

Up A Tree 2309

By Terry Miles

“What ya doin, Dave?”

“What the hell do you think I’m doing, Kenny? Phoning of course.”

“Who, ya phoning?”

“My mother. We need someone to get us out of here.”

“What are you going to say about Johnny?” Royce asked.

“I’ll pass the phone to you Kiwi and you can tell her.”

“Can you see our bikes from there, Kiwi?”

“Yeh. They haven’t touched them, Kenny.”

“Mum, we’re up a tree and need help...”

“What do you mean? Why can’t you get down the same way as you got up the thing. What kind of tree is it, anyway and how far up are you?”

“We can’t climb down because...”

“Why did you climb up it in the first place, son?”

“We can’t get down the tree because we’re surrounded by crocodiles.”

“Crocodiles, where on earth are you?”

“Tell her we’re in crocodile country. Far more north than you damn well thought.”

“Kiwi, for god’s sake! Don’t get Dave all heated up. Not right at the moment anyway.”

“I heard that,” Daisy, Dave’s mother said. “Bill, come down there’s something going on, Dave’s trapped up a tree, surrounded by crocodiles. Bill’s coming down the ladder; he’s painting the outside window frames.”

“What’s happening?” Kenny asked.”

“Dad’s up a ladder.”

“How high up is he?” Royce asked.

“Bill, wipe your hands, I don’t want white paint on my mobile.”

“What’s going on, Dave?”

“Dad’s wiping his hands.”

“He’ll be going for a piss soon if he’s been up that ladder for a long time. Was he in the shade or sun?” Royce asked.

“Shut up.”

“It’s your father! Are you telling me to shut up. I’ve just come down from painting the bedroom window-frames. Doing something useful around the place, unlike, some.”

“We’re in trouble. We’re up a tree...”

What?” Bill asked.

“We’re up a tree surrounded by croc’s Dad.

“How many are there of you up the tree?”

“Three of us.”

“There should be four of them,” Daisy said.

“Your mother says there should be four of you.”

“For God’s sake, tell him.”

“Royce, don’t get him mad, he has to concentrate.”

“He’s not the only one who’s mad. I’m mad, too. Mad for agreeing to go on this trip with you lot.”

“Can you speak one at a time otherwise it’s too damn confusing.”

“Johnny’s been eaten by a croc., Dad.”

“Eaten? How?”

He went into the water to cool his feet.”

“What was he thinking?”

“Dad, we need rescuing. We’re stuck up a tree surrounded by crocodiles.”

“How many crocs, Son.”

“How many crocs are there, down there, Kenny?”

“About nine and they look hungry. And they seem to be settling in for a long wait.”

“Around nine, Dad. Can you get in touch with the emergency services?”

“Which one, Son?”

“For god’s sake! Try the police first. If it’s not them they’ll be able to tell you...”

“Dad’s cut me off.”

Kenny pulls out his telephone and dials his father.

Kenny’s father answers the phone.

“Dad, we’re in a pickle. We need help.”

“There’s footy on the television, son.” And it sounds as though someone’s just scored.”

“Can you turn the sound down?”

“What!”

Kenny’s father turned the television down, a little.

“We need help right now.”

“Can’t it wait, Son?”

“Have you been drinking?”

“It’s an important match. Match I’ve been looking forward to all week. I want to enjoy it.”

“Father, it’s serious. Johnny’s been eaten by a croc.”

“Hit by an old croc?”

“Father sober up, eaten by a crocodile. Get it! And we’re up a tree surrounded by them. They want to eat us too, Dad.”

“Jesus, what a time to telephone me.”

“For Christ’s sake, sober up, or you’ll be on the front page of all the tabloids the day after tomorrow.”

“What?”

“Just get in touch with the emergency services. My phone needs topping up. I don’t know just how much time I’ve got left. And give the police my number and get in touch with Dave’s father.”

With that said Kenny switched off his phone.

“Where’s your phone, Kiwi?”

“In my paniers, Dave.”

“Typical!”

“Well, Dave, how much power is left on yours?”

“Not a great deal.”

“One of your families should be getting in touch with the emergency services.”

“Jesus, the flies are everywhere,” Dave protested.

“Concentrate on the crocs and they won’t seem so irritating,” Royce suggested.

Dave’s phone gave an incoming call ring.

“Hello. Yes, it’s Dave Cummings.”

“This is Scott. A plane is on the runway just about to take off. Do you know your coordinates?”

“Can someone get our coordinates?”

Kenny switches his phone back on.

“I’ve asked Kenny and he’s trying to find out.”

“What colour shirts are you wearing?”

“We’re surrounded by crocs. and you want to know the colour of our shirts?”

“Listen boys...”

“We’re not boys...”

“Stop interrupting, first, we want you to wave the brightest coloured shirts towards the plane when you hear one. Secondly, if you were men and aware of this country’s hazards regarding the crocodile belt you

wouldn't be in this predicament. Thirdly, we can get more operations searching for you if you're classified as boys and not men. Get it!"

"Yes, Sir."

"Don't worry about your coordinates they're coming through as we speak."

"Is that everything?" Dave asked Scott.

"You still haven't told me the colour of your shirts."

"White," shouted Kenny."

"Salmon pink," Royce interrupted.

"And yours, Dave?" Scott asked.

"Mauve and grey stripes."

"That's not very helpful. What colour is your undershirt."

"White."

"Wave that," Scott instructed, "and keep your phones switched on and we've instructed your families not to spend much time on the phone so we can get in touch. and we want you to inform us if you hear a plane. Goodbye for now. Over and out."

"Listen out for planes everyone."

"Everyone is not here," Royce corrected Dave.

"Please, Kiwi, you'll only upset Dave.

