

Waiting in the Qantas Club by Lisa Conolly

The man in the Green Jeans slid further into the lounge as he spoke.

"I know he's worried about it, but I thought something could have been done to...."

The man in the Blue Suit boiled his thoughts as he listened. Moron, doesn't he know this is a mobile free zone.

"..there may be other options, it doesn't seem worth it now, but in time it could be.."

Your bloody life won't be worth it if you don't turn that phone off mate.

"Okay, I'll go over it again and we'll make sure we don't miss this chance..."

You'll miss it alright if you don't shut it off.

"Okay, I'll check it all again this weekend, see you Monday".

Hooray, off you go, see you later, piss off mate.

Green Jeans put his phone back in his pocket and looked around, letting his eyes skim past the man in the Blue Suit who was glaring at him. He thought the Melbourne meeting would be a waste of time. Some chance. His manager was unable to see past his own nose, but he knew he would have to play it safe, bite his tongue, the usual crap. His boss looked a bit like that Blue Suit over there. Oversized and overimportant and he was over it, except he couldn't be over it just yet. He'd have to hang in there a bit longer.

His pocket rang and jostled in his jacket.

Bloody hell not again.

Blue Suit got up slowly and slumbered off to the coffee machine. He was too tired to drink wine even though it was a Friday. It was a short trip from Adelaide to Melbourne. He could unwind on the plane. He found flying peaceful. It was routine. Away from interruptions and demands. He'd be too late to get to the benefit dinner tonight. Which was exactly as he planned it. When he resumed his seat, Green Jeans was still on the phone.

"Course I'm going. Wouldn't miss it. Should be a great gig for you. Melbourne music scene has always been the best. Don't know why I didn't move over there when you did bro, Got stuck in the desert somehow. You were always the mover and shaker in the family. How's Kate?"

Blue Suit knew only one Kate, and she was his daughter. She'd gone off to Melbourne with some muso loser a few months ago. She hadn't called or written since but that was



Waiting in the Qantas Club, by Lisa Conolly

not unusual. He knew she'd be back. She saw life as a playground, and played it like a see-saw.

"A baby mate, seriously? Shit. When?"

Blue Suit had been grandfather grey for decades, but without the relevant accompanying offspring. He tensed up to listen more closely, as Green Jeans softened his voice.

"Shit. Guess that makes me an uncle. Cool. Whoa. You move fast bro. Why didn't you tell me this before? Does this mean you're getting married? How'll you keep the band going?"

Blue Suit dismissed the idea that this was his Kate. She would have phoned home if she was pregnant. She would need something from him. Money. A bigger car. An obstetrician. Health insurance. Especially money. Some-bloody-thing.

"So the kid'll have Kate's red hair and blue eyes and your musical talent. Good one..."

Oh God. My Kate has red hair and blue eyes.

"So what about Uni, isn't she doing a degree?..."

Blue Suit reassured himself again. It couldn't be her, because his Kate had skirted study. He had been surprised when she'd passed her final school exams. She had said she wanted

to be an artist, but he knew she was still working out what she wanted.

“Oh, defer it, yeah, I guess she only just started so it’s no great loss. Like, philosophy can wait. Hey, who does philosophy anyway?”

Christ. Kate always wanted to do philosophy. A waste of time. What sort of job do you get with a philosophy major?

“Sure bro, just kidding, y’know, I really like Kate. It will be great to see you. And Kate.... See you tomorrow then. Ciao”

Blue Suit never acted on impulse and he rarely showed feelings. Not even when he drank. He had control. So what happened next was not normal. He took two short strides over to position himself in front of Green Jeans. He was too big and spoke too loudly.

“I couldn’t help overhearing, since you were so bloody loud, you were talking about Kate. Would that be Kate Koller by any chance? She’s my daughter. And if some muso has knocked her up I want to know about it”

“Jesus mate. Get a grip. I was having a private conversation, and..”

“not very bloody private if the whole lounge can hear it, is it”

“Hey, cool it mate”

Green Jeans and Blue Suit stared at each other for a moment. It was just enough time for the turbulence to subside and the club room steadied. Blue Suit noticed a pretty young woman watching them. She could have been taking notes on her lap top. Evidence. Witnesses. Her angelic gaze flew through him, rousing a familiar pulse of shame. He was shouting at a complete stranger in a public place. A stranger who could be family. Blue Suit loosened his stand. Green Jeans lifted himself in his chair and his voice toughened.

“listen mate, I don’t know a Kate Koller. Actually I don’t know Kate’s surname anyway. She’s just Kate. She’s my bother’s new girlfriend. I hardly know her. If she’s your daughter, then you should talk to her yourself. It’s really none of my business. Sorry. Let’s leave it at that hey?”

Green Jeans rose and stretched to grab his bag. Blue Suit took a step back. His fat face folded and he looked away. A white kangaroo tail drifted past the window as the warm tarmac silently released the heat of the day.

“I don’t know where she is”

And then a soft female voice moulded the stuffy club air.

“Qantas welcomes all members and guests travelling on flight 345 to Melbourne. Your aircraft is now ready for boarding, via Gate 24.”

