

The Adventures of Red Dog & Bat Devil



5. Bald Bob

The boys were rolling up their swags at first light. Bat boasted "I won't need an afternoon nap today." This was met with a resounding cheer from everyone. They fuelled up at the big BP on the corner, Red bought himself a newspaper and then they set off, heading into the rising sun.

Dog found a clever dude in the caravan park to transfer their new riding song, Highway Heaven, onto his IPOD. When they arrived at Balladonia, he knew that song off by heart and couldn't stop himself from singing it.

*Ride on easy, ride on fast,
Highway juke box, future and past.
I'm living it here and now, the bike and me alone
On the edge, in the wild, king of the road.*

Dog dared to show his ignorance and asked Red "what's a highway juke box?" Clever Red replied, "I guess it's whatever you want it to be!"

They rode on until the shadows grew long, then they set up camp on a cliff top overlooking the Great Australian Bight. The chairs were untied this time! Red settled into reading his newspaper. The others amused themselves drinking lager, munching potato chips and watching an army of ants carry the crumbs away. In the distance was a lone camper, also on a bike. He was sitting on a small camp stool with his back turned and he appeared to be wearing white overalls. "We'll wander over and say hello" said Red, "just give me five minutes."

The newspaper read:

Bald Bob strikes again

Bald Bob, who hasn't been seen for many years, is believed to be responsible for last week's theft of a Ferrari owned by Max Master. Bald Bob's tell tale message was left on a torn piece of paper and taped to Mr Master's garage door. The note read: "I apologise for any inconvenience I may have caused you. Yours, Bald Bob."

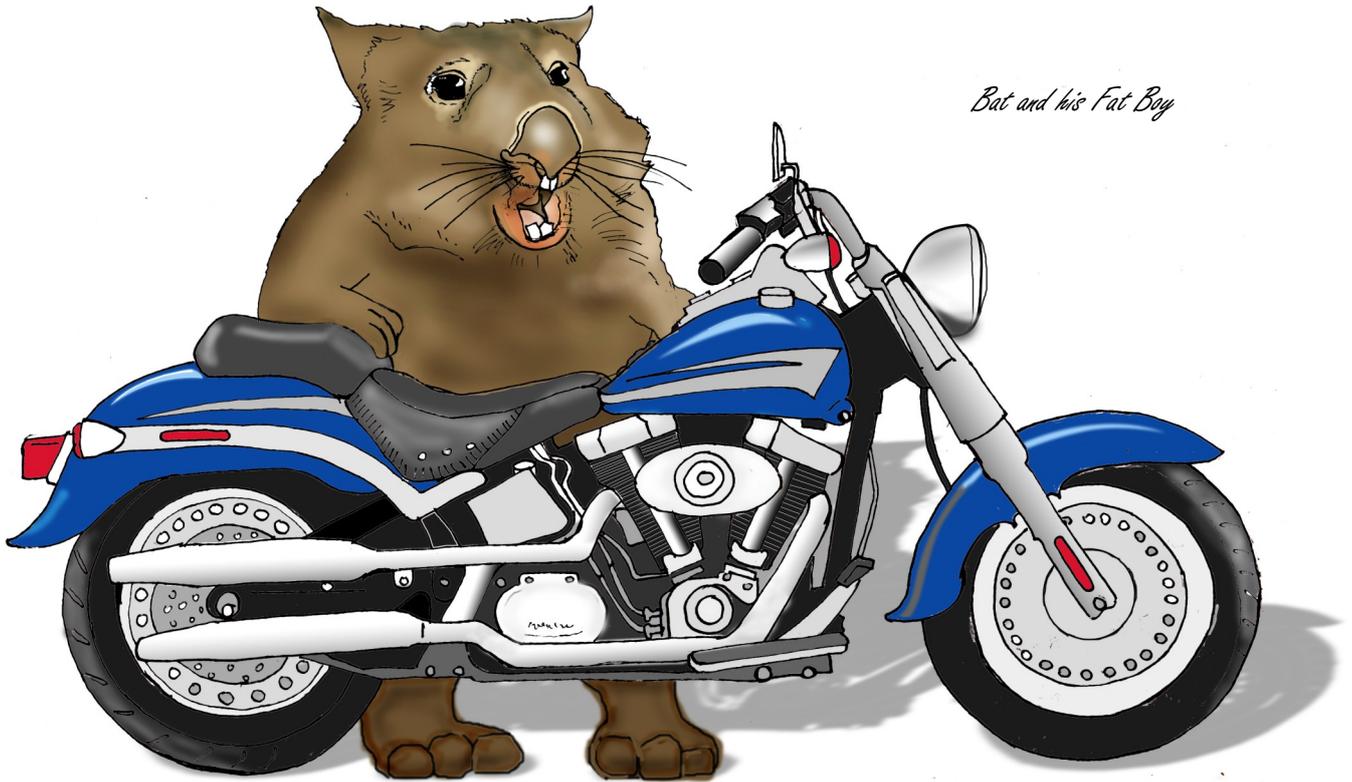
Flamboyant Mr Master is the CEO of Australia's latest corporate failure, leaving angry shareholders with nothing and staff owed millions of dollars. The Ferrari has not been seen since, however, it has been reported that Yalata Aboriginal Mission have received an undisclosed cash donation with a note "I would appreciate your discretion in this matter. Yours, Bald Bob."

