

# CUCKOO

Jane Miller

## Characters:

Mel	early 40's
Leo	early 40's
J/Jono	19-21
Dan	late 30's - early 40's

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1.

NOW

MEL & LEO.

*LEO IS MAKING A MODEL OUT OF LEGO.*

*MEL IS USING A LAPTOP*

LEO: They're a cross between...A pug and something a – lier.

MEL: Big eyes-

LEO: Little rippers. Really smart.  
This looks like Big Ben already.

MEL: Big-ish Ben.

LEO: So the guy I was talking to reckons they're pedigree-

MEL: How many pedigree dogs cost two hundred dollars?

LEO: I'm thinking we don't call it Jack or Rex or some doggy name. Let's go for something unique.

Francois or Bergerac? What about Che?

MEL: We're not calling it Che.  
We're not getting a dog.

LEO: We always had dogs when I was kid.

MEL: We never had dogs.

LEO: They're great pets-

MEL: I had a fish.

LEO: We can take it for walks.

MEL: My sister had a budgie named Darcy.

LEO: I hate birds.

MEL: My mother used to hang the cage outside in the sun and one day we came home and the cage was there but Darcy was gone. Next day, we came home and the cage was gone.

LEO: You'd hardly know it was here.

MEL: We had disposable pets.  
How do you spell acknowledgement? With the "e"?

**LEO:** Yes.  
Before you finally say no-

**MEL:** No.

**LEO:** Have I ever told you about my aunt's cat? Great cat.

**MEL:** No.

**LEO:** My aunty had this cat. Ripper of a cat. I'm allergic to cats but this was a top cat . He's tough. He's like a street fighter. He's always coming home with scratches and cuts. One night he turns up with one eye missing.

**MEL:** Why was he out at night?

**LEO:** Couldn't keep him in.  
So he comes home this night and he's got this dirty great rat hanging out of his mouth-

**MEL:** A rat? Or a mouse?

**LEO:** A rat. Almost bigger than he is. And my aunty starts yelling at him and hits him with the broom. Says he's disgusting and whatever. Next thing he takes off and because he's only got one eye, he can't see and he jumps over the fence and the neighbour backs out of their driveway and runs straight over him.

**MEL:** Hurt?

**LEO:** Dead. My aunty was very upset. She made me bury the rat as a tribute to the cat.

**MEL:** Did you bury the cat?

**LEO:** Couldn't. Pretty much had to hose him off the driveway. He was flat like a pancake. Like a cartoon. Had to use a high-pressured hose... Put the rest...The remains...In the rubbish.

**MEL:** Yuck-

**LEO:** The thing is....That cat couldn't be fenced in.  
My aunty cried more over that cat than she did at my uncle's funeral.

**MEL:** Hadn't she already moved her man friend into the spare room?

**LEO:** Not the spare room.

**BEAT**

**MEL:** Not everyone cries at funerals.

**LEO:** No-

**MEL:** Not everyone has to perform every emotion.

**LEO:** I played the violin at my uncle's funeral. Not the same Uncle. Another one.

**MEL:** I didn't know you played the violin.

**LEO:** I played "Polly Wolly Doodle". Only ever had four lessons. When I finished mum jumped up and applauded.

**MEL:** A girl at work plays the ukulele. Since when did the ukulele become a thing?

**LEO:** I think my violin is still in the shed.

**MEL:** We had a farewell baby shower for one of the girls in I.T... Three of them showed up with these Ukuleles and played some baby song.

**LEO:** Or at Mum's.

**MEL:** Something baby something....  
I only stayed 10 minutes-

**LEO:** Who has a baby shower at work?

**MEL:** People spend so much buying gifts. The mother-to-be literally makes out like a bandit.

I was lucky to get a card when I went on maternity leave-

**LEO:** We were robbed.

**BEAT**

How great would it be to have a wagging tail greeting you every night?

