

another pSecret pSociety pshort pstory



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by Mike Bozart

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Keith Sapsford, a 14-year-old, rambunctious, hyper-adventurous, wanderlust-filled Australian lad, has just slipped through a gap in the chain-link construction fence on the perimeter of the nearing-completion international terminal at Sydney Kingsford Smith Airport. It is the early morning of February 24, 1970. And, Keith has run away yet again; this time he has absconded from a troubled-youth facility.

The daring adolescent spies a Japan Airlines DC-8 docked at the existing terminal and dashes towards it. He crouches and darts under the right wing in the predawn dim light. Once at the wheel well, he looks up. *That's plenty big enough. I can easily fit in there. No problem.*

Keith then hops on one of the large tires and climbs up the main landing-gear column. He uses a strut to get his body into the four-wheel storage compartment. Amazingly, his stowaway maneuver goes unnoticed.

Once ensconced in a snug yet tolerable position, he awaits takeoff for Tokyo. Keith hears the sounds of luggage being loaded into the cargo hold. And then, a baggage handler almost spots him. *Whew! That was way too close. Need to reposition myself. Need to get completely out of their sight.*

Keith leans back some more, so that none of the airport's runway workers can possibly see him in the wheel well. But, he still feels anxious. His mind races. *Must not be seen. Must not get arrested. Have already got into enough trouble. Wonder when this plane leaves. Should I really do this? How safe – or unsafe – is this? What to do when the plane lands in Tokyo? Oh, just figure it out upon arrival. Will need to get food and drink soon after landing. Will have to enter a store or restaurant. Hope I have enough money. Do they take Australian dollars? Maybe just catch the next flight back.*

Thirteen long minutes later, Keith hears the cargo doors being slammed shut. Then he hears the four jet engines coming to life. The pilot revs them for nine screaming seconds. It is extremely loud. *Hope it's not this loud the whole way. Might go deaf. Darn! Should have brought earplugs. Those old earmuffs would have been perfect. Wonder how cold it will be. Probably should have brought gloves, too. Oh well, it's too late now.*

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