

TWO CAN

DAVID GOLDON



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A short story
by
David Goldon

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A bright sunrise penetrated through his eyelids, stirring Roman from his comatose state. An icy breeze travelled along his hairless tanned legs, sending a shiver through his body. Slowly opening his eyes, he lifted his head gently from the comfort of his folded arms. Turning away from the brightness of the sunrise, he groaned, noticing the condensation emerge from his breath. He began to feel the rough textured surface of bitumen bite into his bare chest. Dazed and not quite sure where he was, he sat up.

Roman's head was throbbing. He squinted his eyes, surveying his surrounds. Raising a hand to his chest, he brushed off the debris embedded into it. His body shivered as he began to feel the effects of the cold winter morning. Only the warmth emanating from his tight silver PVC shorts prevented hypothermia from setting in. Silver PVC shorts have the added advantage of acting as a thermal blanket while lying face down in the sun he discovered.

Huddling himself into a ball for warmth, he brought his knees into his chest while trying to work out where he was and how he got there. In the distance, the thumping sound of dance music carried on relentlessly competing with the cries of hovering seagulls.

A gust of icy wind blew across the water surrounding the docks. Roman took a deep breath in. Using the last burst of energy he had, he rose slowly to his feet. In the distance, he could make out figures of men and women in winter coats leaving the dance party. Others that weren't sensible enough to use the cloakroom were scantily clad. Walking fast-paced, with their arms wrapped tightly around their chests for warmth making their way home, or to an after party.

Roman walked like a newborn giraffe unsteady on his feet towards the warehouse, which tonight had undergone a metamorphosis into the dance capital of Melbourne.

His feet felt heavy as lead as he took step after each careful step in his black leather ankle length boots, towards the venue.

Utterly exhausted, all he could do was offer a smirk to the unattractive dregs that whistled or called something out to him as he arrived back into the comfort of the warehouse. He sat on the bleachers far away from everybody else. His body began to thaw in the heat of the now sparsely populated warehouse.

He rested his head in his hands staring up at the flashing lights. The pulsating beat of the unfamiliar dance music fuelled his headache. Roman sighed at the thought of lifting his exhausted body up and making his way back home.

He jumped in fright as he felt the grip of strong hands behind him resting on his shoulders, then gently massaging them. With his eyes closed, he revelled in the luxuriating sensation as chills of intense pleasure washed over his body. The hands moved slowly from his shoulders down his muscular back, reaching around feeling his hard-pectoral muscles. Roman felt the breath of the stranger on his neck. The chest of the stranger pressed against Roman's back as hands caressed his legs, then reached up to his crotch. Although Roman felt intense sensations from the touch of this faceless stranger, his crotch was the line that had been crossed. Drawing on the strength he had regained during his rest, he sprang up to his feet. Turning and looking behind him, he saw the stranger with the magic hands, that didn't respect the boundaries. Roman quickly turned back around to face the dance floor, his long, lean legs carefully manoeuvring their way down the bleachers.

On the verge of dry retching upon the sight of the vile thing he allowed to accost him, Roman, with his new-found energy, stealthily made his way outside to find the toilet. He desperately needed to pee.

Roman shielded his eyes from the bright morning light. The air outside was bitterly cold, the portable toilet block, which resembled a caravan from the outside, wasn't far away. Stepping inside, he was overcome by the stench of piss. The floor was wet and muddy.

Fluorescent lighting never does anyone any justice, but Roman couldn't resist having one sneaky peek at himself in a full-length mirror just inside the entrance.

Giving himself a quick glance, he surprised himself with how good he thought he looked. There he stood, a twenty-three-year-old model, large dark almond-shaped eyes, dark hair with a long fringe sitting limply over his forehead. Pecs, six-pack abs from endless workouts at the gym, two layers of fake tan, and there he stood, alone, in a stinking portable toilet block at sunrise. All the extra work he had put into himself to look this good for *the* major dance party of the year and the only attention he received was from a dirty old man. He sighed, wondering if he was destined to live a sad, lonely life.