**MEL:** What if we wanted to go away?

**LEO:** How often do we go away?

**MEL:** But we could. If we decided to-

**LEO:** We never decide to.

**MEL:** But we could.

**LEO:** Don't say "no", now.

**MEL:** No.

**LEO:** Plenty of time to talk about it. No need to rush. Although two hundred bucks is pretty cheap.

**BEAT**

**LEO:** I can take it on jobs with me.

**MEL:** Your clients will love it. You come to unblock their toilet and your little rat dog pees all over their floor.

**LEO:** He'll be toilet trained.

**MEL:** Leo-

**LEO:** Let's not rush to a decision-

**MEL:** I mean, we could go away.  
There's no reason why not.

**LEO:** Any time. Where? There are hundreds of places.

**MEL:** We could do a walk.

**LEO:** Grampians or something. Tasmania-

**MEL:** A couple of days away would be so nice.

**LEO:** No phone or laptop. Really get away. From everything. Everyone.

**MEL:** Sounds good. Sounds great.

**LEO:** Want me to book something? I'll book something-

**MEL:** Yes.

**LEO:** I'll book.

**MEL:** Yes. Definitely. Do it.

**LEO:** I can't remember the last time we went away. Just the two of us.  
Overnight. When would it have been?

**MEL:** I have no idea. Have we ever done it?

**LEO:** The two of us? Alone?  
I'll definitely book something.

**MEL:** Good. Yes. Let's.

**LEO:** Great.  
Because the thing is...We'd be mad not to do it now. While we can.  
We're free.

**MEL:** Free and easy.

**LEO:** We could do anything.

**MEL:** Anything.

**LEO:** Sometimes. When I'm driving to a job. I think that. I think, "We're completely free".

I think, "I could just drive past this house where this job is. I could just keep driving and end up where I end up."  
Drive for hours. Just end up wherever.

And when I get there. To wherever this is. I'd call you and I'd say "Mel, I'm...." Wherever I am and I'd say, "Come. Now. Just drop everything. Just come"

**MEL:** In the car?

**LEO:** By plane. Or cab.

**MEL:** Free as the wind.

**LEO:** Would you come?

**MEL:** If you did that. If you just drove one day and kept driving for hours and called me. I would. It'd be like an adventure.

**LEO:** I'll do that one day. I'll ring.

**MEL:** Do it.

**LEO:** I will.

**SILENCE**

**MEL:** I don't think that goes there.

**LEO:** You know... I might see if that violin is in the shed.

**MEL:** It's on backwards.

**LEO:** I could take it up again. As a hobby. Get some lessons.

**MEL:** You should.

**LEO :** Do you think I'm too old?

**LEO LOOKS AT THE INSTRUCTIONS. HE MOVES ONE OF THE BLOCKS**

**MEL:** How do you spell "perseverance"? A-n-c-e?

**LEO:** Yes.  
I'd hope I could go beyond "Polly Wolly Doodle".

There was another song, I was learning.... What was it?  
Something, something.... five miles long...Doo da.  
Doo-da.

**MEL:** Something about a race track? Doo da. Doo da.

**LEO:** Doo-da.

**MEL:** Doo-da.

**LEO:** Something, something..... Doo-da.

**MEL:** It's definitely a race track.

**LEO:** Doo-da.

**BEAT**

**LEO:** Could be tomorrow.

**MEL:** What?

**LEO:** When I ring. You could be at work tomorrow and I'll ring.

**MEL:** Tomorrow's Tuesday.

**LEO:** Could be any day. No set day.

**MEL:** I just imagined it would be a Friday.

**LEO:** Tuesday, Friday. Any day. We're flying by the seat of our pants on this one.

**MEL:** Winging it.

**LEO:** Exactly.

**MEL:** That's what we'd be giving up. That type of spontaneity.

**LEO:** Yeah, no... I know.

**MEL:** It's just that pets are such a responsibility. A real tie.

**LEO:** Like a mortgage. Or a kid.

**BEAT**

**LEO:** Did you ever replace the budgie?

**MEL:** No. The cage was gone.

2.

**7 YEARS EARLIER**

**MEL & LEO**

***MEL AND LEO SIT ON THE FLOOR. THERE IS LEGO LITTERED AROUND THEM***

**MEL:** I might leave again. I might not stay. It's not that I won't want to but sometimes I just can't. I can't be here.

**LEO:** I had trouble parking on my way to the job this arvo. That's why I was late home.

**MEL:** I don't want you to get used to me being here.

**LEO:** I drove around and around. Must have been half an hour.

**MEL:** Promise me, Leo. Promise you won't get used to me being here.

**LEO:** I thought about leaving the car somewhere but the parking inspectors are red hot around there.

**MEL:** Promise.

**LEO:** If you get a fine that's your afternoon's work.

**MEL:** I only came back because I thought-

**LEO:** You can't let people down. Can you? Can't make them wait and wait and then not turn up.

**MEL:** What if I'm not here and he comes back?  
What if he's here and I'm not.

**LEO:** You wouldn't have been.

**MEL:** And neither is he.

**LEO:** It was an old lady. This afternoon. The client. The job.  
She had an empty toilet roll stuck in her "S" bend.

**MEL:** I might not stay. I might not be able to stay. You can't get used to it.

**LEO:** I didn't charge her. Poor old thing. She was pretty embarrassed.  
Said she hadn't had a man in her bathroom for 30 years.

**MEL:** Promise me, Leo.

**LEO:** No.



3.

