

I7

Capital letters

Rosie McCrossin

When I first started to learn English, I didn't understand capital letters. Someone said they were for words which were important, and so I made a list for all the people I knew in a notebook of what was important to each of them. And it said Mum: Success, Rent, Dry Cleaning Job, because they were the things Mum talked and worried about the most. For Callum, who is my best friend, it said: Girls, Cheezels and Beer, because even though Callum and I were only eleven, he was always talking about how his dad gave him beer. And then I made one for Dad and it said: Job, Yvonne, Mum, because he was always reading the jobs section of the newspaper and he loved Mum and he loved Yvonne. And after I found out what capitals did, I kept making the lists, because even though people almost never made sense, they always seemed to not make sense for a reason.

And here we are, Callum and I, and we are sitting in the library, and I am reading *The Complete History of Australia* and Callum is reading the lines in Melanie Gordon's tight sports pants. And I make a mental note to add that to my capitals list: 'Melanie Gordon's Tight Sports Pants'.

'Why did they storm Eureka?' I say to myself, but also to Callum. Callum does not respond, the navy blue of girls' skirts have hypnotised him.

'Callum, Callum!' I say, and I click in his face like people do in the movies and he turns around.

‘Why did they storm Eureka?’ I repeat in my most scholarly voice.

Callum looks angry and then he turns back around. And even though we are learning about the Eureka Stockade in class, Callum will not learn with me. Callum does not care that he is failing every class except sport.

I want to know why Callum does not care about school, but he cares all day, every day about Melanie Gordon, who does not care about him. Callum’s mum is in jail and he is going to have a sister. They are some words for Callum that are in my notebook: Mum, Jail, Sister. I am going to ask Callum why he cares about Melanie Gordon and not about school, but he has gone to talk to Janice, who he says is easy because she has acne and red hair. He is going to ask her questions about Melanie Gordon. He is going to smile. I do not understand why Janice is easy; once, she gave me two pens when I asked her for one. I do not know about Callum sometimes.

Sometimes people have too many capitals and I cannot understand them any more. All the words and their letters jumble in my head. One of those times was when Dad was coming home when Mum was at work at night and he jumped the fence and looked worried, and then he made this sign which meant ‘This is a secret’, and then I’m not sure how but I knew that mum had no capital letter now, but Yvonne did.

And sometimes I try to find one word that will be the overall capital letter word for a person. And when I do this, I sometimes find things that I do not like. Because I think Callum’s overall word is ‘Failure’, because he is a Failure at school and a Failure at dating Melanie Gordon and a Failure at not having his mum in prison. But he is very happy and so sometimes I am not so sure about Callum.

While I am thinking this, Callum is sitting down beside me and he is saying, ‘Janice reckons Mel’s got the hots for me.’ And he is smiling really widely like he is Successful. And I am glad that sometimes I can understand him.

I think some people can have capital letter words about their families. I think maybe they do not decide their capitals themselves. For example, I think Callum's family's capital letter word might be Broken, because they all seem to be broken somehow. I am not sure if Callum will ever be able to change this, because his family is Broken.

He will also be Broken, and he will make another Broken family and they will each be Broken too, and they will have more Broken families. Maybe this is not the case, but I am not so sure. I think my family's is Immigrant but I will make it Success. I will be a Success and people will see me and say, 'That man, he is a success'. One day I should make a list for me and it will say Me: Success, Love, Feelings. And it will be the last list I ever make because I will be like Callum and I will not make lists and I will love people and I will be successful and I will be Happy.



Rosie McCrossin wrote this in 2015 when she was in Year 12 at Sandgate District State High School in Queensland.