

Jeannie by Carole Lydon

JEANNIE jolted from her daydream as the bus arrived. Automatic doors sighed a weary greeting.

The metroticket lizard buzzed its welcome. Experienced feet led the way to her peak hour companion.

Hey Jeannie, that red dirt still blowin' through your dreams?

Yeah, Rosie. Every night. It's fillin' up the gaps in my head.

Jeannie could count on it. She knew that when her long dark eyelashes met, she would hear the far off wind. A light whistle at first. Then a heavy moan vibrating through her body until a choking howl purged fiery sand into her dreams and out through her veins.

Well girl what are you gonna do about it?

What should I do about it? Last night when the dust cleared I saw a little tree. A bush.

Silence.

Better go find it then Jeannie

Where?

Rosie's lips stretched with a smile that knew everything.

Ask your dream.

Jeannie's confidence eroded with every kilometre. Doubt weighed her wrists on the steering wheel. The looming fence



Women in Conversation, by Lisa Conolly

constricted her heart and held her breath. Dust that followed now hovered before her in an uncertain cloud.

What if Aunty doesn't remember me? What if she doesn't even know that Maggie had a daughter? What if they don't speak English? Without her language Jeannie felt a hole in her aura.

Doubt still hovered as the cloud cleared and the sign stung like a headmistress' slap.

DO NOT ENTER WITHOUT PERMIT

Lost in anxiety and ready to turn back, the four-wheel drive surprised her. So did the smiles.

Whadya stopped here for girl?

I haven't got a permit

Laughter cracked their smiles wide open.

Sign not for you girlie. Follow us.

She followed them to a group of women working around a fire. Stepping out of the car, she faltered on uneven ground. Nervously she looked up and heard the faraway voice from her dream.

Si'down Jeannie. We knew you comin'.

You knew?

Laughter peeled around the circle.

Course we knew. We called you girl.

A gentle breeze blew Jeannie's fear into the desert. Anchored by the dirt between her toes, her dream took her through a doorway to something she always knew. She saw branches of the bush scattered around the fire.

What are you makin' Aunty?

Medicine.

What for?

Why just one thing? Everything!

Aunty scooped up some sticky resin, leaned over the coals and rubbed it on Jeannie's arm. It's warmth oozed down Jeannie's spine, then shot through her legs like fire bolting her to the earth. At that moment she felt everything. She felt the earth this bush grew in. The air it breathed and the precious water it drank. She felt the wisdom with which it was made. But she was puzzled.

Why call me Aunty? I'm just a city girl

The wisdom around the fire cast their eyes respectfully towards Aunty. They had discussed this.

We need city girl teach us how to sell it. Make money. Fix houses. Fix people.

Jeannie's breath poured out slowly and completely. It too, was carried away into the desert. For the first time in her life she belonged.

One more thing girl.

Yes Aunty

We need a website.

