

Greg VIII
by
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Greg and Sarah Johnson are in their mid thirties. They are in a warm coloured living room, relaxing on a sofa in peace and quiet. Mr. Johnson's body language is by far the more dominant of the two. It's as if he's saying 'everything I do is right'. Making that interpretation even stronger is his shirt with an angry face and 'comply' written on it. He stretches out a little further, as what he is about to say is particularly important to him: 'Enough about taking time off work to raise our baby, what are we going to call him?' Sarah responds 'I like Jame...' Greg quickly interrupts: 'No! Greg, we'll call it Greg. My name's Greg, my father's name was Greg, his father's name was Greg, so our baby will also be called Greg'. Sarah agrees: 'Sure. Ok. Well call him Greg the Eighth.' Greg is more than pleased: 'Perfect. That was quick'.

It's twenty years later and a punky, colourful and rebellious looking Greg VIII (maybe deep down he is rebelling against his crappy name) is strolling through a shopping complex, with lots of escalators, high quality bins and such. This may be surprising to you later on in the tale, but he is actually browsing establishments that are completely normal: Games shops, music shops, etc. In the latter, he takes a peak at artists such as Bjork. Ok, THAT was weird. Not crazy, though. He buys the girly pop star's work so he can bop to classic 90s disco stuff, later on.

Greg leaves with a spring in his step. He then notices a chatting group of typical teenagers have since gathered outside the shop. In their reassuring yellow clothes and other friendly colours, they are admiring the numerous CCTV cameras, and feel so safe because of them. Of course, all a killer has to do is hide his weapon, but that doesn't matter. Despite their amiable appearance, the effeminate music shopper immediately picks out a rather sinister phrase in their conversation. It was something like 'where are we going to con Greg VIII'. Greg feels a wave of terror going through his body. He freezes like a stone. They are going to rip him off? But why? The poor young man didn't even recognise them. How could they treat him so badly if he didn't do a thing to them?

After a few peaceful, if not blissful moments of thinking 'this can't be real', Greg panics inside for a second time. Now the gravity of the situation has been fully processed, he shakes like a leaf. He limps away, then builds to a fast, wonky stroll. He has to get out of the centre, ASAP. Finally he is in the unappreciated open, parkland air and his thoughts are still racing. He says to himself 'Bjork will make me all better', and that is understandable. She's very calming. Wussy as as hell, but that's not important at this point. In a cruel twist of fate, he overhears a group of OAPs also mentioning the apparent phrase 'con Greg VIII', so he has to sprint and get the hell away from them. Even sweet old ladies are against him?? Dear God.

In the (relative) comfort of his angry red and black painted bedroom (deliberately designed to deter thieves), Greg is laying on his bed with skulls on it. He puts, or rather jabs the newly bought Icelandic artist's work into his CD player, but he unsurprisingly isn't in the mood for bopping to her. More like escaping to her. He thinks to himself for the thousandth time now 'has the world gone nuts?? Why does everyone want to con me? Everyone is insane! Completely loopy! It's not exactly like I'm rich. What are they expecting to get from me??' He turns off the music and switches on the TV, perhaps subconsciously to relax. (Apparently the frame rate of such devices calms people down, or something. I wasn't really listening to the explanation when I got one).

Shock horror! In a million to one chance, here's what the program is saying: 'we will all be con Greg VIII-ing down to the pub to celebrate th...' A traumatised Greg switches the telebox off in dread. Desperate to distract himself in a way that will hopefully actually work this time, he pulls his mobile phone from his pocket and checks his emails. One of them reads 'Greg... Why the hell did you run out of the shopping centre, screaming 'noooooo'', and more alarmingly, one of the messages is very suspicious spam. It reads 'give me your bank account details, we need it. This is NOT a con!' Greg is not a complete idiot, he has no intention of replying to the message whatsoever. However, it has justified his concerns about getting well and truly screwed over.

With a surprising amount of courage, the 20 year old pulls himself together, smashes the TV with his phone, puts his phone in his pocket again, and leaves the house. He rambles through the commercial streets, trying to clear his mind and it works to an extent - now that he has practiced doing so. That is until he spots his friends in the distance, leaning against a shop and checking out the bins. Interestingly, they have a different shape than usual. He would usually say 'hello' to them, but his paranoia is getting the best of him. He hides behind a parked car and listens, hard... Here's what they say: 'I'm really worried about Greg, I heard he called an OAP a criminal'. 'That's just classic Greg being whacky'. 'Of course. Anyway, it's such a nice day, today. We should go somewhere really nice. Maybe we could con Greg VIII at the local ice rink...' Even his friends are trying to get close to him to exploit him?!?!?

If he wasn't scared before, he certainly is now. He has to get out of town, but not before running passed his chums and shouting 'leave me credit card details alone!!!'. As he legs it away from them, he faintly hears 'ok... NOW I'm worried about him...' He runs through parklands and past ponds whilst accusing the ducks of being 'traitors' before finally making it to the local train station. He bursts through the waiting area doors, where he sees the ticket seller behind a very reassuring (for him) thick layer of toughened glass.

Through its gaps, the employee asks the clearly distressed Greg if he is ok, before asking him 'where are you planning to congregate, today.' 'Which Greg are you talking about', Greg asks, nervously. 'What do you mean?' asks the worker. 'Which Greg are you talking about, I don't know another Greg VIII. Why do you want me to con him?' 'You what?' 'Why do you want me to con Greg? It's a perfectly simple question to understand. Why are you messing with me like this?' 'You do know what congregate means, don't you?' 'Yes. Con Greg VIII'.

The ticket guy gives a nervous smile: 'I don't mean to embarrass you, but congregate means 'to meet up'. Greg is stunned, to put it mildly. He's gobsmacked. Confuddled: '... What?...' 'Can I ask what your name is please? Do you have a carer?' 'My name is Greg VIII.' 'To be clear, when I asked where you wanted to congregate, you believed I was asking you where you were going to con another person called Greg VIII?' 'Yip'. 'Well, the good news is you don't have to worry, anymore. However, you seem to have had a nervous breakdown.' 'Wow... Just Wow. All this time I was imagining people were after me. That has really... that has really... Wow. I have some serious explaining to do. Bye!' 'Errrrrr... Bye...'

Before setting off, Greg picks his mobile from his pocket, dials a number and waits. He then says 'sorry for accusing you of wanting my credit card details, you're not going to BELIEVE the reason I said that to you... You know my name is Greg VIII? Well, when I heard you talking about CONGREGATING, I assumed that meant you wanted to con me! L.O.L.! Anyway, want to go for a burger later?... No?... Well, laterz...' Greg opens up to the ticket guy and says 'I think it's best to give this sort of thing time, don't you?' 'Yes, I do think that. Off you go... Please...' Greg ambles away with a new appreciation for life. As he walks, he phones a different friend. 'Hey, man, I've had the most crazy day. Can you please explain to everyone that I'm not mental anymore, please?... Right! Everyone DOES make mistakes! Thank you!... No I'm not hearing voices... No I don't think I'm truly crazy, either... Whacky is a great word to describe me... Yes, we totally should congregate some time! Bye!' Greg strolls back to his house. It's time to celebrate with some mellow Bjork!