

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



In Cahoots

by Melissa Reeves

EXTRACT

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ACT ONE

The location is the first Cardwell St Brownie Hall. The audience are the Parents and Friends.

Tonight is the Annual Parents and Friends evening. Brownies are engaged in various activities as the audience arrive. Brown Owl is moving amongst the audience smiling at everyone intimately and chatting. Jeannie is teaching people how to tie rolling hitches and double sheep shanks. Ruth is saying "good evening" in a number of foreign languages she has learnt, and Monica is playing strategic games of chance with small groups.

Front-of-House and bar people are parents and friends as well.

In the hall are various posters and displays, a portrait of Lady Baden-Powell, an platform below the ceiling which has access in and out, with rope that can drop to the floor.

At eight o'clock Brown Owl rings the bell and the audience enter the space. Brown Owl follows the last person in and when everyone is settled.....

Brown Owl Well, first up I'd like to welcome all you parents and friends here this evening - and really a big thank you all for coming. I think perhaps girls our parents and friends deserve a big Brownie clap.

(The Brownies applaud the audience)

I can see some familiar faces, Monica's mother in the corner How are you Mrs Robinson? Looking very well. Looking very well indeed. That jumper does suit you. Jeannie's twin sisters, who I never can tell apart. They're like two peas in a pod aren't they everybody. And of course Mr Reynolds, Ruth's father, who never misses one of our little get togethers.

But for those of you who never have been to one of our annual parents and friends nights this is your opportunity to really see what happens at a Brownie meeting. Of course tonight is no ordinary meeting. It's a very important occasion for us and an especially important occasion for one little person in particular. Come on Jeannie.. Now Jeannie is the first tweenie to be initiated into the first Cardwell this year and I'd like to say at this point what a marvellous job Val has done in recruiting. Well done Val. A big hand for Val everyone. Now I'd like to

reassure any of the mothers who were worried by the incident with the CIB. Rhonda was totally cleared of all charges.

(Rhonda and Natalie sneak in late)

But she has decided to go for her knitters badge instead of her first aid badge at least , until they build the police station. Much thanks must go to all you mothers who found time to help with the snow ball run. \$24.65 was collected and it is a tribute to the cooks that not one little snow ball was left over. Everyone of those little charity snow balls found their way into a good home. This year has been a proud one for the First Cardwell. As I look down the long road of memory I see a line of girls in long dresses. They are marking time and holding hands and they are all shouting out at the top of their voices"welcome, welcome, welcome".

(Brownies begin singing softly at first)

Brownies

If we sing loud enough we will be heard
Spreading the Brownie word
Do a good turn every day
That's the Brownie way

Think of others lend a hand
Build on rock and not on sand
In the home at work at play
That's the Brownie way

It will bring its own reward
Use the smile and not the sword
Be cheery bright and gay
That's the Brownie way

Monica

I'd like to welcome a very special guest tonight. The district Commissioner.

Rhonda

Monica, can I have a word with you..

Ruth

Not now Rhonda!

Monica

The district Commissioner always makes an extra effort to be with us at our annual parents and friends night to see how we're progressing. This year we have a new district Commissioner, Lady Ivy Copeland, and we'd like to ask her to do us the honour of joining us in our Brownie ring.

(Brown Owl has fixed her gaze on somebody in the audience)

Brown Owl Come on Commissioner . Don't be shy. We're all one big happy family here.

(She walks over to person)

Up you get.

Natalie That's not the district Commissioner Brown Owl.

Brown Owl I'm awfully sorry. I mistook you for somebody else entirely. But of course. Now I realise. How silly of me. Young Lilly Chaplain. How you've blossomed. Was it fiver? No, sixer of the sprites. But you used to have black hair. . .

Monica Brown Owl.....

Brown Owl Yes Monica of course. We must get on. We'll have our own little pow-wow later on Lilly. Where were we up to?

Monica We ought to wait till the Commissioner arrives.

Brown Owl Isn't she here yet?

Rhonda It's my fault Brown Owl. I was driving the car .

Monica Car?

Natalie No it's my fault Brown Owl. Don't blame Rhonda. I just wasn't sure what was meant to happen.

Monica Where is the Commissioner Natalie?

Natalie I think she's going to be late.

Monica Where is she?

Rhonda Lay off her. Look we just.....

Natalie No, I'll tell.

Brown Owl Brownie smile Natalie

Natalie Well Rhonda picked up the Commissioner from headquarters and then came over to my house. My mother usually takes me, but she's been very sick lately. They're not sure what it is.

- Brown Owl Oh Natalie
- Natalie I was waiting by the road and the Commissioner got out of the front seat and opened the back door for me. So I got in the back and the Commissioner shut the door. But Rhonda thought the Commissioner got in the back as well and she drove off.
- Monica What!
- Natalie I was going to say something. I could see the Commissioner jumping about and running after the car but well, I didn't know Rhonda very well yet.
- Monica You've known her for five years.
- Natalie Yes but I'm not in her six. And the closer we got to the hall, the less I could say.....
- Brown Owl Very understandable.
- Natalie So I didn't say anything and when we got here, Rhonda leaned over to open the door for me and the Commissioner wasn't there and Rhonda.....
and the commissioner was there but the commissioner wasn't there
- (Commissioner rides into the hall on a small bike, panting and dishevelled.)*
- Commissioner Good evening girls.
- (She salutes)*
- Brownies Good evening, Commissioner
- (They salute)*
- Commissioner Good evening, Brown owl.
- (She salutes)*
- Brown Owl Good evening, Commissioner.
- (She salutes)*
- Commissioner Good evening ladies and gentlemen. I'm very sorry I'm late. I assure you that punctuality is one of my highest priorities. You stupid girl. Why didn't you let me get into the car?

(Natalie brings the toadstool out and places it in the center of the room)

- Rhonda I thought you were in the car.
- Commissioner Didn't you tell her?
- Natalie I'm very sorry Commissioner.
- Commissioner What were you doing driving a car anyway?
- Monica She was brought up on a farm. She was driving a combine harvester before she turned five
- Rhonda I was not brought up on a farm.
- (Monica gives her a dirty look)*
- Rhonda But I did go on holidays to the country.
- Commissioner I see. Will somebody take this bicycle and keep it in a safe place. I had to borrow it off some young idiot and he demanded a twenty dollar deposit.
- (Monica takes the bike away)*
- I regret to say Brown Owl that this will have to go down in my report to the central committee.
- Brown Owl Of course, Joan.
- Commissioner Ivy.
- Brown Owl No, Muriel
- Commissioner Ivy
- Brown Owl No Joan, my name is Muriel.
- Commissioner Yes, but my name is Ivy.
- Monica Lady Ivy Copeland is the new district Commissioner Brown Owl, replacing Lady Joan Rider.
- Commissioner Now that we've got that sorted out, let's get down to it shall we?
- Ruth We were just about to have our Brownie ring Commissioner. Would you like to join us?