Making his way to a free urinal, he reached into his PVC shorts and freed his member. The insides of his shorts were wet from sweat; his black G-string didn't fare much better. After he was done, he washed his hands and splashed his chest in a desperate attempt to wash off any imprint that dirty old man may have left on him.

The party was long since over, only the dregs and lonely losers remained, Roman was neither. He'd long outstayed his welcome.

Back inside the warehouse the music slowed, the crowd had dwindled further, it was time to leave.

Roman walked slowly around the dance floor in search of the cloakroom. Glancing around, he wasn't surprised to find the so-called friends he'd arrived with had long since left, without a single goodbye. It probably wasn't their fault, once you lose someone in a crowd of partygoers it's hard to find them again.

Spying the cloakroom, he headed over to it and retrieved his jacket. Having no idea what happened to his singlet and, wishing he'd worn pants over his shorts, he made his way out into the sunlight. Standing on the street, feeling like a hooker, he waited alongside other tired party goers for a taxi to appear.

Finally, a taxi pulled up; he jumped in. The taxi was warm and comfortable. Roman's head fell and immediately shot back up again as he drifted in and out of sleep. To fight off his tiredness until he reached his destination he thought he'd attempt a conversation with the driver.

"Busy night mate?"

The taxi driver of foreign appearance replied with a grunt. Roman rolled his eyes.

"Not much further mate, just a few blocks away now." The driver turned too early into a side street and pulled up alongside a deserted park. "No mate, not here." A confused Roman said.

The driver reached into the compartment of his door pulling out an auburn coloured wig, waving it in front of an alarmed Roman. "You put on; you give me good time, you no pay." The heavily accented driver said as he smiled at Roman.

"No bloody way mate!" Roman yelled at him.

Swiftly opening the taxi door, he got out and slammed the door shut. Walking fast-paced along the footpath, the taxi driver slowly followed him along in his taxi yelling out unintelligible abuse.

To escape the deranged taxi driver Roman double backed running into the park. The taxi driver gave up and sped off down the street.

Making his way through the park to exit from the other side, far away from where he escaped the crazed taxi driver, he noticed an attractive looking guy sitting under a tree. Some children were climbing over the play equipment nearby.

Dressed only in his boots, tiny silver shorts, and a black waist-length jacket, he felt uncomfortable having to walk past them all, dressed the way he was. Putting on a brave face and an air of confidence he walked past the children avoiding eye contact. As he neared the

tree, the attractive guy was anxiously shuffling his phone between his hands; he looked like he had been crying.

"Hey mate, are you okay?" Roman asked.

The guy looked up at him and replied, "Yeah, a mate's picking me up soon I hope."

Roman noticed the muscled hunks eyes travel up and down his body. "I'm Roman, by the way." "Michael," he nodded.

Roman was far too tired to try and pick up this upset looking hunk of spunk. He knew he would've got lucky too, judging by the way Michael was looking at him.

A bright shiny sports car pulled up, and a voice yelled out "Michael!"

Michael feigned a smile at Roman as he rose to his feet from under the tree. "That's my mate Dylan, see you round maybe mate."

Michael was taller and more muscled than Roman expected as he watched him walk over to his mate's car and get inside.

The sun was shining brightly as Roman plodded along in his heavy leather boots the last few steps before reaching his apartment block. Standing at the bottom of the stairwell, he took a deep breath, only two flights of stairs to endure until he'd ditch all his party clothes, have a hot shower, and fall into a deep, much-needed sleep. The stairwell was cold and dark, feeling exhausted he grabbed hold of the railings, pulling himself up the steps one by one.

Finally, there it was, the door to his apartment. He could hear Madonna music pounding away loudly behind the door. Marcus, his flatmate, was a part-time Madonna impersonator, part-time international flight attendant.

