

Book Three. Hidden scandals

Chapter 1: Turbulence and Tactics

Scene 1: The Tail Thumps

The scandal broke quietly at first. A small article tucked into the back pages of The Cockatoo Chronicle whispered accusations of favoritism within the Transport Ministry. By midday, the whispers had turned into a cacophony of squawks as every media outlet picked up the story. Minister Glenda Glide, once lauded for her innovative transport solutions, was suddenly in the eye of a storm.



Kangaroo Prime Minister Iva Hoppit sat behind her desk in her lush, eucalyptus-scented office, her tail drumming a steady beat of annoyance against the polished wooden floor. The day's headlines were spread before her like a battlefield, and she eyed them with the steely determination of a marsupial used to hopping out of tight spots.



Freddy Fringe, her no-nonsense frilled lizard Chief of Staff, stood by the desk with a stack of reports clutched in his scaly claws. His frill twitched like a faulty ceiling fan. "We've got a problem, Iva. And by problem, I mean a media frenzy so big it's got its own weather pattern. "Protected airline routes, first-class tickets—it's bad, Iva "



"It's only a problem," Iva said, her voice as smooth as a freshly paved road, "if we let it stick. Glenda's a liability right now, yes, Iva leaned back, her ears twitching thoughtfully. "It's only bad if we let it stick," she said. "Glenda's a problem, yes, but she's our problem. I'm not going to let this ruin us when the election's around the corner."

Freddy arched a brow. "And by us, I assume you mean you? I heard about your dinner with the airline's CEO last week. Cozy, wasn't it?"

Iva shot him a sharp look but didn't deny it. "Let's focus on what matters. We'll announce an investigation, make it sound serious. One of those... what do you call them?"

"A kangaroo court

"Funny," Iva said with a tight smile. "No, something official-sounding. Fill the panel with our people, release a statement about transparency, and buy us time. As for Glenda..."

"She's glowing like a bonfire right now," Freddy interrupted. "You want her gone? Iva leaned back, her claws tapping rhythmically on the desk. "Not gone. On vacation. Somewhere remote, where she can't make things worse. Tell her it's for her own good."

Scene 2: Glenda in Exile

High in a eucalyptus tree, Transport Minister Glenda Glide perched with a flask of lukewarm gum leaf tea. Her hideaway was deep in the bush, far from reporters, cameras, and judgmental wombats. But peace was elusive; her phone buzzed incessantly.

“This is ridiculous, Iva,” Glenda squawked into the receiver, her feathers ruffled with indignation. “Those first-class tickets weren’t personal—they were inspection tours! I’ve got paperwork to prove it.”

On the other end, Iva’s voice was as soothing as a mother kangaroo’s pouch. “Of course, Glenda. I know. But you’ve seen the headlines. Perception is everything. Take a break, let the heat die down, and when you return, we’ll have it all under control “And if I don’t?” Glenda asked, narrowing her eyes at the treetop horizon.

“Then the media will roast you faster than a bilby at a barbecue,” Iva replied sweetly. “Trust me, Glenda. This is for the best.”

Glenda sighed and hung up. “Trust her,” she muttered to the empty forest. “As if I have a choice.”



Scene 3: Cockatoo in Command

The next day, the Cockatoo Media Spokesbird Norma Loud took center stage at a packed press conference. With her dazzling yellow crest angled for maximum drama, she surveyed the room like a general before battle.

“The government takes these allegations seriously,” she squawked, her voice rising above the cacophony of reporters. “An internal review is underway to ensure transparency and accountability. Minister Glide has voluntarily taken leave to allow for an impartial investigation.” A bold possum reporter from the Marsupial Gazette piped up, “What about the first-class tickets? Rumor has it they were used for family vacations.”



The Cockatoo fluffed her feathers with theatrical indignation. “Baseless rumors! The minister’s travels were entirely work-related. Now, if you’ll excuse me, no further comments!” She snapped her beak shut and strutted off, leaving the press squawking louder than a flock of lorikeets.

