

Exchange: Down Under

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Contents

Chapter 1: Destiny or Doom	5
Chapter 2: Jetstreams	11
Chapter 3: New Country, New School, New People	15
Chapter 4: Derby Day	22
Chapter 5: Day Boy and Boarder Rivalry	25
Chapter 6: Camp	33
Chapter 7: On the Road	115
Chapter 8: The Usuals	127
Chapter 9: A Smelly Situation	133
Chapter 10: Kalgoorlie	139
Chapter 11: Honour	148
Chapter 12: Smoke Alarm	153
Chapter 13: Good Old South African Entertainment	158
Chapter 14: The Last Days	166
Chapter 15: Tyler's House	171
Chapter 16: My Last Day Down Under	186

Chapter 1: Destiny or Doom

Standing in the hallway outside that dreaded room was probably one of the most stressful moments of my life. The minutes dragged on endlessly while I was pacing up and down in my ultra-nervous state. I had especially arrived early so that I could read over my application essay just to make sure that I knew it back to front.

After I had been standing around for a while I heard a noise and I looked up from my essay that I was reading over. Andrew Smith had finished his interview and Ross Walker was walking tentatively towards the open door. My heart fluttered and missed a beat when I realized that I was next in line. It felt like my whole life had been leading up to this moment, and I was so nervous that I was shaking so uncontrollably that I nearly dropped what I was reading. I read through my essay a few more times and before I knew it the door creaked open and Ross walked out. He had a happy look on his face so he probably thought that he had done well.

I heard the call of “Matthew Davidson” from

inside the interview room. That was it, it was time to shine. Would it be destiny or doom? I was quite intimidated when I walked inside because there in front of me were five faces with all their attention drawn solely to me. The interviewing committee consisted of Mrs du Toit, Mr Gilman, Mr Buckley, Mr Field, and Mr Chambers. I sat down and Mr Buckley got straight into it and started asking me questions about my essay, and so the others followed suit one by one. It was the first time that I had been in an interview type situation and it was very scary!

My time in that room went quickly and before long they were finished interviewing me and I was free to go. For the next two weeks all I could think about was Exchange. “Was I going to get in?”, “Was my essay good enough?”, “Did the committee like me?” All of those questions and more circled around my head countless times.

Eventually, after many days of waiting, Friday the 8th of May 2009 arrived after much anticipation from all the hopeful applicants. The day dragged on as I was counting down the hours, then minutes, then seconds until the end of the day. 10,9,8,7,6,5,4,3,2,1...Ring ring ring.

The comforting sound of the bell echoed around the school. All 35 of the applicants arrived promptly at the lecture theatre where we would receive letters that told us if our application was successful or not. The big question was: Thick or thin? I walked in and grabbed my envelope from Mr Field and rushed out with it I broke into a brisk walk as I wanted to open the all important letter in private. I kept up the pace until I was far away from the school and was walking across one of the cricket fields near the bottom of the grounds. I sat down on the stands and looked down at my destiny. All that separated me from what lay in store inside was a piece of folded up paper and a couple of drops of adhesive.

My heart was in my throat as I ripped it open and pulled out the letter... and there was a second sheet too. My heart nearly popped right out of my throat! I opened the first piece of folded paper and I forced myself to look. It was all in slow motion as the letter unfolded in my hands and I turned my head to read the information that it held...

My heart missed a beat, for real this time... I had gotten in! SUCCESS! All my dreams had

finally come true. This is how the letter read:

8th May 2009

Matthew Davidson

Shelton House

Dear Matthew

Congratulations on being selected to represent Duke's College on exchange to Nashford School, Wembley Downs, Western Australia in term 3 of 2009. You will receive further details of term dates, contact numbers etc next week and should come and collect an information sheet from me in my classroom on Tuesday or Wednesday.

Well done, we are sure that you will make a fine ambassador for your family, school and country.

Yours sincerely

Peter Field

It was so amazing that I almost couldn't believe it. I pinched myself just to make sure I wasn't dreaming, and I most certainly wasn't.

I walked back across the field and up the hill to where my mom was waiting in the parking lot, with the letter of success in my hand. She congratulated me and said she was very excited for me, and my dad and sister did the same when I got home a few minutes later. There was only three and a half weeks left of the term and there was so much to do. I had to tell all my friends that I got accepted, organize a visa for Australia, make sure that my passport was valid, book flights, buy gifts to take there, and the list went on.

The next few weeks passed by in the blink of an eye. Exams came and went and I hardly even studied for them, with the prospect of a whole term of hardly any work ahead. My visa arrived on the 5th of June, after just four weeks, and as soon as I arrived home from fetching it my dad booked my flights. The term began on the 21st of July and ended on the 24th of September. My flight arrived on the 19th of July and left on the 27th of September, so that I could settle in for a few days before school and stay at someone's house for a few days in the holidays before I left.

School finished and the holidays began. It was only three weeks until I left and my excitement grew and grew every day. Finally the day arrived. I was all packed and ready to go and I had my passport and my ticket in my hand as I walked up to the check in desk. My bag and hockey stick were checked in and all I had with me was my backpack with my laptop, toiletries and some magazines to read. I said goodbye to my parents and sister at the boarding gate-I was going to miss them but I would talk to them on the phone and on Skype when I was free. With the farewells over with I turned around and gave them one last wave before I went through passport control.

I had been in the international terminal many times before and I was familiar with it, so I headed straight for the food court and ordered myself a delicious toasted egg and bacon sandwich and a Coke. 'Boarding' popped up on the screen next to my flight. I wanted to beat the queues, so I finished off my meal and headed for gate A4. The gigantic Air Malaysia Boeing 747-400 was waiting at the end of the tunnel. I arrived at the door of the plane and the air hostess was waiting to direct me to the seat.