Red had followed the escapades of Bald Bob since he was a teenager. Bald Bob was renowned for taking from the rich, particularly the rich who had blatantly stolen from the poor, and giving to the poor. All of a sudden, bells started to ring in Red's head. He remembered years ago reading that Bald Bob always wore white overalls and rode a motorcycle. Red's eyes grew big and wide and he started to blink uncontrollably. He called the others over and whispered "I think that's Bald Bob." "Who the hell's Bald Bob?" asked Devil, never one to take any notice of the news. They all crowded around to read the

newspaper. "Marvellous isn't it" said Red, "he leaves one message when he takes from the rich and another when he gives to the poor. He always uses the same two messages." Dog started tapping his foot nervously, "what should we do?" he asked. "I say we go over and make his acquaintance" said Red. "You first, we're right behind you" added Devil with an uneasy twitter in his voice.

that they knew who he was. "We know who you are" Red blurted out, "your secrets safe with us" he added quickly. Bald Bob smiled and nodded that he knew. Then there was silence again.

All of a sudden Bald Bob looked Dog straight in the eye and said "if my eyes are the windows



Bat and his Fat Boy

They walked slowly towards the lone camper. They tried to make some noise as they didn't want to surprise him. He heard them coming but never looked up from the chess piece he was carving with a whittling knife. "G'day, we've set up camp over there" said Red, pointing in the direction of their camp site. "I know, I heard you ride in!" Then there was silence. Bat gave Red a "what do we do now" glance. "I'm Red and this is Dog, Devil and Bat." "And I'm Bald Bob" came the reply as he sliced at the chess piece with his knife. Red wanted to do a little dance and sing "it really is Bald Bob, it really is," but he managed to control himself.

Bald Bob gestured to the others to sit down and they quickly did as they were told. Red thought it best to come clean and tell Bald Bob

to my soul, what do you see?" He took Dog by surprise. Dog waited a moment, cleared his throat and said "ask Red, he's the philosophical one." Red shot Dog a wincing glance which said "thanks for the hand ball mate." Then he looked into Bald Bob's eyes. They were dark, deep set and haunted from years on the run and yet, when Bald Bob smiled, there was something magic about them. Those eyes hadn't worked nine to five, or been burdened by a mortgage they couldn't afford. They had spent most of their time on the road less travelled and Red liked what he saw. Red blushed, "I think you're the coolest dude we have ever met." It was the only thing he could come up with. Bald Bob smiled and said "my friends call me BB." Then he shook everyone's hand and took another swig out of his army surplus tin mug.

Red realised why he was called Bald Bob. He didn't have a hair on his head. On second glance, there wasn't a hair anywhere in sight, no eye lashes, no eye brows, nothing. Bald Bob knew they were staring at him and said "it's called Alopecia Universalise; I don't have any hair anywhere." Bat wanted to crack up laughing when he imagined a human without pubic hair, but Red gave him a warning glance just in time. Bald Bob knew what they were thinking and said, "that's right, I don't have any pubic hair." They all looked away, embarrassed they had been caught out. "I'll never whinge about trimming my whiskers again!" thought Devil.

As well as wearing white overalls, Bald Bob was wearing a tatty pair of Dunlop Volleys. His big toe was poking out of his right shoe and there were no laces. A set of prescription lenses were perched on the end of his nose and he was smoking an old pipe. When the smoke wafted in the air, it smelt exotic, like an antique cigar. He rode a 1942 H-D WLA 750cc. It was smothered in dust and yet it looked mechanically sound. "Had her for 30 years" mumbled Bald Bob. "My uncle bought her the year I was born and left her to me when he rode on." The boys looked at the old Harley in silence. "Without fail, she's serviced every 5000km, even if I have a "job" to do!" he smiled.

By now it was dinner time. It wasn't the night to waste precious time cooking a bush banquet, so Bat offered to make everyone a vegemite sandwich and a cup-a-soup. Bald Bob gently raised his hand in refusal. Instead, he ripped the lid off a can of baked beans and ate them, cold, straight from the can.

Bald Bob did most of the talking; they knew not to ask any questions. It was a stunning night with a million stars in the sky. Bald Bob pointed at the sliver of a moon and said "when my time on this earth is done, that's where you'll find me, sitting, watching." Red nodded that he understood. "Where will you be when it's a full moon?" asked Bat. Everyone laughed, but Bat wasn't quite sure what they were laughing at.

Bald Bob taught them how to play a game called Matches. A pile of matches are placed in the centre. Each player, in turn, may remove one, two or three matches from the pile. The winner is the player who removes the last match. Dog and Devil decided that the winner should be rewarded with a cap full of Red's Jagermeister. Bald Bob was extremely cunning and was the winner most of the time!

When it was time to turn in for the night, Bald Bob removed a chess piece from his pocket. It was a black knight, perfectly sculpted into a true work of art. He said to Red, "if you ever pass by Bonnie Doon, give this to my Aunt Agnes, she hasn't heard from me in a while." Red was dumb struck with the honour and the responsibility of the request. "She lives at Grass Valley Farm, just out of town." "You can give her a call on my mobile" said Red nervously. But BB gently raised his hand again and said "don't do phones. No pressure, just if you're passing that way."

As they wandered back to their camp site Bat said "So Bald Bob is a Bonnie Doonian!" Dog gave him a contemptuous look and said, "I think we should keep watch tonight, we don't want to wake up a victim do we?" "Good idea" said Devil. "As they say, there's no such thing as victims, only volunteers!" "Imagine that" said Dog "waking up to find a note where my Rocker had been. "You could sell it on E-Bay" quipped Red. "A genuine note from Bald Bob himself would probably be worth more than your Harley!"

Bat took the first watch. Bald Bob never stirred from his swag all night. Red was so confident when he came on for the last watch that he relaxed and fell asleep. When they woke up, Bald Bob was gone. There was a note on Red's bike which read "hope to meet again someday, Yours, BB." They ate breakfast in silence, sorry they never had chance to say good bye.

Stay cool
The Skink



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