In the shadows, Dingo Opposition Leader Norman Bushytail ground his teeth. "They're sweeping this under the rug," he growled to his echidna advisor. "But we're not letting it go. Draft a statement. Something sharp. Something with bite."



Scene 4: Dinner with Intent

That evening, Iva Hoppit dined under dim candlelight Qantas CEO Cecil Bumble, as he raised his glass of sparkling wattleseed wine and exclaimed "To partnerships that soar above the clouds," he cooed. Iva clinked her glass to his, a sly smile playing on her lips. "And to keeping the skies clear of pesky competitors. I trust you'll remember who made that possible?"



Cecil's grin widened. "Of course, Prime Minister. And when the time comes, there's always a place for someone of your... talents in our executive team."

Iva leaned back, her tail flicking lazily. The scandal might have singed her fur, but she knew how to play the long game.

Scene 5: Distraction Tactics

As the days passed, the government's distraction campaign went into overdrive. The Cockatoo Media Spokesbird chirped endlessly about new infrastructure projects and wildlife sanctuaries. A bold plan to install koala-friendly skybridges across the highways captured public imagination.

Meanwhile, Wombat Environmentalist Willy Waitree muttered to himself in a dim corner of Parliament. "The roots of corruption run deeper than any burrow," he said, gnawing on a pencil. But his words fell on deaf ears as the nation, dazzled by shiny promises, looked the other way.



****Closing Thoughts: The Facade Holds...**

For Prime Minister Iva Hoppit leaned back in her office, watching the evening news with satisfaction. Glenda was hidden, the media had moved on, and her political facade remained intact. For now.

But in the distance, a wiry Dingo sharpened his claws, ready to pounce on the next misstep.

Opposition Leader, Norman Bushytale leaned over his desk, the weight of the documents in front of him heavy with implications. His assistant, Beatrix, placed another folder beside him.

"This is what you were looking for," she said. "The first-class tickets—dozens of them—linked directly to Transport Minister Glenda Glide. They were for friends and family, disguised as work-related travel. And here's the kicker—the refunds only happened after the scandal broke.



"Dingo flipped through the documents. "Quintas laid off hundreds of workers—using Job Keeper as a shield—while accepting millions in government relief. And then there's the first-class ticket fiasco...only reimbursed after the public found out. They took taxpayer money, while the airline was gouging its customers."

The next day, Norman Bushytail the opposition leader stood in Parliament, his voice echoing through the chamber. "Prime Minister Hoppit, how do you justify covering for your Transport Minister, who used first-class tickets for personal favors? The refunds only came after public scrutiny. This is no coincidence—it's a cover-up."

Iva rose with practiced poise. "Opposition Leader, the government supports its ministers in their official duties. Mistakes may have been made, but the refunds were processed as part of standard procedures. To suggest otherwise is baseless."

Normans tone sharpened. “Baseless? The public demanded answers, and only then were the refunds issued. This reeks of political interference, Prime Minister. And you were complicit

The morning after this heated exchange, the media erupted with a new twist: Cecil Bumble , CEO of Qantas , had resigned. His departure followed mounting pressure from the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC), which was seeking a record \$250 million penalty over misleading conduct—selling tickets for flights already canceled.

The timing was damning. The scandal surrounding Qantas’ handling of COVID-19-era flight credits, coupled with revelations about the Transport Minister’s misuse of first-class tickets, shook public trust in both the airline and the government.

The inquiry findings, released amidst growing public anger, centered on Qantas ’ handling of canceled flight refunds and the layoffs of hundreds of baggage workers despite receiving substantial government aid under JobKeeper. The ACCC confirmed that Qantas had engaged in deceptive practices, selling tickets for flights already canceled and delaying refunds to passengers.

The report highlighted a pattern of disregard for both customers and employees. “While receiving taxpayer-funded support designed to preserve jobs, Qantas proceeded with

cost-cutting measures, including widespread layoffs. This contradicted the intent of the Job Keeper program,” the inquiry stated.

Though the Transport Minister’s misuse of first-class tickets was not the focus of the ACCC investigation, the inquiry findings added to the perception of a government deeply entangled in Qantas’ failings.