"I'm thirsty," Dave said.

"The crocs. are hungry and they have more patience than you."

"Kiwi..." Kenny chipped in.

"Oh! Kenny, I'm a bit more, thick skinned than that."

"What do you call an Australian male who dribbles out of both corners of his mouth at the same time?"

"Do you know the answer to Kiwi's question, Dave?"

"No, do you know, Kenny?"

"Not this one, Dave. Tell us, Kiwi."

“Level headed.”

“And you think that’s funny,” Dave blurted out.

“Is that another one of your New Zealand jokes, Kiwi?”

“Afraid, so! But we do have source material for them, you know.”

“This is not the time or place for that kind of humour,” Kenny warned, trying not to laugh as he did so.

Kenny’s phone tone was indicating an incoming call. The Waltzing Matilda song played a little, until he could switch to answer mode.

“I’ve just had the police here, son. They wanted to know where you were going and why.”

“What did you tell them, Dad?”

“I don’t know where you were going.”

“The next time they call they might be telling you they’ve found my body hanging from a tree.”

“What! Don’t say that, son.”

“You’re not interested in anything but how fast you can drink a Fosters and start another. The police will keep you posted, Dad.”

With that said Kenny switched his phone off.

“I think that’s the first time I’ve heard you speak up for yourself, Kenny,” Dave said.

“Well done, Kenny.”

Dave’s phone ringing tone rang out.

“Can’t you put that thing on a more muted ringing tone, it’s not as though we’re up the next tree,” Royce said, “It’ll save more of your battery, too.”

“Mother,” Dave said as he put his phone on speaker mode.

“Are you sure Johnny’s gone?”

“Mother, the crocs. were in a frenzy, tearing him apart. What do you think?”

“I can’t say that to his mother.”

“Put it as delicately as you can, mother. Where’s Dad?”

“He’s taken the van and gone looking for you. I think the plane will spot you first, though. And you’re not to worry if it disappears once the crew has spotted you. If there’s no place to land a chopper will be sent out. They might have some kind of spray to get them back into the water. Bye, for now, everyone is thinking about you. Stay calm and collected. Bye for now. They’ve told us not to spend too much time on the phone.”

“I think it’s about time we took off our shirts,” Royce said.

The three of them were wearing their leather coats just in case they came off their bikes at speed. it does give some protection. It’s surprising just how much. And they were still wearing them due to the predicament they were in, not to mention the shock of being in it.

“You’re a hairy fucker for a New Zealander,” Kenny observed as Royce took off his shirt.

“I am at that,” Royce agreed.

Kenny took off his jacket, pulled off his shirt and said, “Bloody flies.” as he waved his arms about him.

“Come on Dave what’s keeping you from stripping down to your waist?” Royce asked.

“Can’t you turn around, you two?”

“Modest are you. We’re not asking you to strip that far down, Dave.”

“Stop having a go at him, you know just how touchy he can be,” Kenny said. After all, it wasn’t the time for them to fall out.

Dave took off his jacket and shirt, which would just have blended in with the land. He took off his under-shirt and was by then exposed from his waist upwards. Dave’s two companions looked at him wondering what all the fuss was about.

“There you are! Are you satisfied?” Dave asked which he didn’t intend to do.

“Just look at the size of those nipples? How they stand out. What do you think, Kenny?”

“How do you get them to poke out like that, Dave?”

“I guess it’s the kind of state I’m in, you two.”

“Nervous, are we?” Royce questioned.

“What do you think, Kiwi?”

“Body parts don’t stand out when you’re nervous. I think they’ve needed some assistance to help them on their way. Have you been using crocodile clips?” Royce queried.

“What! Dave exclaimed.

“Jesus Almighty!” Kenny called out.

“Where’s my shirt?”

“I think a croc. is eating it,” observed Royce.

“I think I can hear a plane, Kenny said. Put on your jacket. Crocs. like skins you know. Tie your shirt to a branch so we don’t lose any more of them, whilst we put our jackets back on.”

The three boys, growing up to be men put their jackets on. They untied their shirts from the branches and listened out for the direction of the sound of the plane’s engines. They not only heard the plane but saw it too. The plane went passed them but turned and circled around them three times. Coming in very close the final time. The co-pilot waved to let them know they had been sighted.

“I wonder how long it will be before we are rescued?” Dave asked.

“How long’s a piece of string, Dave?”

“You’re at it again, Kiwi! Can’t you see Dave’s in a distress mode?”

“Hey buddy,” Royce said, “We get a lot of flack from you Aussies! Do you think we can keep taking it lying down all the time?”

Royce knew what he had just said would make Dave laugh, perhaps not quite then but some time, in the future.

“Thank you, you two! I guess we deserve being the butt of other people’s jokes sometimes. Shit what have I just said!”

“Have you heard about the guy walking on Bondi Beach in his flip-flops. He saw a reasonably looking Sheila, nudged her in the ribs with his foot and asked, “Fancy a screw, Sheila?”

She replied, “I didn’t but I do now, you smooth talking bastard.”

“That’s a bloody old one, Kiwi.”

“So, you know some. Why don’t you amuse us with them? They’ll help pass the time.”

“Quiet you two, I think I can hear a chopper,” Kenny announced.

“I can’t hear anything can you, Kiwi?”

“Not yet.”

“You must have very sensitive hearing, Kenny,” Dave said.

“That’s a start,” Royce responded.

“Be quiet. I’m sure I could hear it. Keep listening out.”

“Nothing!” Dave said.

“It’s faint but it’s there,” Kenny insisted.

“I can hear it now,” Dave announced.

“Me, too,” Royce said in agreement.

The three boys, I mean young men waved their shirts as the emergency response approached them.

The End