**NOW**

**LEO, MEL & A YOUNG MAN.**  
**HE IS AROUND 19 - 20.**

**LEO:** They just...What...They just drove through the stop sign?

**J:** Thanks for opening the door. A lot of people wouldn't open the door. I could be anyone.

**MEL:** Drink some water. Just sit there for a minute.

**J:** Whose Lego?

**LEO:** So they just hit you? A hit and run? I'll call the cops.

**MEL:** We should call the police or an ambulance.

**J:** They've cut me up pretty bad before.

**LEO:** You know them?

**J:** See. Here. And here

**LEO:** I can't see anything. Where?

**J:** How big's that tv?

**LEO:** I'll call the cops.

**J:** 42 inches? You got Foxtel?

**MEL:** Yes.

**LEO STARTS DIALLING**

**J:** If you call the cops, you may as well put a bullet in my brain.

**LEO:** It'll be okay.

**J:** Put the fucking phone down.  
Please.

I'm not going to rob you or anything.

**LEO PUTS THE PHONE DOWN**

Whose Lego?

**LEO:** Where's your bike helmet?

**J:** Don't know. They took it.

**LEO:** What about the bike?

**J:** Took that too.  
**MEL:** Can we take you to the doctor?  
**J:** No. Can't risk it.  
Can I have a Band-Aid?

***MEL GOES TO GET A BAND-AID***

**LEO:** What sort of bike was it?  
**J:** Why? Do you know about bikes?  
**LEO:** No.  
**J:** It's blue.  
It has a bell. And a flag.  
**LEO:** A mountain bike or a racer-

***MEL HANDS J THE BAND AID***

**J:** Can you put it on me? I can't see where.  
**LEO:** There's nothing there.  
**J:** It's there. Just above my eye. Could have lost that eye.  
**LEO:** How?  
**J:** How many channels have you got?  
**MEL:** Too many.  
**LEO:** What's too many?  
How did you hurt your eye?  
**J:** Maybe when I was hit by a moving car.  
**LEO:** Did you hit your head? Because if you-  
**MEL:** We should definitely take you to a doctor or call an ambulance.  
**J:** Just put it there. See. Just above my eyebrow.

***MEL PUTS THE BAND AID ON***

**LEO:** I can't see a mark on you. Can't see where you almost lost an eye.  
**J:** No, well there's a Band-Aid covering it now isn't there?  
**MEL:** Leo, it doesn't matter.  
**J:** What doesn't matter? Don't you believe me? You put the band aid on. If there wasn't anything there why'd you put it on? If I'm such a liar, why did you waste a Band-Aid on me?

**MEL:** What's your name?

**J:** Could I have some toast?

**LEO:** So these guys....Ran through a stop sign, hit you and then they got out of the car, stepped over you and knocked off your helmet. And your bike with a bell and a flag?

**J:** Can I watch something on Foxtel?

**LEO:** There's not a mark on you.

**J:** Whose Lego is that?

**MEL:** What do you want on your toast?

**LEO:** Mel.

**J:** Peanut butter.

**MEL:** I don't know if we have any.

**J:** You allergic?

**LEO:** Don't tell him anything more.

**J:** Don't be ashamed of it. I'm allergic to eggs.

**MEL:** So is Leo.

**LEO:** Mel.

**J:** Whose Lego is that?

**LEO:** Mel, go and see if the bike's there.

**J:** Are you going to hurt me? While we're alone? While she's out of the room. I mean you could be anyone. I just knocked on the door and you answered.

**MEL:** I'll just go to the gate.

**MEL LEAVES THE ROOM**

**J:** Don't leave me here alone with him

**LEO:** I'm not going to hurt you.

**J:** You could bash me.

**LEO:** I'm not going to bash you. I was going to call the cops.

**J:** But you didn't. Did you?

**J:** Whose Lego is it?

**LEO:** Forget about the Lego.

**J:** Can you get my toast?  
**LEO:** You're not having toast.  
**J:** I haven't eaten for days.  
**LEO:** Why not?  
**J:** Can I change the channel?  
**LEO:** No.

**MEL ENTERS**

**MEL:** I couldn't see a bike.  
**J:** Can I have some toast?  
**MEL:** I'll get some toast.  
**LEO:** We're not getting toast.  
**J:** Where are your kids?  
**LEO:** That's it.  
**J:** You haven't got kids. Have you? Or have you?  
**LEO:** That's none of your business.  
**J:** Whose Lego?  
**LEO:** I'm warning you-  
**MEL:** It's Leo's.  
**J:** You know who I am don't you? He doesn't but you do.  
**LEO:** What are you talking about?  
**J:** Me.  
**MEL:** No.  
**J:** Yes, you do. I'm the right age and everything.  
**MEL:** No.  
**J:** That's probably what you thought as soon as I came in.  
**LEO:** What are you saying? What is he saying?  
**J:** You know who I am.  
I know you do. You do.  
Why else would I come here? In the middle of the night?  
I could knock on any door.