Roman reached into his jacket pocket to retrieve his keys his pocket felt deeper than he remembered. As he took the keys out from his pocket, they felt heavier than usual. Looking at them, he realised they weren't his keys. Feeling the outside of the other pocket, it felt like a phone. He had left his phone at home in the rush to leave last night, so it wasn't his. A closer examination of the black jacket confirmed it wasn't his at all, very similar, but not his. That tweaked out guy at the cloakroom had given him the wrong jacket.

"Oh shit!" Roman said to himself.

He clenched his hand into a fist and began banging on the apartment door, hoping Marcus would hear him above the loud music. Thankfully he did, and the door opened.

"Look what the cat dragged in!" Marcus shouted above the music. "For a supermodel of the world you look awful, I didn't think you were coming home!"

Roman, not far from collapsing, staggered to the stereo turning the music all the way down. "Sorry, my head is killing me."

"Sorry, can't talk, took exhausted, need shower, then bed," Roman groaned feeling a sense of relief, he was finally home.

"Did you lose your keys?" Marcus asked him.

Roman held up the keys and jiggled them at Marcus, "I got the wrong jacket, wrong keys, and there's a phone as well. I'm too tired right now to contact the owner; I'll do it later. Right now, I've got to shower and sleep."

"I'm going to head out to lunch; there's a spare key on top of the fridge you can use," Marcus said as he gathered his things and left the apartment.

Roman's ears were ringing, his eyes were burning, and his head was throbbing as he sat on the sofa in the lounge room. Bending over, he unlaced his boots, heaving a sigh of relief as each boot was freed and fell to the ground. Off came the once white socks, he left them with the boots as he made his way into the bathroom.

Dropping the stranger's jacket to the floor, he turned on the tap to the shower, hot steaming water cascaded out.

Removing his shorts and slowly peeling off his uncomfortable G-string, he stepped over the bathtub and under the shower. Finally, he could wash off the night before. Suffering

from exhaustion, he sat in the bath with his legs crossed as the water washed over him. Roman stretched his legs in front of him, opened his mouth, filled it with water and spat it out.

Leaning back luxuriating in the bath, he imagined the beautiful warm water cascading down on him from the shower head was that of a waterfall in a secluded lagoon, set amongst a tropical rainforest. Roman was overcome with a sense of peace and tranquillity as he floated in his imaged lagoon. Closing his eyes, flickers of light appeared changing shapes and colours, much like a kaleidoscope. Basking in the dappled sunlight shining down from the canopy of lush tropical plants above him he felt at home in his new surrounds. Birds merrily chirped fluttering amongst the canopy. Opening his eyes just slightly, he saw a beautiful pair of brightly coloured toucans perched amongst the greenery. He heard a rustling noise emanating from the tropical plants a few metres in front of him; the toucans flew away. Roman wasn't going to allow anything to interrupt this fantasy, so he tried to ignore it until he heard a voice.

"Hi Roman, I'm Viktor." A gentle, soothing voice with a rough sexy timbre came from the distance. Roman fully opened his eyes. Amongst the tropical shrubbery stood a gorgeous looking guy. Dressed in only a loincloth, tanned, toned with a modern blonde quiff of hair, he smiled warmly at Roman.

In a strange accent, he said, "This is nice, I like what you have created here. No one has ever dressed me in a loin cloth before; I like it," he giggled. "But seriously, you can't stay, it's not your time, there are better things to come. Please go back Roman, go back."

Roman's back became uncomfortable like he was lying on something flat and hard. He felt great pressure on his chest. His lungs felt as if they were being blown full of air on their own accord. Coughing hard, he spluttered water out from his mouth. His eyes opened slowly; he recognised the patterned tiles of his bathroom. He could make out the muffled sound of a male voice but couldn't decipher what he was saying.

