exclaimed while patting it back down. John laughs at her reaction.

“Anyway, I best be on my way orange will get cranky if I am not back soon!” John explained while getting ready to walk away.

“It was nice speaking to you!” Roselia replied,

“Say bye to John, Claudia.” They added.

“BYE JOHN!” Claudia yelled.

John waved goodbye and went on his way back to shopping then home.

Blurb

A marathon runner finds himself on a movie set after falling asleep on a bus and meets a receptionist and an Orangutang that is not treated well as a cast member.

