

# FLY GIRL

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***UNSAFE. REG ANSETT'S OFFICE. 1978.***

*The lights come up on REG ANSETT—sixty-nine years old—on a phone in his office. He is talking to FAY in her office, who has him on speaker so she can take notes.*

REG: Whilst it's my personal belief women should not be commercial airline pilots, Mrs Marles, Ansett did not *discriminate* against this woman.

FAY: But, it is your personal belief, Sir Ansett?

REG: They're big machines Mrs Marles, a woman's not strong enough to handle them if, say, the hydraulics fail.

FAY: I didn't realise my survival in an emergency depends on my pilot's musculature.

REG: They must be strong, of course.

FAY: You test for strength then?

REG: ... No.

*FAY notes this.*

FAY: Then how do you determine how strong your pilots are?

REG: It's implied, isn't it?

FAY: Is it?

*Silence.*

Were there other factors that contributed to your rejection of Miss Lawrie?

REG: The Union won't have it.

FAY: You think there'd be industrial action?

REG: I'm sure of it.

*FAY notes that down.*

FAY: And is there anything else you'd like me to take into consideration as I make my decision?

REG: Your decision?

*REG scoffs.*

You can't have someone who goes hysterical once a month fly a plane.

*For a moment, FAY is speechless.*

FAY: 'Hysterical. Once a month?'

REG: During their monthlies.

FAY: I understand the allusion you're making to the female menstrual cycle, Mr Ansett, but what makes you think Deborah Lawrie has any issue with hers? Was that covered in the application?

REG: Don't be stupid.

FAY: I can assure you, Mr Ansett, I'm not stupid. Merely trying to ascertain the facts.

REG: The fact is women shouldn't fly commercial aircraft.

FAY: Why?

REG: It's not safe.

FAY: What is it about women, Mr Ansett, that you find so dangerous?

*Beat. REG hangs up.*

Mr Ansett?

*FAY hangs up. They've got a case.*

***FLY GIRL. ANSETT 747. IN THE GALLEY. 1978.***

*GLENDA stands smoking in the galley of an airplane, on a break after the dinner service.*

BRUCE: [voiceover] Ladies and gentlemen, this is your First Officer, Bruce Woodbridge, speaking. We've reached our cruising altitude of thirty-five-thousand feet. We are anticipating some turbulence up ahead, so please remain seated with your seatbelts fastened. Our cabin crew are available to assist you with any further needs.

*The lights dim. PATRICIA enters, bends down and looks in a low cupboard.*

PATRICIA: Where are all the rice puddings gone?

GLENDA: Those kids in business have had half a dozen each.

PATRICIA: They're the ones asking! Bugger 'em. Can I bum a smoke, Glen?

GLENDA: Sure thing, Pat.

*GLENDA offers PATRICIA her cigarette box. She lights up.*

PATRICIA: What's news?

GLENDIA: Helen started her new job, Monday. Receptionist at an ad company on Collins Street. You were right, they said she had a lovely speaking voice.

MARGARET *comes racing in, conspiratorially.*

MARGARET: Excellent, you're both here, I've got some really good goss.

GLENDIA *hands MARGARET a smoke and lights it.*

Have you heard about the girl trying to fly the plane?

GLENDIA: Which girl?

PATRICIA: What plane?

MARGARET: The girl who wants to be an Ansett pilot.

GLENDIA: That's impossible.

MARGARET: No, she went through the interviews, did all the tests and apparently was as good as any bloke but they rejected her. So she might be taking Reg Ansett to court!

PATRICIA: You don't say?

GLENDIA: My Hayden says girls should keep away from all things mechanical, else they'll get hurt.

PATRICIA: Glenda, Hayden's easy on the eye but he's what the feminists are calling a chauvinist.

MARGARET: That's the second time I've heard that word this week. When we landed in Brissie yesterday, I heard Kerry shout at Captain Spencer, '*You're a male chauvinist pig, Simon!*'

GLENDIA: Was Captain Spencer okay?

PATRICIA: If it was Captain Spencer, he no doubt deserved it.

GLENDIA: I just don't think it's nice to get into name-calling.

MARGARET: He pinched her on the bum!

GLENDIA: A pinch on the bum's part of the job. When it happens to me, I just clench my buttocks and think of a rainforest.

PATRICIA: No offence, Glen, but you need to get onto Gloria Steinem. S-T-E-I-N-E-M. I read an article by her in the *Women's Weekly*. Very illuminating.

GLENDIA: Hayden says I shouldn't read, it'll give me wrinkles.

PATRICIA: Hayden's got a lot of opinions.

MARGARET: He definitely wouldn't be into that girl trying to fly the plane.

GLENDА: Are they going to let her?

*The three women start to sway.*

BRUCE: [voiceover] Ladies and gentlemen, this is your First Officer speaking. We are experiencing some turbulence, please ensure your seatbelts are securely fastened.

*The women, now swaying a little more, expertly put everything not pinned down into the cupboards and drawers.*

MARGARET: Apparently Reg says she'll never be allowed to fly because her period makes her hysterical.

GLENDА: Makes sense. After her thirteenth kid, my nan's periods went all over the shop and *she* went hysterical. They had to give her a lobotomy.

MARGARET: Geez Glen, that's a nightmare!

PATRICIA: I bet all she needed was a bloody nap.

*The turbulence gets so bad they all get into their seats and do up their seatbelts. Click.*

GLENDА: She must be a lesbian.

PATRICIA: Who?

GLENDА: Fly Girl. Coz if lesbians want to be men, they probably want to do men's jobs too.

PATRICIA: Lesbians don't want to be men, darl.

GLENDА: How do you know?

PATRICIA: I'm considering being one myself.

MARGARET: You don't say?

*The turbulence subsides. Beat.*

PATRICIA: Well, I hope she makes it.

GLENDА: Who?

MARGARET: / Fly Girl.

PATRICIA: Fly Girl. I hope they let her fly. Imagine, a woman up there at the front.

*They look to the front of the plane and try to imagine it. Beat.*

MARGARET: Wouldn't that be something.