



# The Peacock Detectives

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PART ONE

# Autumn





Today would have been an ordinary Saturday, except that two things happened:

- 1) The peacocks escaped, and
- 2) I started writing this story.

Dad says if you want to write a story you should start by choosing a topic that you know a lot about. That's why this isn't a story about France (which I know a little bit about but not a lot), and it isn't a story about my big sister Diana (who I used to know a lot about but now that she is fourteen-turning-fifteen I don't anymore). This is a story about peacocks. I know a lot about peacocks because:

a) Two peacocks live in the holiday flats across the road from me, and

b) I'm good at finding them when they go missing.

I'm good at finding things because I'm good at noticing details. For example, in February Mum was trying to make apple crumble and she couldn't find the cinnamon. I went through the cupboard and sniffed everything and

found it in a jar labelled 'Cumin'. And last year when Diana lost her new bra I noticed some dirt on my dog Simon's nose, which meant that he had been digging. I found Diana's bra in a hole under the bay tree. I guess Simon doesn't like Diana being fourteen-turning-fifteen either.

Dad says that if you want to be a writer you have to be good at details because details are what colour the pictures in people's heads when they read. I keep all my details in my Notebook for Noticing, which Dad gave me for my birthday last year. Here are some examples of the things in my notebook:

Silverbeet for dinner tonight ☹.

Diana was on her phone for three hours today.

Dad is yawning a lot.

Mum made lamingtons.

Dad also says that a story has to have an Inciting Incident at the beginning. An Inciting Incident is something that happens to get the story started, like a problem that has to be fixed, or a mystery that has to be solved. And the Inciting Incident for this story is that the peacocks escaped and Mr and Mrs Hudson came over to ask for my help.



Noticing details makes me a good writer and it also

makes me a good detective, like Sherlock Holmes. Mr and Mrs Hudson knew I was a good detective because I was the one who found their peacocks when they escaped the last time. I found them by noticing some peacock poo on the ground, which meant I knew which direction the peacocks had gone in, which meant I could follow them and find them behind the fire station where they were sitting on a coiled-up hose.

‘Cassie Andersen, Peacock Detective!’ Dad said. I thought this sounded good, so I wrote it on a piece of cardboard and made it into a badge. Then I pinned it to the backpack Grandpa gave me for Christmas, and now everywhere I go I’m ready for solving mysteries.

The first thing I did when Mr and Mrs Hudson asked for my help was write down everything I already knew about the peacocks in my Notebook for Noticing. Everything I already knew looked like this:

- 1) There are two peacocks: William Shakespeare (who is a boy) and Virginia (who is a girl). Technically, Virginia is a peahen, not a peacock.

- 2) William Shakespeare and Virginia live with Mr and Mrs Hudson in the holiday flats across the road from my house.

- 3) William Shakespeare and Virginia are ornamental pets. Ornamental means decorative, like when you put baubles and little wooden Santas on your Christmas tree

to make it look nice. Simon, however, is not an ornamental pet. He is a pet for doing things, like barking and sniffing and getting patted.

4) Virginia and William Shakespeare have escaped once already in February, which was when I found them on the fire hose.

5) In the wild, boy peacocks have lots of wives, but in captivity (like being decorative pets at holiday flats) they are monogamous. Monogamous means you only have one husband or wife forever. William Shakespeare is monogamous with Virginia, just like my dad is monogamous with my mum.

6) Boy peacocks start to lose their feathers at the end of summer and the start of autumn, which, since it's March, is now (if you are reading this in a country like England, you should know that Australian autumn starts in March).

7) Peacocks like to have a lot of space so they can roam around.

8) Peacocks poo everywhere and it is really messy.

9) Peacocks like to have baths in dirt.

10) Peacocks like to eat insects, seeds, fruit and sometimes small snakes.

The second thing I did was interview Mr and Mrs Hudson because they are the people who know the peacocks best, and I thought they might be able to give me

some more details. I'm going to write down my interview in dialogue, which means writing what someone actually said instead of just explaining what they said. Dad says it's important to have dialogue in a story because it helps the reader imagine how people speak and it also stops them from getting bored reading lots of long paragraphs full of lots of long sentences that feel like they go on and on and on and never end.

The dialogue of my interview with Mr and Mrs Hudson looks like this:

Me: Excuse me, Mr and Mrs Hudson, would you mind if I asked you a few questions? (When you are interviewing people it's important to be polite.)

Mrs Hudson: Not at all, Cassie, go ahead.

Me: Thank you. When was—

Mum: (Interrupting) Would anyone like a cup of tea?

Mrs Hudson: That would be lovely, thank you.

Mr Hudson: Thank you.

Me: When was—

Mum: (Interrupting again) Milk? Sugar?

Mrs Hudson: Black, please.

Mr Hudson: Milk, no sugar.

Me: When was—

Mum: (Interrupting *again*) Caramel slice?

Me: Mum!

Mum: What?

Mrs Hudson: Not for me.

Mr Hudson: No, thank you.

(A pause while I wait for Mum to interrupt again.)

Mum: What are you waiting for?

Me: (Sighing) When was the last time you saw Virginia and William Shakespeare?

Mr Hudson: This morning. Before breakfast.

Mrs Hudson: We let them out into the garden. Like we always do.

Me: And after breakfast—

(Mum interrupting again by putting cups of tea and a plate of caramel slice on the table, even though no one wanted caramel slice.)

Mrs Hudson: Thank you, Helen.

Mr Hudson: Thank you.

Me: (Continuing, despite the unwanted presence of caramel slice and my mum) And after breakfast they were gone?

Mrs Hudson: Yes.

Mr Hudson: They were gone.

Me: I see. (Pause while I write down important details.) Is there anything else you can tell me about William Shakespeare and Virginia? Anything...unusual?

Mrs Hudson: Unusual? Sebastian? (Sebastian is Mr Hudson's first name.)

Mr Hudson: (a.k.a.—which means ‘also known



as'—Sebastian) I suppose...

Me: (Excited because I could tell by the way they didn't finish their sentences that I was getting close to an important detail) Yes?

Mrs Hudson: They've been a lot noisier than normal recently. Especially Virginia. But I've no idea why.

Me: (Trying to hide my interest because good detectives never give away their real feelings) Thank you for your time.

Mrs Hudson: Thank you, Cassie.

Mr Hudson: Thank you.

Then Mum sat down at the table and started talking to Mr and Mrs Hudson about the night classes she is taking, which had nothing to do with peacocks and was boring. So I got up and went to my room and added another important item to the list of things I know about the peacocks:

11) William Shakespeare and Virginia were being noisier than normal.

I felt like this was important but I didn't know exactly why. I did know, though, that when you are writing a story (or looking for peacocks) things are not always clear from the beginning. So it's important to listen to your feelings and write down everything you can.



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