

The Kid

by Michael Gow



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CHARACTERS

DONALD, 17

SNAKE, 18

ASPRO, 19

DEAN, 17

DESIREE, 15

WOMAN A, a country cafe proprietor

MAN A, a bookshop proprietor

WOMAN B, an apartment block caretaker

MAN B, Desiree's father

WOMAN C, distraught and middle-class

WOMAN D, in the Department of Social Services

MAN C, her husband

SETTING

The present. On the road from the North to Sydney and various locations around the city.

SCENE ONE

A country cafe.

DONALD *sits staring into space.* WOMAN A, *the proprietor, is cleaning up.*

WOMAN A: I have to tell someone. I have these terrible dreams. It's probably these westerlies. I dream about Peter, my husband. Can I tell you? Peter and his brother Phil were crop-dusters. They were doing well. One day Phil's plane clipped some trees on Robie's place and hit their barn. Burnt. The very next week I was getting tea and there was this tearing noise. I went to the back door and stood there as Peter's plane sailed over the house and landed in next door's dam. He was drowned, officially. They always flew so low. Twelve years ago this month. I dream I'm getting tea and it starts to rain. I can hear it on the roof. I know what it is, that's the awful thing. I know, even while I'm dreaming. But I go to the door saying: 'Good. We could do with the rain.' I get to the door and see it's Peter in little pieces falling slowly to the ground.

Silence.

It's very quiet.

DONALD: When was it ever loud here?

WOMAN A: Nineteen fifty-two. Before the bypass. This town was a resort then. The main street was criss-crossed with coloured lights all summer. On New Year's Eve we all stood in the street and held hands and cried like on VE Night.

DONALD: You look very tired.

WOMAN A: Doesn't your mother worry you stay out so late?

DONALD: No.

WOMAN A: Another cuppa chino?

DONALD: No thanks.

WOMAN A: I'm happy to make it.

DONALD: No, really.

WOMAN A: You really don't have to go.

DONALD: I'm happy to stay.

SNAKE *enters.*

SNAKE: Are you open for business or what?

WOMAN A: Yes, my girl. I'm open for business.

SNAKE: Marvellous. [*She goes out and screams.*] It's okay, Dean! She's open for business! [*She comes back in.*] Was this town designed by a moron or what? There's one other milk bar right up the other end of the street and it's closed.

WOMAN A: May I help you?

SNAKE: Where's the shithouse?

WOMAN A: I beg your pardon?

SNAKE: You do have one? Or do you spread it on toast and call it paté? That's what I reckon they do in them coffee shops. Makes you sick, a milk bar's a milk bar.

DEAN *and* ASPRO *enter.*

Sit down, Pro, and annoy this nice young man. This is Aspro. He lives on them. That's our brother Dean. I'm called Snake but my name's Yvonne.

WOMAN A: Can I help any of you young people?

SNAKE: Three cupsa chino. Through here?

SNAKE *goes out, followed by* WOMAN A.

ASPRO: When she turned sixteen Auntie Eileen sent her upstairs with a wharfie. When she came down she said, 'Christ, it was like a snake'. [*He laughs.*] Cuppa chino?

DONALD: Er...

ASPRO: [*shouting to the kitchen*] Make that four! What's your name?

DONALD: Um...

ASPRO: That's unusual. Foreign? Or a nickname? Um short for... Bum. Oo-waaa.

DONALD: Donald.

ASPRO: Um short for Donald, I don't see the connection.

DONALD: Just Donald.

ASPRO: Just Donald? Have you got a complex or something? You must stop running yourself down. Is this the menu?

DONALD: That's right.

ASPRO: I hate plastic. Now let's see. Mmm. Yum.

DEAN: Hot, eh?

DONALD: Sorry.

DEAN: Hot. Don't you reckon?

DONALD: I suppose it is.

DEAN: Good.

He winks at DONALD.

ASPRO: Hey, there's no prices on this menu. Is it all free?

DONALD: Nearly everything's off.

ASPRO: God! Fancy giving away your old food.

DEAN: I wouldn't mind a swim right now.

DONALD: Oh?

DEAN: What do you reckon?

DONALD: Oh, yes.

DEAN: Just strip off. A swim in the raw, eh? Nice?

DONALD: I...

DEAN: Yeah?

He winks again.

ASPRO: I might try the pies. What do you think?

DONALD: Yes.

ASPRO: You had them?

DONALD: Probably.

DEAN: Fuck, it's hot.

ASPRO: I'll give it a go. *Hey! Bring us a pie! Thanks!* Bit quiet. Here.

He turns on a radio full blast. SNAKE comes back.

SNAKE: That's better. You want to go? Aspro? Do you want to go? Turn that off.

ASPRO: Leave it.

SNAKE: Turn it off. Do you want to drive us all crazy or what?

She turns it off.

ASPRO: Just because you hate music.

SNAKE: Shut up. We're on our way to Sydney. Pro was the victim of this terrible accident. He fell under a Randwick bus. He's been going downhill ever since.

ASPRO: My actual brain's not impaired.

SNAKE: He's going to pieces. There's no obvious reason, so there's no cure.

WOMAN A re-enters.

WOMAN A: Four cupsa chino. Pie. Anything else?

DONALD: Umm...