

Australia by Ira Wocadlo, GYQ2b

"Hey, nice to meet you. I'm Luke. I am here to take you to your host family." The tall blonde-haired guy shakes my hand. I smile at him. "I'm Victoria." He opens the door to his car for me. "The car ride is going to take an hour. We live in a hick town", he laughs. I look out of the window. The people at the airport look stressed. Everyone is looking at their phones. I see a man bump into another man by mistake. "Aye, watch your step!", he screams. I open my phone and tell my mum that I have landed and that I am now in Sydney in the car with Luke. Luke starts the car and turns on the radio. We don't talk much on the ride because I prefer looking out of the window. "I can't wait to see all the animals", I say, excited. Luke scratches his head: "There is something I have to tell you." I look him into his eyes. "Well...", he begins. "There was a bushfire years ago in Australia. The firemen stopped the fire but about a month ago there was another fire which spread throughout Australia." "That can't be true.", I protested. I take out my phone. "There was nothing on the news about this. I should have been informed about this.", I say, looking at my phone and searching for a bushfire in Australia, but of course I don't find anything.

"I know.", Luke answers sharply. Luke looks straight at the streets and avoids any eye contact with me. After a while Luke turns to me. "Look, I'm going to tell you something but you have to promise not to tell anybody, okay?", he says. I nod. "And this" he takes my phone and throws it out of the window "is just bad for the both of us." "Why the hell did you do that? That is my phone! I need it.", I scream at Luke. "See. That's what I mean." Luke places his hand on my thigh. "Victoria. These phones make us sick. You know why you've never heard of a bushfire?" I say nothing. "The government doesn't want you to know about this. They don't want you to know that climate change is a real thing. If society saw what's going on here, they would protest. They would be against the government. That is why the government wants you to look at your phone and take it everywhere you go. They only tell you about the good news so that the government looks like they've done a great job and haven't done anything wrong.", Luke screams. "Luke, I really like you but I don't believe you.", I take his hand. "I think you're just overreacting." Luke scoffs. "You don't believe me? Then watch this.." Luke drives through a desert. "There used to be trees. Not only trees but a whole jungle.", Luke points at a place in the desert. The only thing I can see are black tree trunks. A lot of tree trunks. Suddenly, Luke stops the car. "Come with me", he says. I follow him. We go through the burned-down jungle. Luke points at a crater in the middle of the jungle: "This used to be a lake with a waterfall. Take a closer look." I take a step closer to the crater. The crater is filled with dead fish. Even skeletons lie in the crater. "This is why the government doesn't want you to know the truth. Because the government failed to help the environment before it was too late."