The face of a young man with dark, soulful eyes gazed into his. Taken aback, Roman sat up. Still coughing as he slowly regained consciousness. The bathroom floor was covered in water overflowing from the bathtub. Roman couldn't make sense of what was unfolding in front of him. *Who's this stranger, what's he doing in my bathroom. What am I doing on the bathroom floor?*

"You're going to be okay; you're going to be okay." The stranger said. Roman slowly orientated himself with his surrounds as he remained seated on the bathroom floor leaning against the bath, wet and naked.

"Wh-What's going on? Who are you?" Roman uttered between coughs.

"I'm Dean," the stranger replied.

"I don't understand, what's going on?" Roman repeated.

"I believe you have my jacket, keys, and phone," Dean said whilst motioning to the now wet black jacket lying on the bathroom floor.

"I've got your jacket. I got your address from the ID in the pocket, and your keys were in the other pocket. I live close by so thought I'd drop by and give you your jacket back. I didn't know you had mine, but there it is."

"Oh, okay, I'm still a bit confused though," Roman coughed.

Dean dragged a towel off from the railing on the wall and handed it to Roman.

Dean rose from the floor; he was wet all over. His simple white t-shirt clung to his well-defined torso; jeans were thoroughly wet from his knees down to his sneakers. Holding his hand out, Roman firmly grasped it as Dean pulled him up to his feet. Roman wrapped the towel around his waist and smiled.

"You okay?"

"Yep, fine I think, what happened?"

"Like I said, I found your address in your jacket pocket and came over to give you your jacket back. As I reached your door, there was water seeping out from underneath it. I knocked and knocked, and there was no answer. So, I used your keys to get in. Following the water, it led me here, I came in and saw you in the bath, underwater. I turned off the shower and dragged you out of the bath onto the floor. You weren't breathing, so I gave you mouth to mouth," Dean explained.

"But I didn't put a plug in the bath." Roman turned and noticed a face washer which must have fallen into the bath blocking the plug hole causing the bath to fill up and overflow. "Oh, right, I see."

Dean bent over and picked up his jacket from the floor; it was dripping wet. He reached into the pocket containing his phone. "Phew, it's still working," he said holding it up.

Bewildered, Roman stood facing Dean surrounded by a flooded bathroom floor, not sure what to do next. Suddenly he realised that the guy standing in front of him just saved his life. "Dean, thanks. You just um, saved my life."

Dean smiled warmly, "You're welcome."

"Sorry, I um," Roman started.

"It's okay, you're still in shock, I understand," Dean reassured him. "Let's get some clothes on you first. I'll begin the mop up, okay?"

Roman was impressed how Dean took charge of the situation. Doing as instructed, Roman went into his bedroom, dried off, slipped into some shorts, and returned to Dean. Roman was gobsmacked at the sight of Dean wearing only boxer shorts, whilst on his hands and knees mopping up water with towels he'd taken from the linen cupboard.

Walking up behind him, Roman noticed a tattoo of a pair of toucans on Dean's right shoulder blade. Immediately he had a flashback to the Amazonian rainforest, the toucan's perched in the tree and the gorgeous blonde guy that appeared as the toucans flew away. He recalled what he was told; it wasn't his time yet, better things are coming, go back.

Roman's breathing became deeper as he swallowed hard. He had an epiphany as his eyes remained fixated on the toucans on Dean's back.

Was it Dean, was Dean the good thing that was going to happen to him? Hearing Roman approaching from behind him as his feet sloshed on the wet carpet, Dean stood up and turned around. Roman experienced palpitations at the sight of Dean's smooth pale skinned swimmers' body, square jaw, and light brown hair. Maybe he had died in the bathtub; Dean was surely too good to be true. "You okay?"

"Couldn't be better."

"Come on then, give me a hand. Two can clean up faster than one."

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This short story serves to introduce you to Dean and Roman who will be making an appearance in an upcoming Engle Byen book. In the meantime, you can check out the others in the series.

[Engle Byen – A Place to Call Home.](#)

[The Road to Engle Byen](#) (This is a prequel to A Place to Call Home).

[Engle Byen Opportunites](#)