

Ticket to Ride

—Matthew Ng

“As chief of security, I declare this building safe. As chief of recruiting, I declare you recruited. I’m on break now. Don’t call my name.” With that, the chief of security and recruiting vanishes, leaving behind her motorbike and poker tables.

Bundy sits on a poker table, adjusts his lab coat, and smiles at you.

“I am sorry for the hitherto secrecy. My sworn enemy, Doctor Bill has been after me for a while. I dared not divulge the full extent of what I know while his agents might have been listening. But now that we are in a safe place, let’s get on with saving the world. Here, this will explain everything.”

He gestures towards a map of Australia on a nearby wall, with several smaller maps wedged below.

“Three weeks ago, a team of third year research students noticed that many of the fresh koala droppings were either squashed or had prominent paw-prints in them, and it wasn’t long before they saw a koala literally drop upon its own droppings. Capturing this specimen for further studies, they found that it possessed a far surlier and aggressive disposition than the common member of the *Phascolarctos* family. Upon genetic analysis, we realised that this was a wholly new species.”

Reaching into his ample pocket, Bundy procures a flask of rum and takes a swig.

“We named it the *Phascolarctos vertiginus*, after its strange behaviour, but our celebrations at the identification of this new species were short-lived. The drop bear population has exploded exponentially, and is now a major threat to local fauna and flora, not to mention tourists. Especially European females. And here is the epicenter of this outbreak,” he points to a small region north west of Port Lincoln.

Tracing the outline of Australia with your eyes while digesting this information, you get the sneaky feeling that there might be something more to this map.



