



**And  
before  
love -  
there  
must  
be  
Trust**

“Does it bother you that your own people resent you so much?” I asked Goomblar. “Do you resent them right back?”

“To those who criticise me, for playing at Echo Point and now for having my show, I pay no attention, it doesn’t bother me. And believe me, they can be vicious... Even in jail I didn’t have people coming at me like that.

“The jail was full of us, sorry Aboriginal buggers, and that got me thinking. I thought this ain’t right, we can pick ourselves up, and came up with the idea of starting some groups, singing and dancing, talk about our tradition, find some pride again.

“And Bob Debus, the politician, he helped me a lot, he liked the idea, and I was quite happy with those groups. See, I tried to help my own people, make them find some interest, involve them in something within our own culture, but they are just too lazy even for that, what can you do?

“I tell them if you want to educate the white folk, you can

do it through entertainment, you don't need to come down on them with all that anger, punching the air with your fist, accusing them over what happened 200 years ago, demanding respect. They'll respect us once we start respecting ourselves, and living on welfare is not really a show of self-respect.

"I think love can grow out of respect. You cannot have others' respect if you don't respect yourself. If Aboriginal people had more self-respect, white people would respect them more, and grow to like us, or to love our culture.

"But as things are today, it's hard to expect. We all talk about reconciliation, but keep looking for faults."

"Speak for yourself," I said, smugly.

"Just wait and see, they'll come down on you too, just for talking to me. You'll be a target for both Aboriginal people and whitefellas here in the Mountains. My mob will say I have no right to talk, as I'm not a Darug man. My mob will say you have no right to write about Aboriginal people, as you are not one of us.

"Your mob will say you have no right to do it just like this, with the two of us talking, you have to set up a reference group, get an advisory committee, consult a thousand different people and make sure everybody is happy with what you are saying. With this political correctness crap, they'll tell you you must follow some procedure and ask you to have a hundred people telling you what to do, demanding you only say bland things so no-one will get upset, they'll drive you mad.

"See, now it's all about rights. We were denied any rights for too long, and now that we've got a taste of what it feels to have some power, to decide or to voice our opinion, we don't know what to do with it or how to use it, so even though we do have the right to talk now there is that idea about only certain people having the right to talk about this or that and no tribe has the right to talk about any other tribe, you see what I'm saying? We had no rights, and now that

the Government has given us some rights, we deny them to ourselves, because we simply don't know what to say.

"Here in the Mountains, you'll find a weird community... They like to say this is an area with lots of creative people, many artists and writers, and they want you to believe they are open-minded and welcoming. As a matter of fact, they are a lazy, narrow-minded mob, both the blacks and the whites.

"They come up with weird theories, like everything should be 'natural, spontaneous, instinctive expression', 'rules limit the artist', the artist should be free, what a joke!

"I cannot teach the kids to dance unless they are willing to follow some rules, learn the steps, keep repeating them, practise, day after day, until I tell them they are good enough to perform. The same goes for the didge, it takes years to master it, imagine saying it should 'come naturally', 'just let it happen'... But a lot of people in the Mountains take pride in having no self-discipline, have you noticed?"

"Well, I know quite a few people, in the Mountains, who are dedicated to their craft, and ones with a high work ethics," I said, playing the devil's advocate.

"Okay, but how many? In general, they are a lazy, disrespectful mob. Would you trust them? Have they earned your trust?"

"I know that cliché all too well," I said, remembering my own encounters with distrustful people.

"Most people seem to live by that motto, unable to trust anyone until they 'earn' that trust.

"I met a bloke some time ago, here in the Mountains, wretchedly unhappy, who kept repeating that same phrase, justifying his mistrust by claiming he'd been burnt, taken for a ride, let down, cheated... Who hasn't, I said, everyone has had bad experiences, show me one person who hasn't been disappointed. He could have had a wonderful future, if only he'd shown some trust. But his life is so unhappy, he's now a bitter man, suspicious and paranoid, trusts no-one, I don't

know how anyone would even have a chance to earn his trust, when his mind is so set on the belief that everyone is trying to trick him. To me, his unhappiness is a confirmation that I chose a good rule to live by."

"What rule is that? In your, say, Law, huh?"

"Yeah, right, rule number one of Vesna's Law: Trust until the trust is broken. Just the opposite from that guy. He trusts no-one until they earn it. I trust everyone until they lose it. My trust, I mean."

"What, you don't give people a second chance? If they let you down, do you forgive?"

"Goomblar, this is not about me, it's about you."

"Why are you suddenly clamming up, you have a problem with forgiveness? One strike and they are out sort of thing?"

"I'd say three strikes would be more like it, ha, ha. Let me put it this way: initial trust should be pure, no apprehension, no fear, no suspicion. I trust you, you trust me; I trust you are a good person, your intentions are good, you are not trying to deceive me... that's my starting point. You break the trust, go back on a promise, lie to me... and if you then regret it, should I say okay, that's fine, I trust you still, let's try again? Can broken trust be fixed? With another chance?"

"Everything can be fixed."

"Perhaps, but with some strings attached. Even the third time, but with even more strings attached, so the trust-breakers would have a chance to redeem themselves."

"Everyone makes mistakes."

"Sure, we all do. Someone makes a mistake, that's fine, it happens. They repeat the same mistake, it's a worrying thing, but we can still make excuses and find reasons, some justification like circumstances, things beyond that person's control, another stroke of bad luck. The third time, I don't think so, it shows a pattern of behaviour, and patterns are too difficult to change, like grooves in stone."

“I would think if the *will to trust* is the number one rule in Vesna’s Law, that’s what should be set in stone, no?”

I looked at Goomblar, surprised again; sometimes he’d amaze me with a most unexpected insight.

Yes, I thought, that’s how it should be. And I knew that’s exactly what the Wanjinās represent—the Ideas of justice and truth, love and trust, all set in stone.