

## Hand Luggage Only: Beatrice Yell

The invitation took me by surprise. My son in Queensland offered to fly me there to visit him and his daughter, now nine.

After a messy divorce, he has occasional custody and after Covid restrictions eased, she wanted to see me again.

Just before I went to the airport, I re-read the ticket which stated in faint print HAND LUGGAGE ONLY. Yikes! I threw out half the things in my suitcase and squeezed them into a backpack before rushing off.

My only Nanna experience has been with my three grandsons, with whom I've bonded from birth. Now two are teenagers and the youngest is older than Mika. The boys love animals, swimming, sailing, cricket, soccer and golf. Tennis is the least energetic sport they indulge in.

Used to three very active boys, living on a lake and owning kayaks, paddle boards, sailboats and now a runabout with an outboard motor, I knew I'd find it hard to connect with a small girl with no active pursuits, mostly glued to her Tablet. The only thing they have in common is owning a dog. From my limited observation, boys and girls have very little in common, which is why, in the teens, the opposite sex seems to have landed from a distant planet.

At the airports my luggage wasn't even weighed, nor was my vaccination status checked. The plane was packed with holidaymakers all determined to get seriously sunburnt on Surfer's Paradise beach.

When we left Sydney it was hot and sticky, but the Gold Coast was much hotter and unbelievably humid – probably 98% humidity. I felt like an old dishrag the whole time, despite Mike's large house in the Hinterland with air conditioning and fans everywhere.

The dainty necklace and matching bracelet I brought delighted Mika; an inspired choice. She is a shy, sweet girl and we played games and hide and seek.

Sometimes I pretended there was a mouse under the table nibbling her toes. Next thing her little fingers were in my hand; such fun! Giving her lots of hugs and love she was apparently not getting at home felt good. Some things money simply can't buy.

Mike has asked me to come back. So maybe around Easter, if the Premier allows me to visit, I'll head up there, with tennis racquets.

Watch out Annastacia!

