

Two girls on the train by Lisa Conolly

Pausing at Mitcham Station both girls looked to each other for solice. Rosey and Al were content to stay on the train, cruising to the moody sounds of John Butler. It was Saturday, and they were heading to town.

Mitcham station was where they normally got off for school. It was where they met the four G's – Gerry, George, Garth and Goddo. Rosey liked Gerry. Goddo had a thing for Al. The girls played along for the fun of it, but they stuck together, while the boys tried to prise them apart.

The music stole their thoughts ...

I could be young or I could be old... I can be a gentleman or I can be violent.. I can turn hot or I can be cold...!

Rosey and Al rolled by the Adelaide suburbs, joined in waves of guitar. They were the same. But different too. Al was blonde and Rosey was a red head. Al was short for Almond, and she hated her name – people said she was nuts, of course. Duh.

Why didn't her parents think of that. It was a boy's name anyway. Rosey didn't mind her name, but she hated her red hair. Since when did an Italian have red hair? It must be her father's fault, but he always blamed his Irish grandmother.

But Al and Rosey were good together because it was cool to be a bit different. Everyone is different and that's what makes them the same. No worries there.

The train squawked in to Adelaide station. As the train stopped the girls rose together, staying connected to the music. Drums beating. Bags over shoulders bobbing. They stepped in time.



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And then the music stopped. They stopped. The noise of the city wheezed at them.

“Where to?” said Rosey

“The balcony”, they said, together. Adelaide Arcade. It was their church. It was where Al got her dance shoes. Rosey's favourite was the wig shop and Al liked the button shop. They went up to the balcony level to look down at people looking up. It was the light that made them look up. But only some people looked up. Rosey and Al guessed at the lookers– they were the “uppers”. The “downers” usually moved faster, and they never looked up. The mosaic floor absorbed their steps and their souls. A man in a blue suit walked fast – he was a downer. Then an older woman with a shopping trolley – she was an upper. They had worked out who were the uppers and downers among their class mates, their teachers, their families. They were good at it. There were many more downers than uppers.

They guessed that Gerry and Goddo were most likely uppers and Garth and George were probably downers. But just then the

four G's walked below them, looking around.

This was not their place. Al and Rosey looked at each other – “I didn't tell them” they said together. But one knew she did and the other knew she didn't, and they both didn't really need to know more than that. They knew they wanted to stay together.

Al and Rosey carefully peered through the rails of the balcony, but none of the G's were looking up. Were they all downers? Al and Rosey instinctively slipped into the ballet school. The G's would not go there.

Time passed slowly. Al and Rosey wandered the arcade cautiously – watching out for the G's. But they knew this arcade and felt safe. They relaxed and went for their usual iced chocolate's at the Italian cafe in the centre of the arcade.

Just as they were sucking up the last of the creamy chocolate froth, the G's came into view. When Al and Rosey looked over to them, eight eyes met four and the air went still for a second. Gerry led them over to where the girls were neatly balanced on high stools at the cafe.

Rosey was taller than all of them. She looked down, laughed and said, “what are you doing here? This is a chick's palace”.

The G's were awkward in the glamorous arcade with its lacy balcony. Their oversized shorts and sporty shoes looked wild on the neat geometry of the floor tiles.

Gerry rescued them, saying, “we've been checking out the coin shop. Garth's brother collects them.” But it sounded like an excuse. The G's knew Rosey and Al would be here, and they'd come looking for them.

Al had told Goddo about this place, but she never thought they would all turn up.

Al said, “anyway, we were just going” ... “to find a present for Al's mum” said Rosey. Gifts were a great cover up. They could shop the truth away.



Rosey and Al got up to go. Gerry took Rosey's stool, saying “those chocolates look good, think I'll have one”. Goddo went over to Al, and raised his hand. Al slapped him in a hi five, and Goddo said “see ya”, but something else passed between them.

The girls walked off down the arcade, and as they went they looked back over to the G's. They waved. And then Al saw Goddo look up to the light. She nudged Rosey. Then Gerry looked up. Rosey and Al looked up too. Then the girls looked back smiling with a knowing gleam. The two boys smirked back, feeling now that their visit was worthwhile. They were uppers. Garth and George were studying the cafe menu. Downers.

Rosey and Al walked off down the arcade. Rosey got the music out and plugged them in.

Kasey Chambers sang. *I live in a circle, Running around and around and around and around...*ⁱⁱ

They looked up to the light again, and their looking was infectious. They went dizzy watching the lookers, and laughed at how they could turn the world upside down.

ⁱ The John Butler Trio, words from the song “Zebra”; written by John Butler; 2004; Album “Sunrise Over Sea”; Jarrah Records

ⁱⁱ Kasey Chambers, words from the song “Colour of a Carnival”, written by Kasey Chambers, 2006, Album “Carnival”, Sony/ATV Music Publishing