Prime Minister Iva Hoppit’s office faced mounting criticism for attempting to shield the Transport Minister and delay public acknowledgment of the ticket scandal

Back in Parliament, Norman pressed harder. “Prime Minister, the Transport Minister may have been at the center of this scandal, but you facilitated the cover-up. The inquiry is clear—you delayed refunds until public pressure forced your hand. This isn’t just negligence; it’s corruption. Resign.”

Hoppit, her composure slipping, rose slowly. “I have always acted in the national interest. The airline’s actions are regrettable, and I take full responsibility for ensuring accountability moving forward. However, it is clear that my leadership has become a distraction. I will step down to allow for new leadership.”

Her resignation, though delivered with calculated grace, was overshadowed by the inquiry's findings. What might have been a dignified exit now carried the weight of public betrayal

In his office, Norman reviewed the fallout. "She orchestrated a cover-up to protect her minister and herself. And yet, she still gets to step down as if it's her choice."

Beatrix sighed. "At least she's out. But the damage is done—to the government, Quaintas, and public trust."

Quaintas faced the brunt of the legal and public backlash, while Hoppit's plans for a cozy Quaintas role disintegrated in the wake of Cecil's resignation. For Norman, the victory felt incomplete—justice had been served, but accountability had come too late.

Dingo's eyes narrowed. "It's a scandal, and we can prove it." The next day, Dingo stood before the government, eyes fixed on Prime Minister Iva Hoppit. The chamber fell into a tense silence.

"Prime Minister," Dingo began, his voice cutting through the room, "how do you justify allowing Quaintas to lay off workers while they pocketed government subsidies under Job Keeper? And the first-class tickets—why reimburse only after the public outcry?"

PM. Hoppit rose, her composure unwavering. "Opposition Leader Dingo, we have always acted in the national interest. The relief programs were designed to support Australian businesses during difficult times. If Qantas made mistakes, they will address them." The opposition leaders voice hardened. "That's not enough. You've turned a blind eye while Qantas exploited every loophole."

The very next morning, the media exploded. Cecil Bumble CEO of Qantas, announced his resignation, citing the fallout from the first-class ticket scandal and ongoing legal action from the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC), which was seeking a record penalty of over \$250 million.

The announcement came as the airline was reeling from public backlash. The ACCC's legal actions, combined with Qantas' poor handling of COVID-19-era flight credits and their record profits amid a cost-of-living crisis, ignited widespread outrage. Cecil's resignation felt inevitable—yet no one expected the scale of the repercussions.

A government inquiry into Qantas soon released its findings, confirming the airline's misuse of government relief programs. The ACCC's investigation revealed violations of consumer protection laws, including failure to promptly issue refunds and layoffs inconsistent with the intent of Job Keeper

The report was damning: Quaintas had exploited taxpayer funds, breached consumer trust, and benefited from anti-competitive practices. The airline now faced severe financial penalties and an irreparably tarnished reputation.

In Parliament, Norman seized the moment. “Prime Minister the Quaintas CEO has resigned, the inquiry has ruled against the airline, and your complicity is evident. How can you remain in office?”

Iva stood, her calm exterior cracking. “I’ve always acted in the national interest, and while Quaintas actions are regrettable, they are addressing the concerns. That said, I recognize the need for new leadership.”

Her resignation was calculated—an attempt to escape accountability while angling for a future role within Quaintas, But Joyce’s resignation and the inquiry’s damning findings shattered her plans. What once seemed like a lifeline had evaporated

Weeks later, in his office, Norman sat with Beatrix, his victory hollow. “She’s done it again,” he muttered. “Stepped down to dodge accountability, but I doubt this is the last we’ll see of her.” Beatrix nodded. “She’s out of politics, but her ties to Quaintas won’t disappear. The public won’t forget.”

Meanwhile, Quaintas braced for a reckoning as the fallout from the inquiry continued. For Prime Minister Iva Hoppit, the dream of a cushy post-Quaintas career was gone. For Norman , the fight for justice was far from over.